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## The bleaching syndrome: Mental health diseases and women of color

**Ronald E Hall**

Michigan State University, USA

Influenced by Western culture women of color have internalized a pathological appreciation for light skin. Travelers to Asia, India, Africa and the Americas will be struck by the various skin bleaching applications utilized by the women there in their efforts to acquire light skin vis-à-vis the bleaching syndrome. The bleaching syndrome is a social disease invisible to the casual observer but is immune to dispute in the aftermath of bleached skin as the universally preferred skin color ideal. According to Webster's Dictionary bleach is a verb that means to remove color and in the case of the Bleaching Syndrome to make one otherwise white. A syndrome consists of a grouping of symptoms i.e., behaviors that occur in conjunction and make up a recognizable pattern. These literal definitions provide a context for the bleaching syndrome which contains three basic components. They consist of the following: (1) psychological according to internalized ideals; (2) sociological according to reactions to those ideals; and (3) physiological according to the bleached ideals manifested via bleach creams. The mental health implications of western skin color ideals are universal and extend to the norms of the total non-European population. Without exception, Eurocentric skin color ideals are an environmental force that impairs the mental health of women of color resulting in a predisposition to disease i.e., bleaching syndrome. Although the literature acknowledges racism among the list of social pathologies, amidst idealization of light skin the neglect of the bleaching syndrome has been all but institutionalized. Greater focus on skin color would enhance the ability of human service professionals to alleviate social pathogens that accommodate the bleaching syndrome and serve the mental health interests of their clients, in-toto.

hallr@msu.edu

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