

## The Bleaching Syndrome

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### Introduction

Psychiatry is a medical profession whose practitioners are charged with the diagnosis, treatment and/or prevention of mental distress. They are trained to address both the physiological as well as the psychological aspects of various disorders. Subsequently psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medication holding medical degrees which are followed by residency training in psychiatry. However despite such training many in psychiatry overlook psychological pathologies peculiar to people of color. In the colonial aftermath and Atlantic slave trade eras a most dramatic pathology affectively designates dark skin as a mark of denigration.

Influenced by Western civilization people of color worldwide have internalized a pathological denigration of dark skin via dysfunctional appreciation for light skin. Travelers to Asia, India, Africa and the various locations around the world will be struck by the numerous skin bleaching applications utilized by men and women of color in their efforts to acquire light skin. The existence of such pathology is invisible to the casual observer but is immune to dispute as an effort to appreciate light skin. Considering research Coard, Breland and Raskin investigated the implications of skin color relative to racial identity for 113 African-American students. Lighter skin was positively correlated to higher levels of racial identity attitudes. Maddox and Chase analyzed the salience of skin color based subcategories among African-Americans. According to experiment 1 manipulation of issues enhanced the salience of skin color. In experiment 2 the manipulation of issues was independent which suggested a link between skin color

and social beliefs in memory which substantiates the denigration of dark skin as prerequisite to the Bleaching Syndrome.

The Bleaching Syndrome is the conscious and systematic process of self-denigration and aspiring to assimilation via internalization of alien ideals. The ultimate objective of the Bleaching Syndrome is a desired quality of life that can only be realized by acceptance into the dominant mainstream population. People of color internalize this appreciation for light skin, even though the process is consciously understood by many to be harmful. It is a linear progression of stages consisting of power, domination, assimilation, and finally the Bleaching Syndrome, which amounts to inferiorization versus normal assimilation. It has three components: (A) Perceptual, according to internalized ideals; (B) Psychological, according to reactions to those ideals; and (C) Behavioral, according to the ideals manifested as direct and indirect actions.

The Bleaching Syndrome is an emerging phenomenon that will be exacerbated by the declining significance of race. Indeed race is increasingly less discernable via inter-racial marriage increases and mixed race birth patterns. Victims of color who succumb to the Bleaching Syndrome face challenges to their psychological welfare, quality of life and the mental stability of future generations. In a heretofore unprecedented post millennium era psychiatrists must necessarily diagnose the Bleaching Syndrome in order to circumvent dysfunctional appreciation for light skin not irrelevant to the colonization of territories and the Western civilization's Atlantic trade in slaves.

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