

***Real Men Don't Bleach!:* Contradiction in Contemporary Notions of Gender Identity Among Bleachers in Jamaica**

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Abstract

Over the last two decades or so, the literature on Caribbean masculinity emerged as one of the growth areas of academic inquiry. The goal of this qualitative study was to explore contemporary cultural constructions of masculinity in Jamaica through the nuanced lens of the skin bleaching practice. Analysis of rich data from open-ended interviews with male and female bleachers revealed evidence of colorism and a distinct preference for light skin among both males and females. The study's findings suggest a mushrooming, complex contestation to the traditional Jamaican gender framework especially for men in relation to notions of sexuality, attraction, and beauty. This study also has implications for conceptions of gender among communities of color from other countries.

Keywords: Gender identity; Jamaican masculinity; skin bleaching; Caribbean sexuality; colorism.

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Masculinity--manhood and femininity--womanhood have long served as crucial social indicators of identity, and gender identity specifically. Gender, a familiar and routine part of everyday life and activities (Lorber, 2000), according to Galtung (1991), is one of the main conflict formations within society. This is an important concept as it underscores the gen-