

EFFECT OF SEXUAL RACISM ON PARTNER DESIRABILITY IN ASIAN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

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Background:

Disadvantages in partner selection due to sexual racism can reduce self-esteem, impede healthy relationship seeking (including practicing safe sex), and prevent positive ethnic identity formation. Those able to identify racially fetishising or exclusive behaviour will be better equipped to pursue healthy relationships, resulting in better sexual health outcomes.

This study investigated the effect of potential partners' racial preferences on desirability among Asian men who have sex with men (MSM), and the role of sexual racism awareness in informing these effects.

Methods:

127 Asian MSM responded to hypothetical online dating scenarios in which they rated the desirability of target facial stimuli. The racial background (Asian/white) and racial preference (none/Asian/white) of targets were manipulated. This study employed a within-subjects, 2 x 3 design.

Results:

As hypothesised, for white targets, no racial preference was more desirable than a white preference ($p < .001$) or an Asian preference ($p = .001$).

As hypothesised, for Asian targets, a preference for white partners was less desirable than an Asian preference ($p < .001$) or no preference ($p < .001$).

Unexpectedly, regardless of racial preference, no negative correlations were found between sexual racism awareness and desirability for white potential partners.

Conclusion:

This is the first experimental study to investigate the effect of racial preferences on desirability in Asian MSM.

We expanded upon previous research, finding that negative attitudes held towards men with racial preferences are reflected in romantic choices. Findings support the idea that white preference for Asian partners is viewed negatively and considered as fetishisation. Asian preference for other Asians is viewed positively, as a challenge to the racial hierarchy.

Omitting racial preferences online is beneficial for one's desirability but can also reduce feelings of discrimination among racial minority members. Online dating applications should establish guidelines prohibiting overt sexual racism and remove ethnicity filters to this effect.

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