CrossMark

ORIGINAL PAPER

Is Sexual Racism *Really* Racism? Distinguishing Attitudes Toward Sexual Racism and Generic Racism Among Gay and Bisexual Men

Denton Callander · Christy E. Newman · Martin Holt

Abstract Sexual racism is a specific form of racial prejudice enacted in the context of sex or romance. Online, people use sex and dating profiles to describe racialized attraction through language such as "Not attracted to Asians." Among gay and bisexual men, sexual racism is a highly contentious issue. Although some characterize discrimination among partners on the basis of race as a form of racism, others present it as a matter of preference. In May 2011, 2177 gay and bisexual men in Australia participated in an online survey that assessed how acceptably they viewed online sexual racism. Although the men sampled displayed diverse attitudes, many were remarkably tolerant of sexual racism. We conducted two multiple linear regression analyses to compare factors related to men's attitudes toward sexual racism online and their racist attitudes more broadly. Almost every identified factor associated with men's racist attitudes was also related to their attitudes toward sexual racism. The only differences were between men who identified as Asian or Indian. Sexual racism, therefore, is closely associated with generic racist attitudes, which challenges the idea of racial attraction as solely a matter of personal preference.

Keywords Sexual racism · Gay men · Online dating · Racialized attraction · Racial prejudice · Sexual orientation

D. Callander
The Kirby Institute of Infection and Immunity in Society, UNSW Australia, Sydney, Australia

D. Callander · C. E. Newman · M. Holt
Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Australia, Sydney, Australia

D. Callander (✉)
The Kirby Institute, Faculty of Medicine, UNSW Australia, Sydney, NSW 2052, Australia
e-mail: dcallander@kirby.unsw.edu.au

Introduction

Discrimination between potential sexual or romantic partners on the basis of perceived racial identity has been referred to as "sexual racism." Stember (1978) initially defined sexual racism as, "the sexual rejection of the racial minority, the conscious attempt on the part of the majority to prevent interracial cohabitation" (p. xi). Today, "sexual racism" is popularly employed in media and research settings as shorthand for racial discrimination between sexual or romantic partners. There is contention, however, about whether this is an appropriate label when it comes to understanding something as complex and personal as desired. Indeed, some commentators contend that distinguishing among partners on the basis of perceived race is not racism at all but a justifiable personal preference (e.g., Matheson, 2012). Researchers have sought to unpack the intersections of race and sexuality in our contemporary (and increasingly digital) world (e.g., Lin & Lundquist, 2013; Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Plummer, 2008) but very little is understood about people's attitudes toward sexual racism or whether those attitudes differ from broader racist attitudes.

Early writing on sexual racism focused almost exclusively on heterosexual relationships between Black and White people living in the USA (Hernton, 1965; Stember, 1978) but more recent work has focused on other populations. A study of profile ads found that men looking for other men were more likely than men seeking women to assess the racial characteristics of their partners and that they were more likely to self-describe in racial terms (Phua & Kaufman, 2003). This research also found that men seeking men were more likely to assess other physical features of prospective partners, such as eye and hair color. One interpretation of these findings is that gay and bisexual men are more explicit about the characteristics they desire in a partner, but it is also important to consider how such forthrightness may deliberately or inadvertently reproduce racial discrimination in

_Springer

partner-seeking behaviors. Questions about racial discrimination are especially complicated among gay and bisexual men because inclusivity and diversity are values often attributed to notions of "gay community" (Holt, 2011; Holt & Griffin, 2003; Ridge, Hee, & Minichiello, 1999). Nevertheless, past work investigating the idea of sexual racism in White majority cultures has revealed entrenched hierarchies of attraction that influence the sexual (and non-sexual) lives of gay and bisexual men of White and non-White racial backgrounds (Caluya, 2006; Han, 2008b; McBride, 2005; Ridge et al., 1999). As some have pointed out, popular understandings of "gay culture" in many Western countries are often underpinned by unspoken assumptions of Whiteness (Han, 2007; Teunis, 2007).

Some commentators in print and online media have challenged the idea that discrimination between partners on the basis of race is racist. These arguments often make a case that there is a difference between sexual (un)attraction and racism:

> Just because someone isn't sexually attracted to someone of Asian origin does not mean they wouldn't want to work, live next to, or socialize with him or her, or that they believe they are somehow naturally superior to them. (Watts, 2012)

Other critiques of sexual racism draw on the deeply held value of sexual freedom—an individual's right to select a partner of their choice—to question the limits that the label "racism" places upon individual desire (Matheson, 2012). Similar defenses of what some consider sexually racist behavior have been observed in the discussions that take place among gay and bisexual men through sex and dating web services (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2012). These arguments invoke the libertarian ideal of choice, which is a key ideology of the Western democracies in which these debates typically take place. Indeed, the freedom to choose one's sexual and romantic partners is especially poignant for gay and bisexual men and other sexual minority groups, for whom the repression, exclusion and marginalization of sex and sexuality is both an historical and ongoing reality. The idea that an individual should feel shame at their desire is in many ways a challenge to the hard-won ideals of sexual freedom, which is exactly what some have argued the concept of "sexual racism" does. Indeed, the ongoing debate on this topic highlights the complexities of race and sex and it reveals how different opinions on this issue can be. This debate also raises important questions about whether a label such as "racist," which is imbued with social condemnation, can or should be applied in the context of our desires.

Although sexual freedom may provide a compelling argument for the right to choose one's partners irrespective of race, research has highlighted the role that systems of colonialism, prejudice and Whiteness can play when it comes to sex and romance among gay and bisexual men in Europe, North America, and Australasia. Caluya (2006), for example, offers a compelling ethnographic narrative of the ways in which Asian-identified men living in Australia are both marginalized and fetishized within the diverse enactments and cultures of gay sex. Racial fetishization, which relies on the construction of racial identities as sexual "types," has featured prominently alongside themes of marginalization in the experiences of gay and bisexual men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in Australia and the USA (Han, 2006a, b, 2007; McBride, 2005; Ridge et al., 1999).

Much has been written about the sexual stereotypes associated with race, especially the characterization of Asian-identified gay men in White majority cultures as effeminate, submissive, and docile (e.g., Chuang, 1999; Han, 2006a, b). Other work has suggested that these stereotypes may influence sexual practices, notably that Asian and Pacific Islander-identified gay men are more likely than men from other racial backgrounds to occupy the receptive role during anal sex (Wei & Raymond, 2010). Han (2008a) has also touched upon this idea, noting that Asian and Pacific Islander-identified men may be at an elevated risk of HIV and other STIs because of racialized assumptions that they should take the receptive role during anal sex. Of course, these assumptions about the sexual behaviors of different cultural groups are not unique to men racialized as Asian, with other work touching upon how sexual stereotypes can play out for Latino and Black gay and bisexual men (e.g., Ayala, Bingham, Kim, Wheeler, & Millett, 2012; Bowleg, 2012; Malebranche, Fields, Lawrence, & Harper, 2007).

Previous research among gay and bisexual men in the USA suggests that, compared with offline venues, sexual racism is more commonly expressed and experienced in online spaces (Plummer, 2008; Smith, 2012). In many parts of the world, gay and bisexual men's sex and dating lives increasingly play out through online channels. Survey data from Australia suggest that website and mobile applications are the most popular ways that gay and bisexual men meet sexual partners (Hull et al., 2014). In the UK and Netherlands, research has found that the majority of gay and bisexual men under 30 meet their first sexual partner online (Bolding, Davis, Hart, Sherr, & Elford, 2007; Franssens, Hospers, & Kok, 2010).

The prominence of online sex and dating practices is significant because the way we behave online may be different from other social contexts. The perception that the online domain is anonymous, aphysical, and depersonalized may lead some to demonstrate what Suler (2004) called the online disinhibition effect. Such disinhibition may promote freer sharing of attitudes or perceptions with respect to race and partner-seeking. The nature of online interactions, which are predominantly text-based and archival, also makes it easier than in offline settings to identify and examine the mechanisms of racial interactions. While people rarely proclaim in a public space that they are, for example, not attracted to Asian men, they may be more comfortable about doing so via online sex and dating profiles. Thus, not only will people more readily disclose racialized attraction

online but, from a research perspective, online spaces provide a unique opportunity to explore a social phenomenon that is likely relevant to the offline world as well.

Using the Internet as a domain through which to analyze practices and meanings relating to sexual racism among gay and bisexual men has been employed in previous research. Researchers have highlighted the diverse forms of language that men use to negotiate race and racism through their sex and dating profiles (Callander et al., 2012; Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Raj, 2011; Riggs, 2012), while others have pointed to the potential harms that can be caused by experiencing sexual racism online (Paul, Ayala, & Choi, 2010).

What is missing from this growing body of research are accounts of the diverse attitudes that gay and bisexual men hold toward the practice and idea of sexual racism. In particular, very little is understood about whether they see sexual racism as problematic or justifiable. Interview data suggest that some men do not view this practice as problematic and see race as an appropriate category for discriminating between partners (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2015). Online debates range from those who actively challenge sexual racism (Mansfield & Quan, 2013) to those who reject the idea as an affront to individual sexual freedom (Matheson, 2012; Watts, 2012). These debates also play out, to a lesser extent, through the profiles men maintain online. A small proportion of gay and bisexual men online use their sex and dating profiles to defend or critique sexual racism in these communities, which adds another dimension to this discourse (Callander et al., 2012). Collectively, these sources provide hints about the attitudes men hold toward race and partner discrimination but a more comprehensive approach is needed to inform understandings and responses to sexual racism.

This article seeks to outline the attitudes gay and bisexual men maintain toward the idea and practice of sexual racism. We focus on sexual racism as it occurs in online spaces as a way to contextualize and frame this issue. Using survey data, we explore the following questions: What attitudes do gay and bisexual men hold toward sexual racism as it is expressed online, and is there any consensus among men about the acceptability of this practice? Further, given the ambiguity around whether or not sexual racism should be considered a form of racism, are there differences between men's attitudes toward this concept and their racist attitudes more broadly? It was hypothesized that men's attitudes toward racism and sexual racism would be similar and shaped by similar forces.

Method

Participants

Data were collected via an online survey during May 2011. Gay, bisexual, and other same-sex attracted men across Australia were recruited through paid advertising on a popular sex and dating webservice for gay and bisexual men and through *Facebook's* free "pages" promotional platform. Recruitment directed potential participants to a dedicated survey website (www.justapreference.com). Those not living in Australia, not identifying as male, not maintaining a sex or dating profile, or under the age of 16 were excluded from participation. As an incentive, participants who completed the final survey item were offered an opportunity to enter a raffle for movie passes.

Measures

The survey instrument consisted of 79 items covering demographics, the use of sex and dating web services, attitudes to race, racism and partner discrimination, and sexual practices with male partners. With respect to participant racial identities, men were able to select from a long list of options or describe themselves using free-text. Using 10 labels taken from a popular sex and dating web service, men were also asked to select how they typically self-identify when faced with these options: Asian, Black, Indian, Latino, Middle Eastern, mixed, Native American, South Asian, White. Participants could also select "other" or "I leave this option blank."

Participants completed part of the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) adapted for use in Australia, which assessed attitudes toward racial diversity and multiculturalism with lower scores indicating less tolerance toward racial diversity (Ponterotto et al., 1995). Participants were asked to respond to items like "My friendship network is very multicultural" and "It upsets (or angers) me that a non-White/Anglo person has never been the Prime Minister of Australia." Each item was assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Participants also completed eight items assessing the acceptability of online racial partner discrimination, such as "Indicating a racial preference in a profile is a form of racism" and "It is ok to indicate a racial preference when looking for sex or dates online," each scored from (0) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree. As a new measure, internal reliability was calculated and a factor analysis was conducted. Measure scores for both scales were calculated by summing item responses and the included items are detailed in Tables 3 and 4.

We calculated the proportion of same-sex partnered households in each participant's home neighborhood as defined by postcode, which served as a proxy for the geographic concentration of same-sex attracted people. Proportions were calculated by taking the number of reported male–male and female–female couples divided by the total number of couples per postcode, drawing on data from the 2011 Australian census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). This technique of calculating same-sex household density is the same used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Procedure

Pearson correlations and ANOVAs were used to assess relationships at the bivariate level. Variables identified as having a significant relationship with either of the dependent variables (online sexual racism acceptability and the QDI) were block entered into multiple linear regressions to assess independent relationships. Non-significant variables were removed from the final models. The racial labels employed by many sex and dating web services (e.g., White, Indian, Asian) were used as markers for how men self-present online and, therefore, included in our analyses of racial difference. All multiple level categorical variables, notably racial identity, were recoded into dichotomous variables to facilitate interpretation. Because of their ambiguity, the racial identities "other" and "mixed" were not recoded for the multivariate analyses nor was the option "I leave racial identity blank." Men who selected these options, however, were not excluded from multivariate analyses because of the comparative dichotomous variables. Statistical significance was set at 0.05 and Stata Statistical Software version 12.1 (StataCorp, 2011) was used for all analyses.

Results

A total of 2177 men were included in the final sample, ranging in age from 16 to 82 ($M = 32.0$, $SD = 10.2$). Table 1 presents data on participant demographics as well as their online sex and dating practices. A total of 326 men (15 %) reported that their sex and dating profile contained content that discriminated between potential partners on the basis of race. Of the total sample, 252 men (12 %) reported that their profiles were *inclusive* on the basis of race (i.e., expressed interest in a particular racial group or groups) while 133 (6 %) reported that their profiles were *exclusive* on the basis of race (i.e., expressed disinterest in a particular racial group or groups). A small minority of men reported both inclusive and exclusive discrimination on the basis of race (3 %). Over half of the men surveyed (58 %) believed they had been discriminated against on sex and dating web services because of their race and nearly all men (96 %) recalled viewing a profile or profiles that engaged in some form of racial discrimination (Table 2).

Tables 3 and 4, respectively, report participant responses to the attitudinal measures: QDI and online sexual racism accept-

Table 1 Participant demographics ($n = 2177$)

Demographic	Response	n	%
Racial identity	Asian	301	13.8
(using racial groups from online sex and dating webservice)	Black	7	0.3
	Indian	41	1.9
	Latino	39	1.8
	Middle Eastern	30	1.4
	Mixed	135	6.2
	Native American	3	0.1
	South Asian	22	1.0
	White	1,474	67.7
	Other	35	1.6
	Leave blank	90	4.1
Sexuality	Gay	1,882	86.4
	Heterosexual	11	0.5
	Bisexual	284	13.0
HIV status	HIV-positive	99	4.5
	HIV-negative	1,969	90.4
	Don't know	109	5.0
Relationship status	Single	1,677	77.0
(at time of survey)	In a relationship	458	21.0
	Other	42	1.9
Education experience	Non-university	793	36.4
	University	1,384	63.5
Proportion of neighborhood households with same-sex partners	0–19.19 % ($M = 3.67$)		

Table 2 Participant online sex and dating practices ($n = 2177$)

Demographic	Response	n	%
Frequency accessing sex and dating web services	≤once/month	114	5.2
	Weekly	639	29.4
	Daily	1,112	51.1
	>once/day	312	14.3
Frequency using online services to organize sexual encounters	Never	156	7.2
	1–2 times/year	624	28.7
	Monthly	917	42.1
	Weekly	446	20.5
	Daily	34	1.6
Experienced online sexual racism	Yes	1,261	57.9
	No	916	42.1
Viewed racially discriminatory profile	Yes	2,088	95.9
	No	89	4.1
Own profile demonstrates racial discrimination	Yes	326	15.0
	Exclusive[a]	133	6.1
	Inclusive	252	11.6
	No	1,851	85.0

[a] These categories were not mutually exclusive, i.e., participants could report both inclusive and exclusive racial discrimination

ability. While half of participants thought that racism was a problem on sex and dating web services, 64 % agreed that it was OK to indicate a racial preference online. Although 43 % of men reported being bothered by seeing racial exclusion in online profiles, a similar proportion (46 %) reported not being bothered. When these proportions were stratified by men's past experiences of racial exclusion online, those who had not experienced racial exclusion were less bothered by seeing it online than those who had experienced it (32 % vs 51 %, $p < 0.001$).

A principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation of the eight items related to online sexual racism was conducted. An analysis of sample adequacy for fact analysis suggested that our sample was favorable for this type of analysis (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value of 0.9). The factor analysis suggested that the items were best considered as a single scale with all items loading at ≥0.6 on a single factor. This scale demonstrated high internal reliability for the sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.9$), which was not improved by removing any items. Accounting for reverse-scored items, participants' cumulative totals ranged from 0 (low acceptance of sexual racism online) to 32 (high acceptance) with a mean of 18.5 ($SD = 7.4$). The QDI also demonstrated high internal reliability for this survey sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.8$) and observed scores ranged from 15–70 ($M = 49.7$, $SD = 7.8$). Scores on these two scales were highly negatively correlated but not so high as to flag concerns about collinearity ($r[2177] = -0.56$, $p < 0.001$). Men with more positive attitudes toward racial diversity and multiculturalism (on the QDI) tended to view sexual racism less positively.

Bivariate analyses identified participant demographics and behaviors used in subsequent multiple linear regressions, which are detailed in Table 5. Only variables which demonstrated a significant bivariate relationship with either dependent variable were included in subsequent models. The constructed models accounted for 10.7 % of the observed difference in scores on the QDI and 14.4 % of the difference in attitudes toward online sexual racism. Being university educated, having experienced sexual racism in the past, identifying as gay/homosexual, and living in a neighborhood with higher proportions of same-sex couple households was associated with viewing multiculturalism more positively and sexual racism less positively. By contrast, identifying as White and visiting sex and dating web services more frequently was associated with less positive views toward multiculturalism and more positive attitudes toward online sexual racism. Notably, the only difference between the models was that men who self-identified as Asian tended to have lower scores on the QDI and men who self-identified as Indian tended to view online sexual racism as less acceptable when compared with participants of other racial groups. These differences were relatively small compared with the others observed in our model.

Discussion

Gay, bisexual, and other same-sex attracted men maintain diverse but generally tolerant attitudes toward sexual racism online. Reflecting some of the debate around this issue, it appears that many men do not view racial discrimination between sexual partners as an expression of racism. We found similarities between attitudes toward sexual racism and attitudes toward multiculturalism generally. These similarities suggest that sexual racism is closely related to more general patterns of racism, although there are some distinctions to consider.

The way in which participants understand sexual racism appears to be related to perceptions of offense or intentional expressions of

Table 3 Gay and bisexual men's attitudes toward racial diversity and multiculturalism (the Quick Discrimination Index [QDI]) (n = 2177)

	Response[a]	n	%
Quick Discrimination Index (Range; M; SD)	15–70; 49.7; 7.8		
I feel I could develop an intimate relationship with someone from a different ethnic group	Disagree	145	3.7
	Neutral	252	11.6
	Agree	1,780	81.8
My friendship network is very multicultural	Disagree	320	14.7
	Neutral	174	8.0
	Agree	1,683	80.1
I would feel OK about my best friend having a relationship with someone from a different ethnic group	Disagree	50	2.3
	Neutral	49	2.3
	Agree	2,078	95.5
In the past few years there has been too much attention directed toward multicultural issues in education[b]	Disagree	742	34.1
	Neutral	787	36.2
	Agree	648	29.8
Most of my close friends are from my own ethnic group	Disagree	846	38.9
	Neutral	144	6.6
	Agree	1,187	54.5
I think that it is important for children to attend schools that are ethnically diverse	Disagree	130	6.0
	Neutral	181	8.3
	Agree	1,866	85.7
In the past few years there has been too much attention directed toward multicultural issues in business[b]	Disagree	734	33.7
	Neutral	909	41.8
	Agree	534	24.5
Overall, I think minorities in Australia complain too much about ethnic discrimination[b]	Disagree	972	44.6
	Neutral	460	21.1
	Agree	972	44.6
I think White people's racism toward ethnic minority groups still constitutes a major problem in Australia	Disagree	439	20.2
	Neutral	304	14.0
	Agree	1,434	65.9
I think the school system, from primary school through University, should encourage minority and immigrant children to learn and fully adopt traditional Australian values[b]	Disagree	514	23.6
	Neutral	456	20.9
	Agree	1,207	55.4
If I were to adopt a child, I would be happy to adopt a child of any ethnic group	Disagree	323	14.8
	Neutral	498	22.9
	Agree	1,356	62.3
I think the school system, from primary school through University, should promote values representative of diverse cultures	Disagree	143	6.6
	Neutral	277	12.7
	Agree	1,757	80.7
It upsets (or angers) me that a non-White/Anglo person has never been the Prime Minister of Australia	Disagree	1,207	55.4
	Neutral	595	27.3
	Agree	375	17.2
I think it is better if people date within their own ethnic group[b]	Disagree	1,824	83.8
	Neutral	208	9.6
	Agree	145	6.7

[a] Responses have been condensed to a three-point scale
[b] Reverse scored

racism. While the majority of men we surveyed saw racism as a problem on sex and dating web services, over 70 % disagreed with the idea that indicating a racial preference online is a form of racism. Indeed, the majority of participants also agreed that racial preferences save time. Even though two out of five participants reported that they were bothered by encountering racial exclusion online there appeared to be hesitation about labeling online sex and dating behavior as racist.

What could be fueling this hesitation? "Racist" is a strong label imbued with heavy social condemnation, which could explain why some men are unwilling to define partner discrimination in this way. Men might also be particularly hesitant to label racial

Table 4 Gay and bisexual men's attitudes toward online sexual racism ($n = 2177$)

	Response[a]	n	%
Online sexual racism acceptability (Range; M; SD)	0–32, 18.5, 7.4		
It is OK to indicate a racial preference when looking for sex or dates online	Disagree	493	22.6
	Neutral	298	13.7
	Agree	1,386	63.6
Indicating a racial preference in online profiles saves everybody time and energy	Disagree	374	17.2
	Neutral	263	12.1
	Agree	1,540	70.7
Indicating a racial preference in a profile is a form of racism[b]	Disagree	1,067	49.0
	Neutral	317	14.6
	Agree	793	36.4
People who indicate a racial preference in their profile are not trying to offend anyone	Disagree	345	15.8
	Neutral	545	25.0
	Agree	1,287	59.2
I am bothered when I read a profile that excludes people because of their race/ethnicity[b]	Disagree	990	45.5
	Neutral	249	11.4
	Agree	938	43.1
As long as people are polite about it, I see no problem in indicating a racial preference in an online profile	Disagree	371	17.1
	Neutral	248	11.4
	Agree	1,558	71.6
If I were attracted to a certain group of people, I would indicate this on my profile (or already do)	Disagree	723	33.2
	Neutral	347	15.9
	Agree	1,107	50.9
Racism is not really a problem on Internet sex and dating sites	Disagree	1,097	50.4
	Neutral	533	24.5
	Agree	547	25.1

[a] Responses have been condensed to a three-point scale

[b] Reverse scored

discrimination among partners as sexual racism because they themselves participate in some form of race-based attraction and discrimination (inclusion or exclusion). As past research has explored, people will sometimes use particular strategies—often unintentionally—to distance themselves from being labeled as racist (Rapley, 1998, 2001). Although results from this survey suggest that around one in ten men post online content about their attraction to racialized groups, some of our previous work has found that many more men than that think about attraction along racial lines (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2013).

We identified a series of factors that appear to relate to the attitudes men hold regarding sexual racism online and, more broadly, multiculturalism and racial discrimination. The factors associated with attitudes toward sexual racism and multiculturalism were similar. A higher degree of education was associated with more positive attitudes to multiculturalism, as has been observed in previous research (Dunn, 2004; Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004; Oliver & Mendelberg 2000). Given that a similar effect was also observed with respect to attitudes toward sexual racism, it is possible that the types of experiences afforded by higher education (i.e., exposure to diverse people and ideas) may influence how men understand sexual racism as well. Similar

to US research that found that Black and Latino-identified gay and bisexual men with higher levels of education were less likely to conform to sexual behavior stereotypes (Jeffries, 2009), education appears to be a key factor not only for influencing race and sexuality-associated behaviors but attitudes as well.

Those who had experienced exclusion because of their race while looking for partners online held less positive attitudes toward sexual racism and more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism. Interestingly, the observed relationships remained, even when racial identity was controlled for in the model. It is feasible that personal experiences of racial discrimination may foster less tolerant attitudes to the practice, which may occur independent of racial identity.

Men who identified as gay compared with those who identified as bisexual or heterosexual expressed more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism and less positive attitudes toward sexual racism. Men who lived in neighborhoods with greater concentrations of gay and lesbian households were also more positive about multiculturalism and less tolerant of sexual racism. It is possible that community attention to these issues (in the gay press, for example) may have contributed to a greater awareness among gay men about sexual racism as an issue. Living in proximity to

Table 5 Factors associated with participant attitudes toward racial discrimination/multiculturalism and acceptability of online sexual racism

Factor	QDI		OSR acceptability	
	Bivariate (F/r)[a]	Multivariate (β)	Bivariate (F/r)[a]	Multivariate (β)
Demographics				
Age (in years)	0.04	–	0.02	–
University educated (no/yes)	50.40**	0.09**	76.74**	−0.10**
Identify as gay/homosexual (no/yes)	23.90**	0.09**	21.57**	−0.08**
Proportion same-sex households in postcode	0.11**	0.06*	−0.13**	−0.07**
HIV status (negative or unsure/positive)	0.36	–	0.07	–
Relationship status (single/partnered or other)	6.93*	0.05	0.49	−0.01
Online behaviors and experiences				
Experienced sexual racism (no/yes)	45.80**	0.08**	59.80**	−0.05*
Viewed racially discriminatory profile (no/yes)	12.14*	0.05	0.02	0.01
Own profile demonstrates racial discrimination	44.49**	−0.12**	164.75**	0.13**
Frequency using web services to organize sex	−0.01	–	0.02	–
Frequency visiting sex and dating web services	−0.11**	−0.10**	0.09**	0.08**
Racial identity[b]				
Asian	10.51*	−0.10**	95.22**	−0.04
Black	0.75	–	2.35	–
Indian	5.23*	−0.005	21.83**	−0.05*
Latino	4.34*	0.002	2.02	0.003
Middle Eastern	1.10	–	0.23	–
Native American	0.29	–	0.45	–
South Asian	2.36	−0.01	7.17*	−0.02
White	86.84**	−0.21**	192.46**	0.20**

QDI = Quick Discrimination Index ($R^2 = 0.109$); OSR = Online Sexual Racism ($R^2 = 0.145$)

$*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.001$

[a] ANOVAs (F) were used to assess categorical variables; Pearson correlations (r) were used to assess continuous variables

[b] Racial identities were recoded as dichotomous variables; 0 = not participant's racial identity, 1 = participant's racial identity; "mixed," "other," and "leave blank" were excluded because of their ambiguous nature

geographic communities of other same-sex attracted people may have exposed participants to critiques of sexual racism, which may have influenced their associated attitudes.

Of all the sex and dating-related factors considered in our analysis, only the frequency with which men visited sex and dating web services was associated with their racism-related attitudes: those who visited more regularly tended to view multiculturalism less positively and sexual racism as more acceptable. This finding may speak of two important, and likely interacting, aspects of sex and dating online. First, the nature of sex and dating web services often encourages the use of simplified racial labels like "Asian," "Indian," and "Black," both in how men describe themselves and how they describe what they are looking for. Many web services allow profile searches and filtering using these categories. Using these categories may encourage the belief that they are useful, natural or appropriate for defining individuals and sexual (dis)interest. Second, participants of online cultures appear to encourage and defend the use of racial discrimination in the context of sex and dating. As mentioned earlier, some of the debate about sexual racism is

expressed in men's online profiles but only a very small number of users are willing to critique the practice (Callander et al., 2012). Thus, men who frequently visit such web services may find their beliefs confirmed and reinforced in an environment that appears conducive to sexual racism. It is possible that this would have a reinforcing effect on men's broader ideas about multiculturalism and racism.

Our findings showed that men racialized as White tended to view sexual racism more positively and multiculturalism less positively compared with men of other racial identities. Here, Australia's Anglo-dominant national context becomes particularly important. As many social theorists have argued, dominant groups tend to defend their dominance and be suspicious of systems that might undermine their control (e.g., Allport, 1979; Brown, 2011). Writing about Australia, Hage (1998) notes that multiculturalism, by its nature, undermines White authority. This perhaps suggests why our White participants tended to view multiculturalism more negatively. Further, specific to sex and dating among gay and bisexual men, previous research has found that White men tend to experience the least racial discrimination while looking for partners and are

consistently rated as the "most attractive" racial group by their peers (Callander et al., 2013). This may also explain more tolerant attitudes toward sexual racism observed among White men.

Participants appeared to have a common set of influences over their attitudes toward racism and sexual racism. We did, however, identify two differences. First, men racialized as Asian tended to view multiculturalism less positively than their peers. Second, compared with men of other racial identities, men racialized as Indian tended to view sexual racism less positively. Some of our earlier work found that Asian and Indian men experience sexual racism more than other racial groups in Australia (Callander et al., 2013). These negative experiences may have influenced their attitudes but it is difficult for us to say how. Further research in this area seems warranted.

It is worth acknowledging the national context of this research. As our sample was based exclusively in Australia, it may not be possible to generalize these findings to other parts of the world. Although Altman (2002) among others has argued that gay cultures are, in many respects, globalized, the social construction of race and racism is nationally specific and it may be that sexual racism as it is expressed and experienced here is different from other settings. Even in countries that share Australia's generally positive attitude toward multiculturalism, such as Canada and the UK (Dasko, 2003; Dunn, 2004; Thalhammer, Zucha, Enzenhofer, Salfinger, & Ogris, 2001), debates and expressions of racism can be quite different. Future research should consider comparing and contrasting attitudes toward sexual racism between gay and bisexual men from different geographic regions.

This study is the first to quantify attitudes relating to online sexual racism and the ways in which these attitudes relate to racism in general. By working to understand the similarities and differences between these concepts, our analysis may help to dispel some of the attitudes and perceptions that surround racialized desire. Our research is limited by several factors. First, given that attitudes toward sexual racism have not been previously measured, we used a new and unvalidated scale. Should the items we developed be of interest to other researchers, more work will be required to assess their validity and reliability. Second, there are likely to be many other factors beyond those considered here that influence men's attitudes and practices regarding racialized sex-seeking practices. For example, although we included the degree to which a local neighborhood accommodates same-sex couples, we did not include a measure of neighborhoods' cultural and linguistic diversity. Unfortunately, available census data in Australia do not facilitate the reporting of racial or ethnic affiliation, which prevented this type of analysis. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of this project prevents us from making any claims of causality.

For the most part, gay and bisexual men's attitudes toward sexual racism online appear linked in significant ways to their attitudes toward multiculturalism and racial diversity. This finding challenges the contention that sexual racism is not an expression of racism. In spite of this apparent relationship, many gay and bisexual men seem to perceive sexual racism as an acceptable practice and resist the idea that sexual or romantic interest can be considered racist. Nevertheless, many men continue to experience racial discrimination in their search for love or sex. More work is required to further explore sexual racism as a concept and practice so that strategies can be identified to combat it among gay, bisexual, and other same-sex attracted men.

References

Allport, G. (1979). *The nature of prejudice: 25th anniversary edition*. New York: Basic Books.

Altman, D. (2002). *Global sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Australia 2011 census data*. Accessed on 15 August 2013 from www.abs.gov.au/census.

Ayala, G., Bingham, T., Kim, J., Wheeler, D. P., & Millett, G. A. (2012). Modeling the impact of social discrimination and financial hardship on the sexual risk of HIV among Latino and Black men who have sex with men. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*(S2), S242–S249.

Bolding, G., Davis, M., Hart, G., Sherr, L., & Elford, J. (2007). Where young MSM meet their first sexual partner: The role of the Internet. *AIDS and Behavior, 11*, 522–526.

Bowleg, L. (2012). "Once you've blended the cake, you can't take the parts back to the main ingredients": Black gay and bisexual men's descriptions and experiences of intersectionality. *Sex Roles, 68*, 754–767.

Brown, R. (2011). *Prejudice: Its social psychology*. West Sussex, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Callander, D., Holt, M., & Newman, C. (2012). Just a preference: Racialised language in the sex-seeking profiles of gay and bisexual men. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 14*, 1049–1063.

Callander, D., Holt, M., & Newman, C. (2013). *Preference or prejudice: Exploring and challenging race-based attraction among gay and bisexual men in Australia*. Poster presented at the conference of the International Association for the Study of Sex, Culture and Society, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/QcgzYy.

Callander, D., Holt, M., & Newman, C. (2015). 'Not everyone's gonna like me': Accounting for race and racism in Australian sex and dating web-services for gay and bisexual men. *Ethnicities*. doi:10.1177/1468796815581428.

Caluya, G. (2006). The (gay) scene of racism: Face, shame and gay Asian males. *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association e-Journal, 2*, online. http://www.acrawsa.org.au/files/ejournalfiles/80GilbertCaluya.pdf.

Chuang, K. (1999). Using chopsticks to eat steak. *Journal of Homosexuality, 36*, 29–41.

Dasko, D. (2003). *Public attitudes towards multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada*. Paper presented at the Canadian and French Perspectives on Diversity Conference, Ottawa, Canada. Retrieved from http://www.queensu.ca/cora/_files/diversity_dasko.pdf.

Dunn, K. (2004). *Racism in Australia: Findings of a survey on racist attitudes and experiences of racism*. Paper presented at the Challenges of Immigration and Integration in the EU and Australia conference, Sydney, Australia. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/41761/4/dunn_paper.pdf.

Dunn, K., Forrest, J., Burnley, I., & McDonald, A. (2004). Constructing racism in Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 39*, 409–430.

Franssens, D., Hospers, H., & Kok, G. (2010). First same-sex partner and the Internet. *AIDS and Behavior, 14*, 1384–1386. doi:10.1007/s10461-010-9685-0.

Hage, G. (1998). *White nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society*. New York: Routledge.

Han, A. (2006a). I think you're the smartest race I've ever met: Racialised economies of queer male desire. *Australian Critical Race and White-*

ness Studies Association e-Journal, 2, online. http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:229149/AlanHan.pdf.

Han, C. (2006b). Geisha of a different kind: Gay Asian men and the gendering of sexual identity. *Sexuality and Culture, 10*, 3–28.

Han, C. (2007). They don't want to cruise your type: Gay men of color and the racial politics of exclusion. *Social Identities, 13*, 51–67. doi: 10.1080/13504630601163379.

Han, C. (2008a). A qualitative exploration of the relationship between racism and unsafe sex among Asian Pacific Islander gay men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 37*, 827–837. doi:10.1007/s10508-007-9308-7.

Han, C. (2008b). No fats, femmes, or Asians: The utility of critical race theory in examining the role of gay stock stories in the marginalization of gay Asian men. *Contemporary Justice Review, 11*, 11–22. doi:10.1080/10282580701850355.

Hernton, C. (1965). *Sex and racism in America*. New York: Anchor Books.

Holt, M. (2011). Gay men and ambivalence about 'gay community': From gay community attachment to personal communities. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 13*, 857–871. doi:10.1080/13691058.2011.581390.

Holt, M., & Griffin, C. (2003). Being gay, being straight and being yourself. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 6*, 404–425. doi:10.1177/13675494030063008.

Hull, P., Mao, L., Kolstee, J., Duck, T., Prestage, G., Zablotska, I., et al. (2014). *Gay community periodic survey: Sydney 2014*. Sydney: Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Australia.

Jeffries, W. (2009). A comparative analysis of homosexual behaviors, sex role preferences, and anal sex proclivities in Latino and non-Latino men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*, 765–778.

Lin, K., & Lundquist, J. (2013). Mate selection in cyberspace: The intersection of race, gender, and education. *American Journal of Sociology, 119*, 183–215.

Malebranche, D., Fields, E. L., Lawrence, B. O., & Harper, S. R. (2007). Masculine socialization and sexual risk behaviors among black men who have sex with men: A qualitative exploration. *Men and Masculinities, 12*(1), 90–112.

Mansfield, T., & Quan, A. (2013). *Sexual racism sux!* Accessed 1 June 2013. http://www.sexualracismsux.com/.

Matheson, J. (2012, December 14). I'm a sexual racist. *Sydney Star Observer*. Retrieved from http://www.starobserver.com.au/opinion/soapbox-opinion/im-a-sexual-racist/91678.

McBride, D. (2005). *Why I hate Abercrombie & Fitch*. New York: New York University Press.

Oliver, E., & Mendelberg, T. (2000). Reconsidering the environmental determinants of White racial attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science, 44*, 574–589.

Paul, J., Ayala, G., & Choi, K. (2010). Internet sex ads for MSM and partner selection criteria: The potency of race/ethnicity online. *Journal of Sex Research, 47*, 528–538. doi:10.1080/00224490903244575.

Phua, V., & Kaufman, G. (2003). The crossroads of race and sexuality. *Journal of Family Issues, 24*, 981–994. doi:10.1177/0192513x03256607.

Plummer, M. (2008). *Sexual racism in gay communities: Negotiating the ethnosexual marketplace*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington. Retrieved from https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/9181

Ponterotto, J., Burkard, A., Rieger, B., Grieger, I., D'Onofrio, A., Dubuisson, A., et al. (1995). Development and initial validation of the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI). *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 55*, 1016–1031. doi:10.1177/0013164495055006011.

Raj, S. (2011). Grindring bodies: Racial and affective economies of online queer desire. *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association e-Journal, 7*(2), 55–67.

Rapley, M. (1998). Just an ordinary Australian': Self-categorization and the discursive construction of facticity in 'new racist' political rhetoric. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 37*, 325–344. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8309.1998.tb01175.x.

Rapley, M. (2001). How to do X without doing Y': Accomplishing discrimination without 'being racist'–'doing equality'. In M. Augoustinos & K. Reynolds (Eds.), *Understanding prejudice, racism, and social conflict* (pp. 213–250). London: Sage.

Ridge, D., Hee, A., & Minichiello, V. (1999). Asian' men on the scene: Challenges to 'gay communities. *Journal of Homosexuality, 36*, 43–68.

Riggs, D. (2012). Anti-Asian sentiment amongst a sample of White Australian men on gaydar. *Sex Roles, 36*, 768–778. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0119-5.

Smith, J. (2012). *Sexual racism in a gay community on the US-Mexico border: Revisiting the Latin Americanization thesis online*. Master's thesis, University of Texas. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/dissertations/AAI1513118/.

StataCorp. (2011). *Stata statistical software: Release 12*. College Station, TX: StataCorp LP.

Stember, C. (1978). *Sexual racism: The emotional barrier to an integrated society*. New York: Harper & Row.

Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 7*, 321–326. doi:10.1089/1094931041291295.

Teunis, N. (2007). Sexual objectification and the construction of whiteness in the gay male community. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 9*, 263–275. doi:10.1080/13691050601035597.

Thalhammer, E., Zucha, V., Enzenhofer, E., Salfinger, B., & Ogris, G. (2001). *Attitudes towards minority groups in the European Union*. Vienna, Austria: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_138_analysis.pdf.

Watts, J. (2012, February 29). Gay men and women are not more racist. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/.

Wei, C., & Raymond, H. F. (2010). Preferences for and maintenance of anal sex roles among men who have sex with men: Sociodemographic and behavioral correlates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 40*, 829–834.