



Asian American Women's Racial Dating Preferences: An Investigation of Internalized Racism, Resistance and Empowerment against Racism, and Desire for Status

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Abstract

Asian American women's racialized dating choices have drawn widespread attention both in academic and public spheres. However, little empirical research has examined racially relevant sociocultural factors that may affect this population's dating and physical attraction preferences. To further understand racialized desire among this underrepresented population, the present study examined the extent to which three sociocultural factors (i.e., internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, and desire for status) were associated with two attraction outcome variables (i.e., dating preferences, physical attraction) across four racial categories of men: Asian men, Black men, Latino men, and White men. Cross-sectional data were collected from a sample of 207 Asian American women who completed an online survey. Path analyses showed that internalized racism was associated with stronger dating preference toward White men and weaker dating preference and physical attraction to Asian men. Resistance and empowerment were associated with stronger dating preference for Black and Latino men as well as stronger physical attraction toward Asian, Black, and Latino men. Desire for status was negatively associated with a preference for dating Black men. The results of our study emphasize the importance of considering racially relevant factors that may be associated with Asian American women's racialized dating and physical attraction preferences. Implications related to addressing internalized racism and emphasizing the strengths of Asian American women are discussed.

Keywords Asian American women · Romantic relationships · Physical attraction · Desirability · Dating preferences · Resistance · Empowerment · Internalized racism

Over the past two decades, interest in Asian American women's racialized dating patterns has grown within both academic and public spheres. Most studies investigating Asian American women's dating patterns have examined their online dating profiles. This research has found that Asian American women prefer to date White men over men of color, and they are less likely than Asian American men to want to date a fellow Asian American (Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). Furthermore, only 32% of Asian

American women expressed a willingness to date a Black man and only 45.9% expressed a willingness to date a Latino man (Hwang, 2013). While these studies describe some patterns of Asian American women's racialized dating preferences, they do not consider what racially relevant sociocultural factors may motivate these preferences.

It is important to understand Asian American women's dating and physical attraction preferences given that the coupling of Asian American women with White men may reify racial hierarchies with white men as the dominant group within the United States and Asian American women as a subordinate group (Nemoto, 2006; Qian & Lichter, 2007). For example, in past qualitative research Asian American women have reported a desire to date White men for the sake of economic security, as well as to assimilate into White American society, even if their White male partners engaged in racial fetishization of Asian women (Nemoto, 2006). This preference may promote stereotypes of Asian American men as undesirable and perpetually foreign (Wong

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& McCullough, 2021) and Black and Latino men as inferior to white men (Casalheira & Smith, 2020). Furthermore, Asian American women face gendered racism (Gamst et al., 2023), or experiences of discrimination that are based upon the intersections of their race and gender, which contributes to their disempowerment and negative self-worth within the United States (Ahn et al., 2022). More specifically, Asian American women report that gendered racism attempts to silence their voices and force them into acting submissive and passive (Ahn et al., 2022). Thus, forming a romantic relationship with someone holds more social power may help to mitigate this felt disempowerment. Some Asian American women have expressed interest in dating White men over Asian men because they view white men as “more confident” and “better looking” (Washington Educational Telecommunications Association, 2021). Asian American women may also witness and engage with a preponderance of media that portrays White people as love interests and receiving messages suggesting they lack beauty compared to white women (King & Iwamoto, 2022; Silvestrini, 2020), which may motivate a desire to date White men to regain a sense of self-worth and cope with internalized racism.

At the same time, Asian American women dating White men have received misogynistic, hateful commentary from some Asian American men who criticize them for dating White men (Yam, 2020). Other Asian American women have shared their journeys about how unlearning internalized racism has helped them view Asian American men as well as other men of color as attractive, instead of only viewing White men as attractive (Spiegel, 2019; Sun, 2015). These anecdotal accounts highlight the necessity for empirical research that provides a nuanced view of Asian American women’s dating preferences and racialized attraction. As opposed to homogenizing all Asian American women and their preferences, this study examines three distinct socio-cultural factors that may affect their attraction toward Asian, Black, Latino, and White men: internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, and desire for status.

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism is one sociocultural factor that may influence Asian American women’s racialized dating and physical attraction preferences. Internalized racism is conceptualized as the process by which the oppressive actions and beliefs of white supremacy are accepted and thought of as true by people of color (David, 2013). Internalized racism can consist of endorsing stereotypes about one’s racial group, self-hatred about one’s race, and viewing the culture and actions of White people as the norm while considering the customs and behaviors of one’s own racial group as backward or foreign (Bailey et al., 2011).

The first validated quantitative measure to assess internalized racism among Asian American adults, the Internalized Racism in Asian Americans Scale (IRAAS), was published in 2017 (Choi et al., 2017). Since then, studies have demonstrated that internalized racism is associated with several negative health outcomes among Asian American adults, including depressive symptoms, disordered eating, psychological stress, and somatic symptoms (Choi et al., 2017; Le et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2022). However, even prior to the IRAAS’s publication, scholars examined internalized racism among Asian American adults with diverse methods. For example, Chou and Feagin (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with 43 Asian American adults and found that participants who struggled with accepting their race as Asian Americans attempted to alter their physical appearance to fit Eurocentric features, and adjusted their behavior to assimilate to whiteness to avoid feeling othered.

Hypergamity theory provides a framework for understanding how internalized racism may be associated with Asian American women’s dating preferences. This theory, traditionally examined within the framework of socioeconomic status, states that human relationships and choices are influenced by social power, more specifically that people may choose to form intimate relationships with people with equal or greater social power than them (Davis, 1941; Homans, 1958). Specifically, this theory suggests that people may marry or date someone who has more power through higher socioeconomic status, educational status, etc. (Davis, 1941), which can be applied to examining internalized racism and dating preferences among Asian American women. As Asian American women are racially minoritized in the United States, when they experience racism and internalize negative messages about their racial group, it is possible they may choose to date someone with more social power to improve their social status. By examining constructs such as race and internalized racism through the lens of hypergamity theory (Hwang, 2013), we aim to understand whether internalized racism may motivate Asian American women to view White men as more attractive and Asian men as less attractive. Asian American women with increased internalized racism may adopt the greater American white supremacist view of Asian men as unattractive and white men as the standard of beauty (Keum et al., 2023; Liao et al., 2020). For example, queer Asian American men with higher internalized racism expressed a greater preference for dating White men and a lower preference for dating Asian American men (Le & Kler, 2022).

Resistance and Empowerment Against Racism

In addition to examining internalized racism, it is also important to consider strengths-based factors that may be associated with Asian American women’s racialized

dating experiences. One such factor is resistance and empowerment against racism (henceforth referred to as “resistance and empowerment”). Resistance and empowerment are conceptualized as the extent to which people of color actively challenge racism in a way that extends beyond managing or coping with their own personal experience of racism (Suyemoto et al., 2022). Examples of resistance and empowerment include participating in activities or organizations that seek to dismantle racism, as well as confronting people who perpetuate racism in interpersonal contexts. Resistance and empowerment have been positively associated with racial collective self-esteem and active coping and instrumental support among a large sample of adults of color living in the United States (Suyemoto et al., 2022). Resistance and empowerment have also been positively associated with self-efficacy among queer Asian American men (Le & Kler, 2022). Resistance and empowerment may be of particular importance to examine among Asian American women, as they may serve as a means of countering racist and sexist stereotypes of Asian American women as passive, submissive, and exotic (Ahn et al., 2022) by highlighting their agency and autonomy within an oppressive system.

Resistance and empowerment may be associated with Asian American women’s racialized dating preferences in several ways. Asian American women who engage in more resistance and empowerment may be less likely to feel compelled by or attracted to the white beauty standard in the United States (Chopra, 2021) and thus may not find White men more attractive or prefer a White dating partner. It is possible that Asian American women who practice more resistance and empowerment more often find themselves in community with men of color who also take action to fight racism, providing more opportunities for interpersonal contact and attraction to form (Lee et al., 2020); perhaps advocating for dismantling racism also portends seeing the beauty in men of color (Le et al., 2022). This hypothesis aligns with the only other study to our knowledge that has examined resistance and empowerment in relation to dating preferences. Le and Kler (2022) found that among queer Asian American men, those who endorsed higher rates of resistance and empowerment were less likely to report a white dating preference and more open to dating men of any race. Thus, Asian American women who engage in more resistance and empowerment may also exhibit a stronger dating preference and physical attraction toward Asian, Black, and Latino men. To our knowledge, the present study is the first to investigate the association between strengths-based variables, in the form of resistance and empowerment, and racialized dating preferences among Asian American women.

Desire for Status

Desire for status may serve as another sociocultural factor that is associated with Asian American women’s racialized dating and physical attraction preferences. Past experimental research suggests that both heterosexual women and gay men may be drawn to dating profiles that display markers of high status (Ha et al., 2012). Some researchers posit that heterosexual women may be drawn to date men with higher status because within a capitalist and patriarchal society, women are socialized to prioritize a male partner who may be able to support them financially (Lips & Lawson, 2009). However, one limitation of these studies includes that they assume that most women do value status as opposed to examining desire for status as a malleable feature that women may differ on. Furthermore, to our knowledge several studies examining social status and dating preferences include predominantly White samples (Ha et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018), leaving a gap in the literature regarding how desire for social status affects Asian American women’s racialized dating and physical attraction preferences.

Further, social status may intersect with race with respect to Asian American women’s racialized dating and physical attraction preferences. For example, Asian American women report receiving messages from their families that they should either date an Asian American man or a White man (Ahn et al., 2022). This implicit exclusion of Black and Latino men may stem both from anti-Black messaging that some Asian Americans hear from their parents (Atkin & Ahn, 2022) as well as the prevalence of colorism within Asian American communities, where lighter skin is often viewed as more attractive (Le et al., 2022). This preference for lighter skin over darker skin may stem from a history of colonization where those with lighter skin received preferential treatment from colonizers (e.g., India, Vietnam, the Philippines; Hunter, 2008), or from Asian societies where those with lighter skin were viewed as the wealthier class and those with darker skin were viewed as laborers or lower social class (e.g., Japan and Korea; Rondilla & Spickard, 2007). Thus, even though Asian American women report relatively high monetary earnings compared to other racial groups of women (Hegewisch, 2023), anti-Black and colorist messaging from within the Asian community and the broader United States may negatively affect their perceptions of Black and Latino men specifically (Harvey et al., 2017; Navata et al., 2023). It is possible that Asian American women with a greater desire for status may be less likely to express an interest in dating or physical attraction to Black or Latino men based on the assumption that because of their skin color, these men do not possess sufficient social capital compared to Asian and White men (Ahn et al., 2022).

Current Study

The present study thus aims to examine sociocultural factors related to Asian American women's racial dating and physical attraction preferences. Among our sample of Asian American women, we examined the associations between three independent variables (i.e., internalized racism, resistance and empowerment, and desire for status) and two outcome variables (i.e., dating preference and physical attraction) for four racial groups of men: Asian men, Black men, Latino men, and White men. Based on prior research (Le & Kler, 2022; Tsunokai et al., 2014) and the lived experiences of Asian American women who have shared their stories online (Spiegel, 2019; Sun, 2015), we hypothesized that internalized racism would be positively associated with a dating preference to White men (H1a) and negatively associated for Asian men (H1b). We hypothesized similar findings for physical attraction, such that participants with greater internalized racism would report greater attraction to White men (H1c) and less attraction to Asian men (H1d). Second, we further hypothesized that resistance and empowerment would be associated with an increased dating preference toward Asian (H2a), Black (H2b), and Latino men (H2c), whereas resistance and empowerment would be negatively associated with a dating preference for White men (H2d). Relatedly, we hypothesized that resistance and empowerment would be associated with greater physical attraction toward Asian (H2e), Black (H2f), and Latino men (H2g), and less physical attraction towards White men (H2h). Finally, we hypothesized that increased desire for status would be negatively associated with a dating preference toward Black (H3a) and Latino men (H3b), whereas they would be positively associated with a dating preference for Asian (H3c) and White men (H3d). In addition, we hypothesized that desire for status would be associated with less physical attraction toward Black (H3e) and Latino (H3f) men and greater physical attraction toward Asian (H3g) and White men (H3h).

Method

Procedures

All procedures for the present study received approval from the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board took place remotely. Asian American women aged 18 and over were recruited through several online distribution channels relevant to Asian American women. These channels included social media websites (e.g., specific Facebook groups) and email listservs (e.g., organizations centering Asian American women). Upon accessing the

online survey hosted through Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT), participants were screened to ensure that they met the following criteria: age 18 or over, identification as an Asian American woman, and currently living in the United States. After providing informed consent, participants then responded to several questionnaires assessing the study's primary variables related to race, dating, and physical attraction preferences. Three attention check items were also embedded in the survey (e.g., "For this item, please select 'Always'.") After completing the survey, participants were offered the opportunity to join a raffle to win one of four \$50.00 USD Visa gift cards. Participants who were undergraduate students at the authors' home institution were offered the chance to either join this raffle or to obtain course credit for their time in taking the survey. The present study is part of a larger dataset that examined Asian American women's health behaviors.

Participants

Three hundred and six individuals accessed the online survey. Of those, 12 did not meet the eligibility criteria, 46 only provided informed consent and did not click to the following pages, 28 participants did not complete any of the survey's questionnaires, eight participants answered two or more of the validity check questions incorrectly, and five participants were not shown the dating and physical attraction questions because they indicated a women-loving-women sexual orientation and the present study specifically examines attraction to men. The exclusion of these 99 responses resulted in a final sample size of 207 Asian American women. Iacobucci (2010) notes that a sample size of 200 is adequate for a path analytic model.

Participants' ages ranged from 18–56 ($M = 22.62$, $SD = 6.58$). Participants' ethnicities (could choose more than one) included Chinese ($n = 45$, 21.2%), Indian ($n = 34$, 16.0%), Filipina ($n = 29$, 13.7%), Multiracial or Multiethnic ($n = 25$, 11.8%), Korean ($n = 19$, 9.0%), Vietnamese ($n = 20$, 9.4%), Taiwanese ($n = 12$, 5.7%), Japanese ($n = 6$, 2.8%), an option not listed ($n = 15$, 7.1%), and 2.0% or less of the sample each identified as Hmong, Cambodian, Thai, Bangladeshi, or Indonesian. In terms of family's total yearly income, 17 (8%) reported an income of \$24,999 or less, 32 (15.1%) reported an income between \$25,000 to \$49,999, 44 (20.7%) reported an income between \$50,000 to \$99,999, 90 (42.5%) reported an income of \$100,000 or more, 28 (13.2%) said they were unsure of their income, and one participant (0.5%) did not answer. In terms of educational attainment, 42 (19.8%) of participants received a high school diploma, 84 (39.6%) reported completing some college, 50 (23.6%) indicated having earned a college degree, 35 (16.5%) reported having a professional or graduate degree, and one participant (0.5%) did not answer.

Study Variables

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism was measured using the Internalized Racism in Asian Americans Scale (IRAAS; Choi et al., 2017). The IRAAS assesses the extent to which Asian Americans endorse negative attitudes and beliefs about being Asian American. The scale contains 14 items scored on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include “Lighter skin is generally more attractive than darker skin” and “I sometimes wish I weren’t Asian.” Individual responses to items were summed, such that higher scores indicated greater internalized racism. Convergent validity has been demonstrated through negative correlations with collective racial identity self-esteem (Choi et al., 2017). The scale has demonstrated adequate reliability in past research with Asian American women (Cronbach’s alpha = .83; Cheng, 2023). Cronbach’s alpha in the present study was .86.

Resistance and Empowerment Against Racism

Resistance and empowerment against racism was measured using the Resistance and Empowerment against Racism scale (REAR; Suyemoto et al., 2022). This scale assesses the extent to which participants take tangible action against racist oppression. The scale contains 26 items that are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*rarely*) to 5 (*almost always*). Sample items include “I create or lead activities or organizations that aim to reduce or resist racial discrimination” and “I share or promote art, music, or poetry created by others that is about race or racial discrimination.” Responses to items were summed and higher scores indicated greater resistance and empowerment against racism. The scale has shown convergent validity through negative associations with colorblind racial attitudes and positive associations with racial collective self-esteem and active coping (Suyemoto et al., 2022). The scale has shown adequate reliability in a sample of 953 adults of color (e.g., Asian, Black, Latinx, and Native Americans) (Cronbach’s alpha = .96; Suyemoto et al., 2022) and in a sample of queer Asian American men (Cronbach’s alpha = .95; Le & Kler, 2022). Cronbach’s alpha in the present study was .94.

Desire for Status

Desire for status was measured using the following three items: “I would like to be well-regarded,” “I want to have high status in society,” and “One of my goals in life is to be a person of high standing.” These three items were used to assess the extent to which individuals seek status in society by Wang et al., (2020). Participants responded to each item

on a 7-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores indicated greater desire for status. Convergent validity was shown in the original study that used these items through positive correlations with subjective social status (Wang et al., 2020). Cronbach’s alpha in the present study was .86.

Dating Preferences

Participants’ racialized dating preferences were measured using the following two items for each of the four racial categories: “Everything else being equal, how likely would you be to consider a (Asian/Black/Latino/White) man as a dating partner?” and “Everything else being equal, how interested would you feel in dating a (Asian/Black/Latino/White) man?” These items were modestly revised from Liu et al. (1995). Both items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*) for the first question and from 1 (*not at all interested*) to 7 (*extremely interested*) for the second question. Higher scores indicated greater interest in the dating partner. Cronbach’s alpha in the original study ranged from .87 to .93. Cronbach’s alpha in the present study for the Asian, Black, Latino, and White dating preferences were .95, .95, .96, and .97, respectively.

Physical Attractiveness

Participants’ perceptions of Asian, Black, Latino, and White men’s physical attractiveness were assessed using the following three items from Liu et al. (1995): “How physically attractive do you find (Asian/Black/Latino/White) men?”; “How desirable do you find (Asian/Black/Latino/White) men?”; and “How sexually appealing do you find (Asian/Black/Latino/White) men?” Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) with higher scores indicating greater perceived physical attractiveness. Cronbach’s alpha in the original study ranged from .94 to .95. Cronbach’s alpha in the present study for participants’ perceptions of Asian, Black, Latino, and White men’s physical attractiveness were .95, .94, .97, and .94, respectively.

Data Analytic Plan

First, we used SPSS v.27 to examine descriptive statistics for the study’s main variables. Next, we examined bivariate correlations with all study variables. We controlled for any demographic variables that were significantly correlated with any of the outcome variables in analyses for that specific outcome variable, as done in previous research related to Asian American women’s gendered and racialized

experiences (Le et al., 2020). For the main analyses, we used Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to examine whether internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, and desire for status were related to 1) racialized dating preferences and 2) racialized physical attractiveness among Asian American women. Model fit was examined using the following indices: Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), root mean square error of approximately (RMSEA), and standardized root mean residual (SRMR). Hu and Bentler (1999) suggest the following indices: TLI and CFI cutoff of .95, SRMR cutoff of .08, and a cutoff value close to .06 for RMSEA. We used the maximum likelihood robust estimation (MLR) to account for missing data. We then examined the direct effects of each pathway to examine whether there were links between the independent variables and each outcome variable.

Results

Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the present study’s main variables of interest and educational attainment are presented in Table 1. On average, participants were most likely to desire dating Asian men ($M=12.18$), followed by Latino ($M=9.71$), Black ($M=9.43$), and White men ($M=8.53$). Participants were also most attracted to Asian men ($M=16.65$), then Black ($M=14.21$), Latino ($M=14.15$), and White men ($M=13.45$). We conducted paired samples t-tests among dating preferences and physical attraction preferences. Participants were less likely to

report a desire to date White men compared to Asian men, $t(206)=-9.86, p<.001$, White men compared to Black men, $t(206)=-2.56, p=.01$, and White men compared to Latino men, $t(206)=-3.51, p<.001$. On the other hand, participants were more likely to desire dating Asian men compared to Black men, $t(206)=10.75, p<.001$, and Asian men compared to Latino men, $t(206)=9.75, p<.001$. However, there were no significant differences between desire to date Black and Latino men, $t(206)=-1.72, p=.087$. In terms of physical attraction, participants indicated more physical attraction to Asian men compared to White men, $t(206)=7.10, p<.001$, Asian men compared to Black men, $t(206)=7.10, p<.001$, and Asian men compared to Latino men, $t(206)=7.16, p<.001$. However, there were no significant differences in participants’ attraction towards White and Black men, $t(206)=-1.87, p=.064$, White and Latino men, $t(206)=-1.72, p=.09$, and Latino and Black men, $t(206)=-0.27, p=.79$.

Of the demographic variables, we ran correlations between educational attainment, age, and income with the study’s outcome variables. Educational attainment was not correlated with a desire to date a White man ($r=-.09$), Asian man ($r=.01$), or Black man ($r=.07$), but it was correlated with a desire to date a Latino man ($r=.15^*$). There were also no significant correlations between educational attainment and physical attraction towards Asian ($r=.10$), white ($r=-.11$), Black ($r=.01$), and Latino men ($r=.09$). Age was not correlated with a desire to date a White man ($r=-.05$), Asian man ($r=-.06$), Black man ($r=-.04$), or Latino man ($r=-.02$), as well as physical attraction towards Asian ($r=-.03$), White ($r=-.09$), Black ($r=-.09$), or Latino men ($r=-.08$). Lastly, income was not correlated with a desire

Table 1 Means, (Standard Deviation)s, and Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Int Racism	27.21 (9.08)	---											
2. Resist/ Empower	89.36 (19.38)	-.35**	---										
3. Desire Status	16.44 (3.62)	.08	-.05	---									
4. Date Asian	12.18 (2.26)	-.22**	.20**	-.01	---								
5. Date Black	9.43 (3.29)	-.10	.37**	-.16*	.16*	---							
6. Date Latino	9.70 (3.24)	-.05	.27**	-.14*	.15*	.75**	---						
7. Date White	8.53 (4.28)	.23**	-.20**	.07	-.26**	.13	.20**	---					
8. Attract Asian	16.65 (3.80)	-.32**	.31**	-.09	.69**	.16*	.15*	-.31**	---				
9. Attract Black	14.21 (4.27)	-.21**	.39**	-.09	.09	.74**	.57**	.05	.26**	---			
10. Attract Latino	14.15 (4.45)	-.16**	.35**	-.09	.04	.55**	.77**	.07	.27**	.74**	---		
11. Attract White	13.45 (4.88)	.07	-.10	.07	-.21**	.07	.13	.79**	-.10	.18**	.21**	---	
12. Education	2.37 (.98)	.004	.15*	-.20**	.01	.07	.15*	-.09	.09	.01	.09	-.11	---

Note. Date Asian=preference for dating Asian men; Date Black=preference for dating Black men; Date Latino=preference for dating Latino men; Date White=preference for dating White men; Attract Asian=perceived physical attractiveness of Asian men; Attract Black=perceived physical attractiveness of Black men; Attract Latino=perceived physical attractiveness of Latino men; Attract White=perceived physical attractiveness of White men.

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$.

to date White ($r = .14$), Asian ($r = .02$), Black ($r = .10$), and Latino men ($r = .06$), as well as physical attraction towards Asian ($r = -.10$), White ($r = .14$), Black ($r = .06$), and Latino men ($r = -.02$). In summary, only educational attainment was significantly correlated with any of the outcome variables for dating preferences (all other p -values $> .05$); it is the sole demographic variable included in Table 1 for that reason.

Path Analyses

While fit indices are used to assess model fit, the models were just identified, suggesting that the number of parameters was equal to the number of known values (Kenny, 2011; Kline, 2005). Thus, rather than interpreting model fit, direct effects of each pathway were examined. Our first model examined whether internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, and desire for status were related to dating preferences toward racially different male targets, while controlling for educational attainment. We controlled for educational attainment in this analysis given that educational attainment was positively correlated with a Latino dating preference, as done in past research centering Asian American women (Le et al., 2020). In terms of the R^2 , the variables accounted for 7% of the variance in the White dating preference score, 7% of the variance in the Asian dating preference score, 16% of the variance in the Black dating preference score, and 10% of the variance in the Latino dating preference score. Next, the second model examined whether the same independent variables (internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, and desire for status) were associated with perceived physical attractiveness of these targets. We did not add any control variables in this model given that they were not associated with the outcome variables. In this model, the predictors accounted for 15% of the variance in attraction towards Asian men ($R^2 = .15$), 2% of the variance in attraction towards White men ($R^2 = .02$), 16% of the variance in attraction towards Black men ($R^2 = .16$), and 13% of the variance in attraction towards Latino men ($R^2 = .13$).

In line with H1a and H1b, respectively, internalized racism was positively associated with a White dating preference ($\beta = 0.17, p = .014$) and negatively associated with an Asian dating preference ($\beta = -0.17, p = .022$). However, in contrast to H1c, internalized racism was not associated with physical attraction towards White men ($\beta = -.03, p = .67$). In line with H1d, internalized racism was negatively associated with the perception of Asian men as attractive ($\beta = -0.23, p = .001$). In addition, internalized racism was not associated with any out of outcome variables related to Black or Latino men (all p -values $> .05$).

Some of our hypotheses were partially supported with resistance and empowerment and our outcome variables. Specifically, in line with H2b and H2c, respectively,

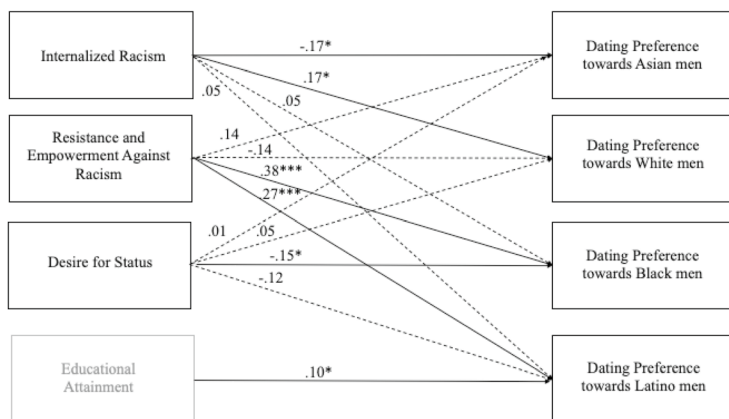
resistance and empowerment was positively associated with Black ($\beta = 0.37, p < .001$) and Latino ($\beta = 0.27, p < .001$) dating preferences. In contrast to our hypotheses, resistance and empowerment was not linked to an Asian (H2a, $\beta = 0.14, p = .055$) and White dating preference (H2d, $\beta = -.14, p = .06$). In terms of physical attraction, our hypotheses were mostly supported such that resistance and empowerment was positively associated with finding Asian (H2e, $\beta = 0.23, p = .001$), Black (H2f, $\beta = 0.35, p < .001$), and Latino men (H2g, $\beta = 0.33, p < .001$) physically attractive. However, resistance and empowerment was not correlated with finding White men physically attractive (H2h, $\beta = -.09, p = .26$).

Finally, our hypotheses were partially supported when examining desire for status and dating preferences. As hypothesized (H3a), desire for status was negatively associated with a Black dating preference ($\beta = -.15, p = .034$). In contrast to our hypotheses, desire for status was not associated with a Latino (H3b, $\beta = -.12, p = .09$), Asian (H3c, $\beta = 0.01, p = .88$), or White dating preference (H3d, $\beta = 0.5, p = .44$). Lastly, hypotheses H3e – H3h were unsupported in that desire for status was not associated with any of the physical attraction outcome variables (all $ps > .05$) (Figs. 1 and 2).

Discussion

While previous studies have examined Asian American adults' online racialized dating preferences (Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014), we extend the literature by examining sociocultural factors related to physical attractiveness and dating preferences among a sample of Asian American women. Specifically, we examined whether internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, and desire for status among Asian American women are associated with their dating preferences and physical attraction towards Asian, Black, Latino, and White men.

First, in line with our hypotheses, we found that internalized racism was associated with a stronger preference for dating a White man but a weaker preference for dating Asian men and perceiving Asian men as attractive. This is in line with previous research that found that Asian women were more willing to date White men than Asian men (Hwang, 2013) and hypergamy theory which states that people choose intimate relationships based on cost-benefits analyses (Davis, 1941; Homans, 1958). As Asian American women endorse more dominant views of white supremacy and inferiority of people of color (Trieu, 2019), they may prefer to date White men to be in closer proximity to Whiteness and privilege by receiving proxy privilege (Liu, 2017). In addition, studies have theorized and demonstrated the prevalence of stereotypes that Asian American men are less desirable, less attractive, and sexually/romantically inadequate (Liu et al., 2018; Wong & McCullough, 2021; Wong et al., 2012).



Note. Significant pathways are portrayed with bolded lines, whereas nonsignificant pathways are portrayed with dotted lines. Educational Attainment was used as a control variable with the dating preference towards Latino men variable. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

Fig. 1 Sociocultural Factors Predicting Racialized Dating Preferences

Thus, as Asian American women internalize stereotypes about their own racial group, including the stereotypes that are prescribed to Asian American men, they may be less likely to date Asian men and view them as less attractive.

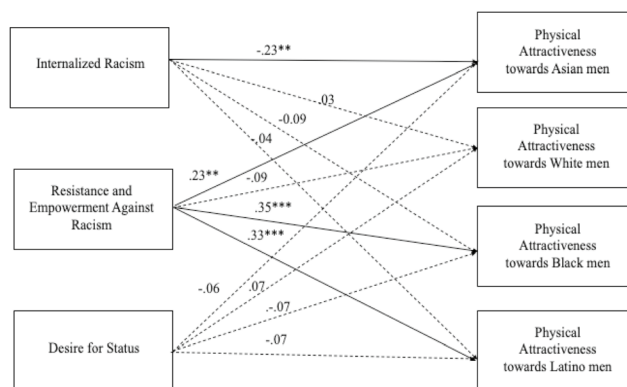
On the other hand, we also found that Asian American women who endorsed resistance and empowerment against racism were more likely to prefer to date Black and Latino men and be physically attracted to Black, Latino, and Asian men. As Asian American women endorse greater resistance and empowerment against racism, they may be more aware of systemic racism and take action to combat racism and feel a sense of agency (Suyemoto et al., 2022). Thus, as they may be aware of the racism that exists in dating, they may be more critical of the White beauty standard and more attracted to men of color. Asian American women with greater critical consciousness (Yoo et al., 2021) may actively challenge dominant racist narratives that they should prefer dating White men and may thus be more open to dating

Black and Latino men, who are often subject to colorism (Charles, 2021; Stockstill & Carson, 2022).

In addition, it is possible that by actively participating in organizations and spaces to fight racism, Asian American women may surround themselves with more men of color and in turn, be more physically attracted to men of color through greater exposure and contact. Interestingly, it is important to note that resistance and empowerment was related to greater physical attraction of Latino, Black, and Asian men, but it was only linked with dating preferences for Black and Latino men. While it is possible that Asian American women who challenge white supremacy are attracted to Asian American men, there may be other factors that these women consider in terms of dating Asian American men.

Finally, previous research has found that women are more likely than men to value social status and socioeconomic status in romantic partners (Regan et al., 2000; Townsend & Levy, 1990), and race and class differences

Fig. 2 Sociocultural Factors Predicting Racialized Patterns of Perceived Physical Attractiveness



Note. Significant pathways are portrayed with bolded lines, whereas nonsignificant pathways are portrayed with dotted lines. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

can be important considerations while dating for undergraduate students (McClintock, 2010). Research has found that Asian adolescents with lower socioeconomic status who interracially date are more likely to date Black adolescents than those with higher socioeconomic statuses (Wang & Kao, 2007). Our study extends this literature by finding that Asian American adult women who reported more desire for status were less likely to prefer dating Black men. One explanation for this is that Asian American women who want greater social status also endorse white supremacist views and may view Black men as inferior, especially due to the prevalence of colorism within the Asian American community (Le et al., 2022; Rondilla & Spickard, 2007). It is possible that Asian American women who desire status also have been explicitly told to not date Black men from their families (Ahn et al., 2022) or have internalized the model minority myth (Yi & Todd, 2021), contributing to anti-Black attitudes in dating. Furthermore, Asian American women may internalize broader cultural messages that place value on upward mobility narratives and minimize the role of racism in achieving professional success (Garrison et al., 2021), thus feeding into the model minority myth. Asian American women who have internalized the model minority myth may value upward economic and educational advancement and thus may view dating Black men as incongruent with these goals, given racist stereotypes of Black men as lazy and unintelligent (Murphy et al., 2020).

In addition to our main findings, it is interesting to note that not all sociocultural variables in the current study predicted dating preferences and physical attractiveness in the same manner. As seen in Table 1, while outcomes of physical attraction and dating may be related to one another, we examined them separately as they are distinct constructs. For example, Asian American women may be physically attracted to certain racial groups, yet still do not prefer to date them. In dating, women have a stronger preference than men for income and social status rather than physical attributes and sexual desirability (Hitsch et al., 2010; Regan et al., 2000). However, women prioritize physical attractiveness in short-term relationships (Li & Kenrick, 2006), but they may place more emphasis on personality characteristics for long-term dating (Regan et al., 2000). Thus, there may be additional factors that may further explain why some sociocultural factors were related to physical attractiveness and/or dating preferences that should be examined in future research.

Lastly, recent research has suggested that Asian American women prefer dating White romantic partners over their own race and other racial groups (Chappetta & Barth, 2022; Hwang, 2013). However, in our sample, Asian American women reported highest mean scores

for physical attraction and dating preferences for Asian American men and lowest scores for White men among the four racial groups. Most of our sample reported completing at least some higher education, and thus it is possible that our sample is more critically conscious through their learning of race and racism in college and endorse less racialized dating stereotypes (Osajima, 2007). It is also possible that there are other factors that influenced why our sample endorsed lower rates of physical attraction and dating preference for White men, such as experiences of discrimination or response bias. It is also possible that there are additional constructs that may predict racialized dating and physical attraction preferences, such as racial collective self-esteem, geographic location (Fisman et al., 2008; Tsunokai et al., 2014), and media consumption, that should be explored in future research. Experimental research may help extend and add increased internal validity to the present study's findings.

Finally, although we found that certain sociocultural factors may affect racialized dating and physical attraction preferences, it is important to note that these factors may not affect all Asian American women and that Asian American women have the agency and choice to determine their dating preferences and partners. Notably, our findings showed that Asian American women reported a stronger desire to date and physical attraction to Asian men compared to other racial groups of men. This finding contrasts with past research showing that Asian American women exhibit a stronger preference to date white men compared to other racial groups of men (Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). There are several possible explanations for this divergence from past research. First, it is possible that our recruitment methods may have affected the findings, such that one recruitment method we used was to email listservs of organizations centering Asian American women. Perhaps Asian American women who are engaged in organizations related to their racial and gender identities may be in similar racial justice organizing spaces with Asian men (Leigh et al., 2021) and perhaps view them as more datable or attractive. We also recruited Asian American female college students from a large university in the Mid-Atlantic region with a sizable number of Asian students, so perhaps our findings would be skewed differently if we recruited college students located in a more predominantly White area. Finally, some research has documented that over the past decade or so, Asian American men are being portrayed in more positive and attractive ways in popular media within the United States (Keum et al., 2023), so these more flattering portrayals may increase the rate in which Asian American women view Asian men as viable romantic and physical partners.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this is the first known study examining this specific set of sociocultural factors (internalized racism, resistance and empowerment against racism, desire for status) and their associations with physical attractiveness and dating preferences toward different racial groups of men among Asian American women, there are limitations. First, the study was cross-sectional which makes it difficult to understand the temporal ordering of variables. Future research might use a longitudinal approach to examine whether sociocultural factors at one time point influence dating preferences at a later point. In addition, while we examined Asian American women in the current study, we grouped all Asian American ethnicities under one category, despite the heterogeneity of the sample. Future research might examine specific Asian American ethnicities and dating preferences, as previous research has found that darker skinned Asians are more open to dating Black and Latinx individuals compared to lighter skinned Asians (Tsunokai et al., 2019). Although it is possible that there are different dating preferences based on specific ethnic subgroups, this study still advances the literature by examining sociocultural predictors of dating preferences specific to Asian American women. Third, while White, Latino, Black, and Asian are the largest racial groups in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), there are other racial groups (e.g., American Indian, Middle Eastern) that were not examined in the current study. Fourth, while we examined the outcomes of dating preferences and physical attractiveness, we did not examine short vs. long-term dating preferences. Thus, future research might consider examining physical attractiveness, short-term dating, and long-term dating as separate outcomes.

Practice Implications

The results of our study contain several important implications for practitioners and researchers at the intersection of race, power, and dating relationships and physical attraction. Our results highlight the importance of considering how factors such as internalized racism, resistance and empowerment, and social status affect dating and physical attraction, instead of considering these intimate relationships in a colorblind way and ignoring the influence of race (Eastwick et al., 2009). As modeled by Asian American women who have shared their stories in the public sphere (Spiegel, 2019; Sun, 2015), practitioners and interventionists may encourage Asian American women to self-reflect about how race and status affect whom they consider attractive and with whom they want to form romantic relationships. To combat

internalized racism, practitioners may also encourage Asian American women to seek out media that positively portrays Asian individuals (Kuo et al., 2022) and honors their strengths and histories as Asian Americans (Chopra, 2021). To increase resistance and empowerment, Asian American women may consider joining local or national organizations dedicated to fighting racism or engaging in activities in their day-to-day lives that dismantle racism (Suyemoto et al., 2022), while practicing mindful awareness of their boundaries and self-care.

Conclusion

Overall, our findings highlight how Asian American women's romantic and intimate desires may be shaped by internalized racism, resistance and empowerment, and desire for social status. Asian American women face gendered racial microaggressions and model minority stereotypes that produce internalized racism (Ahn et al., 2022; Juang et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2008). The current findings indicate that internalized racism may be a factor in shaping dating preferences toward white men over Asian men, whereas engagement in activities around resistance and empowerment against racism may shape dating preferences toward men of color. Our study underscores the robust psychological factors that may affect Asian American women's dating preferences at the intersection of racial power, privilege, and oppression.

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Data Availability The data used in this study are available from the first author upon reasonable request.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The authors attest that they have no conflicts of interest. All participants who partook in this study provided informed consent.

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