

Mobile Dating Apps and Racial Preferencing Insights: Exploring Self-Reported Racial Preferences and Behavioral Racial Preferences Among Gay Men Using Jack'd

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This study quantitatively explored racial preferencing behavior among American and Australian men on Jack'd, a gay dating app. Self-reported racial preferences found on users' written profiles were compared with behavioral racial preferences accessed through the app's "insight" feature, representing users' actual behaviors. Data of 705 users from Los Angeles and 463 users from Sydney were collected. Findings show that while inclusionary racial preferencing was more prevalent than exclusionary racial preferencing, expressions of racial preference on profiles were uncommon overall. Looking at the behavioral data, the study reveals that Asian men were the most preferred mates among Asian and White users in both cities, whereas Black men were the most preferred among Black and Hispanic users in Los Angeles. Together, these findings suggest that some forms of racial hierarchies still operate in terms of actual behaviors on Jack'd. We argue that these findings have implications for the ways that gay dating apps approach the challenges of developing inclusive services.

Keywords: dating apps, sexual racism, racial preferences, gay men, men who have sex with men

While mobile dating apps offer exceptional convenience to gay men looking for romance, casual sex, and other forms of connection, not all users have positive experiences on these platforms. In particular, people of color have reported experiencing discriminatory treatment on apps such as Grindr. User profiles stating "No Blacks" and "No Asians" on gay men's dating apps have been so common, in fact, that journalists, pop-culture producers, and academics have repeatedly spotlighted racial discrimination on these

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Date submitted: 2020-10-27

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platforms (Bielski, 2012; Conner, 2019; Shield, 2018). Studies have shown that racial discrimination faced by racial minorities among gay communities online is associated with negative psychological symptoms, such as decreased self-esteem, anxiety, depression, lower life satisfaction, and even suicidal thoughts (Hidalgo, Layland, Kubicek, & Kipke, 2020; Thai, 2019). As a response to this toxic environment, Grindr, the most widely used Western mobile dating app for gay men, launched the “Kindr” campaign in September 2018, highlighting its “zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and abusive behavior” (Grindr, 2019, para. 3). In 2019, Jack’d, another popular dating app among gay men, followed suit, updating its community guidelines to include a new “No Hate” policy: “We have a zero tolerance policy toward content that promotes or condones violence, hate, or discrimination based on things like race, ethnicity, disability, age, gender identity, HIV status, nationality, or religion” (Jack’d, 2020a, “Conduct,” para. 3).

Both sets of guidelines, however, simultaneously left considerable leeway for users to make statements that might stereotype people on racial grounds, by encouraging users to “freely and authentically be themselves” (Jack’d, 2020a, “Conduct,” para. 1) or to make positive statements about their preferences in profile text—“You’re free to express your preferences, but we’d rather hear about what you’re into, not what you aren’t” (Grindr, 2019, para. 4).

In this study, we explore racial preferencing behaviors on Jack’d, an app that markets itself as being “the most diverse community for gay, bi, trans, and queer people around the globe” (Jack’d, 2020b, para. 1). We look at both *self-reported racial preference* (i.e., what users have stated on their profiles) and *behavioral racial preference* (i.e., whom users have expressed an interest in via the Jack’d “interested” function) of Jack’d users in Los Angeles, U.S., and in Sydney, Australia. These two cities were selected because of their high levels of racial diversity compared with other cities in their respective countries (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Bernardo, 2018). Due to their different migration histories and racial composition, a straightforward comparison of these two cities is not plausible. However, a study on racial preferencing in online dating consisting of multiple regions allows us to access more valuable insights about this social phenomenon.

We use *racial preferencing behaviors* instead of *sexual racism* or *racialized sexual discrimination* (Wade & Harper, 2020) in the title of this article as well as in our descriptions of the behaviors of Jack’d users because racial preferencing behaviors refer to a broader, more generic set of behaviors than what sexual racism encompasses. When the concept of sexual racism was first developed, it referred to “the sexual rejection of the racial minority, the conscious attempt on the part of the majority to prevent interracial cohabitation” (Stember, 1976, p. xi). A more recent definition provided by Orne (2017) defines sexual racism as “a system of racial oppression, shaping an individual’s partner choices to privilege whites and harm people of color” (p. 67). These definitions suggest power imbalances where marginalized groups (i.e., people of color) suffer from racist or discriminatory behaviors more adversely than dominant groups do, even if these latter groups may encounter the same type of racist or discriminatory behaviors. In this article, we are dealing with situations including members of racial minorities expressing preferences for their own group or rejecting members of racial majorities, which are not conceptually covered by sexual racism. By adopting the term *racial preferencing behaviors* we are in no way claiming that racial preferencing behaviors are merely products of personal taste or seeking to downplay the structural conditions behind these preferences (Callander, Newman, & Holt, 2015).

In the following section, we provide an overview of literature and empirical research of sexual racism. We particularly focus on sexual racism among gay men in digital spaces and online dating. Then, we explain our data collection and coding procedures. Our results indicate that systematic racial preferences exist at both the self-report and behavioral levels on Jack'd. We conclude by discussing our results in the light of sexual racism and platform design.

Sexual Racism Among Gay Men in Digital Spaces and Online Dating

Sexual racism is related to deep-seated racial hierarchy. In the context of the United States, due to the different waves of immigration and the role of slavery in early history, there exists a racial hierarchy in which Whites occupy the upper stratum of society and Blacks the lower stratum. In this binary approach to race, the terms "Whites" and "Blacks" are used as unifying descriptors of these respective races, flattening all internal heterogeneity within "Whites" and "Blacks." This binary mode of race (e.g., White versus Black) has been superseded by a tripartite model of race. Bonilla-Silva (2004) argues that, "The US is developing a tri-racial system with 'Whites' at the top, an intermediary group of 'honorary Whites' . . . and a non-White group or the 'collective Black' at the bottom" (p. 224). By "honorary Whites" Bonilla-Silva (2004) refers to Latinos, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans (p. 224). The emergence of "honorary Whites," rather than disrupting the preestablished hierarchy between "Whites" and "Blacks," reinforces the dominant position of the former and the subordinate position of the latter because they serve as a buffer for racial conflicts.

Racial hierarchies of sexual desirability have also been shown to operate in Australia, where an equally complicated history of race relations has ensured the celebration of White sexuality above that of Asians (Ayers, 2000) and Indigenous Australians¹ (King, 2009). Indeed, as Raj (2011) has noted, due to an "inherited system of privileges" (p. 7), a global hegemony of whiteness operates such that, even in environments where Whites are not the numerical majority, racial and affective desire manifest in White partners being most highly sought after.

Building on foundational studies of race on the Internet (e.g., Brock, 2012, 2020; Chun, 2006; Everett, 2009; Nakamura, 2002, 2008) and on existing queer digital dating scholarship (e.g., Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2105; Light, 2007; Mowlabocus, 2010), a growing body of research shows that such hierarchies of sexual desirability are deeply reflected in same-sex digital dating contexts. In one of the earliest studies looking at racial preference in online dating, Phua and Kaufman (2003) found that among men-seeking-men via Internet personal ads, White and Asian men most often requested Whites only; Hispanic men most often requested a category called "mixed preference" (which included both Whites and

¹ In the Australian context, Indigenous people have historically been referred to as "Black." The term "blackfella" (a combination of the words "black" and "fellow" in the Australian English accent), for example, is sometimes used by Indigenous Australians to refer to themselves. However, when used by non-Indigenous people, this term is considered offensive (Australians Together, 2020). With the more recent arrival of African and other immigrants to Australia, those who might now self-identify as "Black" Australians could also include people from Africa, the South Sea Islands, Papua New Guinea, Jamaica, and more.

their own race; p. 986); and Black men most often requested their own race only.² Similarly, examining the online dating preferences of Asian Americans, Tsunokai, McGrath, and Kavanagh (2014) found that among their study's gay male participants, Whites were the most popular match, followed by Asians, Hispanics, and, lastly, Blacks, while Smith and Morales's (2018) study of racial construction among men who used gay dating website Adam4Adam found that participants' desires mapped directly onto Bonilla-Silva's (2004) theory of tri-racial stratification. A more recent study examining the matching preferences of Grindr users in Singapore notes that minority groups in this multiracial East Asian society are equally pigeonholed into "racial categories tethered to stereotypes" (Ang, Tan, & Lou, 2021, p. 13) that hierarchize desire.

Further complicating racial hierarchies is the gendered nature of race (Kandaswamy, 2012; Omi & Winant, 1994). For instance, in media, Black men are often portrayed as hypermasculine and Asian men as lacking masculinity (Collins, 2004; Phua, 2007). Because masculinity is still valued over femininity in contemporary Western cultures, Asian men in these contexts are generally least preferred by women (Feliciano, Robnett, & Komaie, 2009) and either rejected or fetishized as feminine, submissive partners in gay male communities (Peng, 2013; Poon & Ho, 2008). Conversely, the hypersexualized, dominating image of Black men, in terms of its masculine semiotics, can render Black men highly desirable within gay communities (Reeser, 2010). In addition to illustrating the existence of racial hierarchies, studies of sexual racism in same-sex dating contexts therefore frequently point out that racial minorities are often caught between the dichotomous experiences of fetishization and aversion (McGlotten, 2013; Raj, 2011; Shield, 2019), both of which render individual identities subservient to racial stereotypes. In Smith and Morales's (2018) study, for example, Black informants said they were regularly presumed to be sexually assertive and that if they did not fit into these stereotypes, they would have difficulties finding non-Black sexual partners.

The ways that gay men in racial and ethnic minority groups interpret and respond to these kinds of experiences have also been a focal point of research around sexual racism in digital dating contexts. Writing during the early 2000s about the experience of being a gay Asian man in Australia, where he says an "unconscious fear of Asia is embedded within the Australian national identity," Ayers (2000) noted that he had internalized the hierarchies of desirability that permeate gay male communities and the stereotypes which underpin them, finding himself simply "not attracted to other Asian men" (p. 162). In the time since Ayers' writing, several studies have shown this phenomenon continues on, with minority users of same-sex digital dating tools displaying intragroup aversion and adjusting their behaviors in these contexts to distance themselves from their own racial and ethnic groupings in response to sexual racism. Han and Choi (2018), for example, have showed that gay Asian men in the United States understand that they are broadly perceived as passive and effeminate, and often do not find other gay Asian men attractive as a result. McCune (2014) has showed that Black men who have sex with men carefully police their own and others' Black male bodies in digital spaces in ways that align with already present judgement from White peers. More recently, Ang and colleagues' (2021) work illustrates how gay men from racial minorities in Singapore

² This observation is consistent with what scholars call the social alienation of Black communities from mainstream Western societies. In the United States, the historical separateness of Blacks from Whites has alienated the former from mainstream culture and encouraged them to develop their own unique culture (Glazer, 1993). It has also been found that Blacks are less likely to have interracial friendships and marriages as compared with other racial groups (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Quillian & Campbell, 2003).

attempt to increase their attractiveness on Grindr by strategically leveraging various aspects of cultural capital to compensate for and disavow their marginality. This behavior is reminiscent of attempts to pass as White that Gosine (2007) and Tsang (2000) documented in early digital queer spaces such as Bulletin Board Systems and on Gay.com. Given the perpetuation of racialized tropes in advertisements on dating sites (Plummer, 2007) and the inclusion of features (such as drop-down menus) that function as “active elements in the shaping of sexual practices” and attitudes (Race, 2015, p. 253), acceptance born of fatigue has also been shown to be a common response to sexual racism (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2016) in these contexts.

In short, research over the past 20 years indicates that racial hierarchies play a central role in same-sex digital dating environments (Phua & Kaufmann, 2003; Smith & Morales, 2018; Tsunokai et al., 2014) and that being subject to racial microaggressions, fetishism, exclusion/rejection, and overt aggressive racism (Barrett, 2020; O’Brien, 2019) are all hallmarks of the digital dating experience for minority users. As is the case in many of the studies mentioned above, however, the predominant methods of data collection across this body of scholarship are qualitative interviewing, analyses of profile text, and user surveys. This makes sense in the context of understanding the lived experience of sexual racism. However, this also means that we currently have little behavioral data that demonstrates how race plays into the experiences of minorities in gay men’s digital dating contexts. As noted by White, Reisner, Dunham, and Mimiaga (2014) in their content analysis of race-based preferencing in user profiles, research methods such as interviewing, surveys, and analyses of profiles are all contexts that are subject to the social desirability effect (Edwards, 1957). Our work therefore contributes to the above body of work by offering a small snapshot of behavioral data from Jack’d that helps to further nuance existing understandings of racial preferencing in same-sex digital dating.

Research Questions

This study seeks to extend the body of work on racial preferencing and online dating among gay men by exploring the extent to which sexual preferences are enacted within the profiles and of Jack’d users. Our first two research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How prevalent are self-reported racial preferences on the profiles of Jack’d users in Los Angeles and Sydney, respectively?

RQ2: Are there any patterns of self-reported racial preferencing between different racial groups in these two cities?

The studies we reviewed above looked at self-reported racial preferences. While studying the text of dating profiles provides a non-intrusive way to collect data on dating practice, what people say may not always correspond to what they do. Particularly in the light of Grindr’s Kindr campaign, for example, gay dating app users may be cautious of not disclosing racial preferences on their profiles to avoid being criticized as racist. In this regard, behavioral racial preferences can reflect a “truer” situation. Our third research question is:

RQ3: Are there any patterns of behavioral racial preferencing between different racial groups in these two cities?

We separately examined the data from Los Angeles and Sydney to answer these research questions.

Method

Data Collection

Data from this research were collected from Jack'd on November 1, 2018.³ This study was approved by our first author's institute when the research was designed and with the permission of the owners and operators of Jack'd. The data we collected were accessible to any Jack'd users with paid for premium memberships; accordingly, we consider these data as semipublic (Sveningsson Elm, 2009). We are fully aware of the ethical issues associated with collecting data from semipublic social media (Zimmer, 2010). Therefore, apart from securing the owners' permission to carry out this project on their platform, all data, once collected, were completely anonymized. No photos or usernames were collected in the process. Geolocation information was also removed after confirming the validity of the cases, as explained below.

For every Jack'd user, we collected two sets of data. First, from their profile, we collected their self-reported age, ethnicity, height, weight, scenes label,⁴ and their written self-introduction. If a user indicates any racial preference, they do so via their profile. Second, we collected the "interested" data unique to Jack'd. On this app, after users click into another member's profile, there is a list box where they can choose to perform the following actions: "message," "favorite," "interested," "insight," "block," and "report." The "interested" and "insight" functions are pertinent to this study. When a user presses the "interested" button on someone's profile, this informs the platform that this user is interested in another user. This information is recorded by the platform. When the other user reciprocates—that is, presses the "interested" button on the first user's profile—the platform will notify both of them. This mechanism is similar to the swipe function on Tinder. For the purposes of this study, we consider pressing the "interested" button a behavioral indicator of Jack'd users' preferences. The "insight" function allows users paying a premium to have access to the "interested" data of others—what kind of people, in terms of age, height, weight, race, and so on, others have expressed an interest in. Through examining "interested" data available via the "insight" function, we were able to examine the behavioral racial preferences of Jack'd users.⁵ For the purposes of this article, we analyzed only the self-reported ethnicity, written statement, and racial distribution of the people each user had expressed an interest in.

Using an automated code written in Python, we logged into Jack'd from 54 systematically selected locations in each of the two cities (i.e., Los Angeles, U.S., and Sydney, Australia). These locations were

³ To ensure the comparability of the data across countries, data were collected during the same time window on the same day in each respective time zone.

⁴ Users can choose one of the following labels: twinks, bears, big muscles, strictly friends, LTR, bi/straight curious, and "Ask me."

⁵ We were inspired to examine the "interested" data by a study conducted by an anonymous blogger ("The Jacked Racism Study," 2014).

selected to ensure the entire city was covered. From each location, we collected all users nearby. After removing duplicate users and users who had used the “interested” function only five times or fewer, data of 3,813 and 2,043 users were retained in the Los Angeles data set and Sydney data set, respectively.

However, not all of these cases could answer our inquiry. Our concern is the racial preferencing of Jack’d users, and a preference can be made only when there are choices. In a neighborhood such as Koreatown in Los Angeles, for example, most residents are Asians. Accordingly, if a user logs onto Jack’d in Korea Town, he will see mostly Asian faces. If we find him expressing interest only in other Asians, then, it is impossible to decide whether he has a preference for Asians or he simply has no other choices. Therefore, for the analysis of this article, we only included cases from the downtown area of each city (see Figure 1), where people of different races are more likely to be within reach through the app.⁶ As a result, 705 users from Los Angeles and 463 users from Sydney were analyzed. The geolocation data were immediately deleted after confirming the location of these cases.

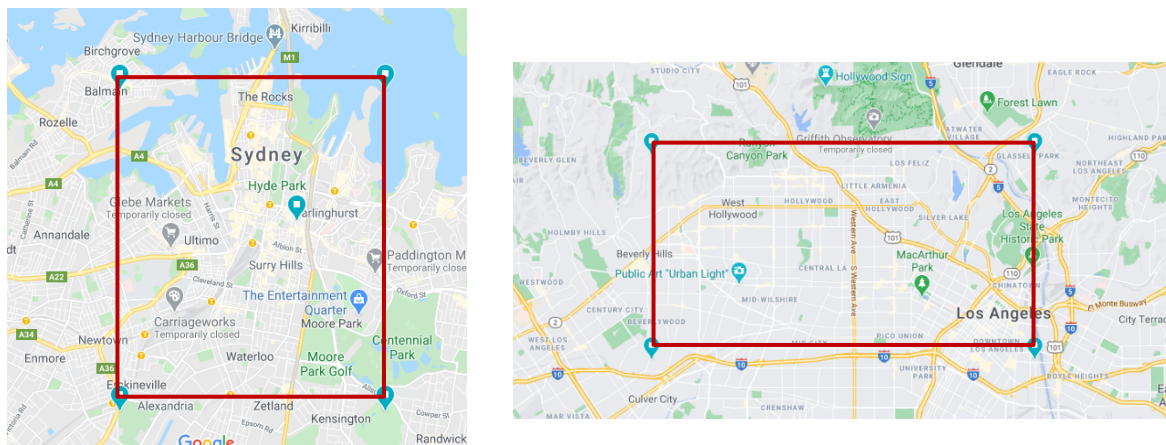


Figure 1. Regions covered in Sydney, Australia (left) and Los Angeles, U.S. (right).

Table 1 presents the racial breakdown of our users. In Los Angeles, around 26% of users in our data set identified as Black; approximately 23% Asian; 14% White, “Ask me,” and “Other,” respectively; and around 9% identified as Hispanic. In Sydney, the majority (around 62%) self-identified as Asian, 21% as White, 11% as “Ask me,” 5% as “Other,” less than 1% as Black, and 0% as Hispanic.

⁶ The City of Sydney’s levels of population diversity can be confirmed highest in the studied area via census data presented in its “The city at a glance” guide (City of Sydney, 2020). The population diversity of the studied area in Los Angeles can also be found in Cedar Lake Ventures (2018).

Table 1. Racial Breakdown of Cases in Los Angeles and Sydney.

Users	Los Angeles		Sydney	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Asian	164	23.3	289	62.4
Black	184	26.1	3	0.6
White	99	14.0	99	21.4
Hispanic	62	8.8	0	0.0
Other	97	13.8	22	4.8
"Ask me"	99	14.0	50	10.8
Total	705	100.0	463	100.0

In both cities, the "Ask me" category was racially ambiguous and could not provide much insight on the questions at the core of this study; therefore, while data for the "Ask me" category are reported below, they will not be analyzed. Likewise, because the small numbers of Black users and the total absence of Hispanic users in Sydney do not allow for meaningful analyses of these groups, in the following, we reported the Sydney data for Black and Hispanic users but did not analyze them.

Variables and Coding

The independent variable of this study is a user's race. On Jack'd, users can choose their ethnicity from one of the following 11 labels: Asian, Black, White, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Mixed, Pacific Islander, "Other," Native American, South Asian, and "Ask me." In our analysis, we grouped Middle Easterners, Pacific Islanders, and South Asians together with Asians; we also grouped Mixed and Native Americans together with "Other."⁷ For those who chose "Ask me," we checked whether they had revealed their race in their written profile statements; if they did, their race was coded accordingly. This resulted in six categories: Asian, Black, White, Hispanic, "Other," and "Ask me" (this last category was not analyzed).

Regarding self-reported racial preferences, we examined the English text of written profile statements and coded whether profiles mentioned any racial preferences. We also looked at the specific racial preferences noted and coded for 13 dependent variables. Seven of these 13 variables were inclusionary racial preferences, where users state a preference for certain racial categories: Asian, White, Black, Hispanic, people of color, mixed, and "any race." Examples of these statements included, "into Black & Mixed Guys," "And I guess my preference is men of color," and "All races/ethnicities are welcome!" The remaining six were exclusionary racial preferences, where users explicitly reject certain racial categories: Asian, White, Black, Hispanic, people of color, and mixed. Examples included, "No Asians"

⁷ Our rationale for combining these racial categories is because of their small size in our sample. In our Los Angeles sample ($N = 705$), there were only five Middle Easterners, four Pacific Islanders, and two South Asians. We grouped them with other Asians ($n = 153$). There were one Native American and 65 Mixed. We combined them with "Other" because their relationships with other major races have not been theorized. In our Sydney sample ($N = 463$), there were only two Middle Easterners, which we combined with Asians ($n = 287$). The 14 Mixed in Sydney were included as "Other."

and "you white don't contact me." A user could simultaneously be coded as preferring one or more racial categories and rejecting others.

Our first author developed a codebook and trained two research assistants based on 59 randomly selected cases. Definitions of each racial category were refined after the training session. The two assistants then independently coded the same 130 cases. Due to the manifest nature of the content, the intercoder reliabilities across all variables were 100%. As such, the two assistants finished coding the remaining profiles on their own.

Regarding behavioral racial preferences, from the "insight" data we gathered the racial distribution of the people in whom each user had expressed an interest. Then, among users of the same race, we calculated the average percentages of interests they had expressed toward members of their own race and the other five racial categories.

Results

Self-Reported Racial Preferences

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, a series of crosstabulations were computed. Due to the rarity of self-reported racial preferences, Fisher's exact test, instead of a χ^2 test, was used to assess whether any associations between independent and dependent variables existed.

RQ1 asks the prevalence of the expressions of racial preferences on the profiles of Jack'd users in Los Angeles and Sydney, respectively. In Los Angeles, of 705 users, 44 (6.2%) stated at least one inclusionary racial preference and two (0.3%) stated at least one exclusionary racial preference. In Sydney, of 463 cases, 38 (8.2%) stated at least one inclusionary racial preference and only one (0.2%) stated at least one exclusionary racial preference. Fisher's exact tests found no significant differences in the frequency of mentions of inclusionary racial preferences or exclusionary racial preferences between Los Angeles and Sydney.

RQ2 further asks whether there were any significant patterns in these racial preferences among users in Los Angeles and Sydney, respectively. Tables 2 and 3 show the self-reported racial preferences from users of each racial category. In Los Angeles (Table 2), preferences for Asians ($p < .001$), for Blacks ($p < .05$), and for Hispanics ($p < .001$) were found to be dependent on the race of the user. To probe the source of dependency, we computed the adjusted residuals in each cell. An adjusted residual greater than 1.96 in absolute value indicates statistical significance. More Asian and White users self-reported a preference for Asians than expected while fewer Black users self-reported a preference for Asians than expected. Also, more White users self-reported a preference for Blacks and Hispanics than expected.

Table 2. Self-Reported Racial Preferences of Jack'd Users in Los Angeles.

Users (<i>n</i>)	Racial Preferences For						
	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	People of color	Mixed	Any race
Asian (164)	7	1	0	0	0	1	2
Black (184)	0	2	0	0	1	0	5
White (99)	6	6	1	5	1	1	1
Hispanic (62)	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Other (97)	0	3	0	1	1	2	4
"Ask me" (99) [§]	2	3	1	3	0	2	2
Total (705)	15	15	2	9	3	6	16
Fisher's exact test (<i>p</i> value)	.000	.021	.426	.001	.648	.229	.466
Users (<i>n</i>)	Racial Preferences Against						
	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	People of color	Mixed	
Asian (164)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Black (184)	0	0	1	1	0	0	
White (99)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Hispanic (62)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Other (97)	1	0	1	0	0	0	
"Ask me" (99) [§]	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total (705)	1	0	2	1	0	0	
Fisher's exact test (<i>p</i> value)	.262	N/A	.736	1.000	N/A	N/A	

Note. [§] Data reported here but were not included in the analysis.

Meanwhile, in Sydney (Table 3), only preference for Asians depended on the race of the user ($p < .001$). Further probing revealed that, fewer Asian users self-reported a preference for Asians than expected, while more White users did so than expected.

Table 3. Self-Reported Racial Preferences of Jack'd Users in Sydney.

Users (<i>n</i>)	Racial Preferences For						
	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	People of color	Mixed	Any race
Asian (289)	13	2	3	0	0	0	0
Black (3) [§]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White (99)	18	1	1	1	0	0	0
Hispanic (0) [§]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other (22)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
"Ask me" (50) [§]	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (463)	34	3	4	1	0	0	0
Fisher's exact test (<i>p</i> value)	.000	1.000	1.000	.295	N/A	N/A	N/A

Users (<i>n</i>)	Racial Preferences Against					
	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	People of color	Mixed
Asian (289)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black (3) [§]	0	0	0	0	0	0
White (99)	0	0	1	0	0	0
Hispanic (0) [§]	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other (22)	0	0	0	0	0	0
"Ask me" (50) [§]	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (463)	0	0	1	0	0	0
Fisher's exact test (<i>p</i> value)	N/A	N/A	.295	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note. [§] Data reported here but were not included in the analysis.

Behavioral Racial Preferences

RQ3 asks whether there were any patterns of behavioral racial preferencing among Jack'd users in Los Angeles and Sydney, respectively. Table 4 presents the average percentages of interest users from each racial category have expressed to members of their own race or other racial categories. For example, among the Asian users in Los Angeles, on average, 51.9% of their interests were expressed to other Asians and only 5.3% of their interests were expressed to Blacks. To compare these percentages, in our Los Angeles's data set, for each racial category (i.e., each row), we conducted 10 paired-sample *t* tests.⁸ Šidák correction was used to adjust the *p* value to account for multiple comparisons. Accordingly, a family-wise error rate of .05 was equivalent to .005 on the level of each pair-wise comparison. In Sydney, we conducted three paired-sample *t* tests.⁹ A family-wise error rate of .05 was equivalent to .017 on the level of each pair-wise

⁸ These 10 pairs are as follows: Asians–Blacks, Asians–Whites, Asians–Hispanics, Asians–Other, Blacks–Whites, Blacks–Hispanics, Blacks–Other, Whites–Hispanics, Whites–Other, and Hispanics–Other.

⁹ These three pairs are as follows: Asians–Whites, Asians–Other, and Whites–Other.

comparison in this data set. The subscripts in Table 4 indicate significant differences between two percentages.

Table 4. Average Percentages of Interests Expressed to Members of Certain Races.

User	To Asian	To Black	To White	To Hispanic	To Other	To "Ask me"
Los Angeles						
Asian	51.9%	5.3% ^a	19.4% ^{ab}	7.0% ^{ac}	9.6% ^{abcd}	6.7% [§]
Black	6.3%	46.0% ^a	7.9% ^b	7.4% ^b	19.7% ^{abcd}	12.7% [§]
White	34.1%	22.6%	10.7% ^{ab}	11.2% ^{ab}	13.0% ^{ab}	8.4% [§]
Hispanic	15.6%	27.5% ^a	11.1% ^b	16.0% ^b	17.6% ^{bc}	12.2% [§]
Other	12.5%	36.2% ^a	12.5% ^b	9.5% ^b	18.1% ^{bd}	11.2% [§]
"Ask me"	17.4% [§]	33.8% [§]	8.1% [§]	8.6% [§]	15.5% [§]	16.7% [§]
Sydney						
Asian	61.6%	0.3% [§]	23.3% ^a	0.7% [§]	6.1% ^{ac}	8.0% [§]
Black	63.1% [§]	13.7% [§]	1.5% [§]	4.8% [§]	6.3% [§]	10.6% [§]
White	82.5%	0.4% [§]	3.0% ^a	0.2% [§]	5.9% ^{ac}	7.9% [§]
Hispanic	0.0% [§]	0.0% [§]	0.0% [§]	0.0% [§]	0.0% [§]	0.0% [§]
Other	57.3%	0.9% [§]	27.9%	0.5% [§]	7.5% ^{ac}	5.9% [§]
"Ask me"	64.2% [§]	0.3% [§]	16.0% [§]	0.0% [§]	6.3% [§]	13.3% [§]

Note. [§] Data reported here but were not included in the analysis.

^a Significantly different from Asian.

^b Significantly different from Black.

^c Significantly different from White.

^d Significantly different from Hispanic.

In Los Angeles, Asian users were most interested in other Asian men, followed by White men, men of "Other" races, and then Hispanic and Black men (equally preferred). Black users preferred their own race the most, followed by men of "Other" races and then the three remaining races (equally preferred). White users were equally interested in Asian and Black men (equally preferred), followed by the other three races (equally preferred). Hispanic users preferred Black men the most, followed by Asian and Hispanic men and men of "Other" races (equally preferred). They preferred White men the least. Finally, users of "Other" races behaved similarly to Black users: They preferred Black men the most, then men of "Other" races and Asian and White men (equally preferred), Hispanic men the least.

In Sydney, all three groups that we analyzed were most interested in Asian men. Specifically, among Asian users, most interests went to Asian men, followed by White men and men of "Other" races; among White users, the order of interests was Asian men, men of "Other" races, and White men; among users of "Other" races, they equally preferred Asian and White men, followed by users of "Other" races.

Discussion and Conclusion

Self-Reported Racial Preferencing

In our study, both expressions of inclusionary racial preferences and exclusionary racial preferences on Jack'd, in general, were uncommon: In total, around 7.6% of the 1,086 users (Los Angeles and Sydney combined) mentioned an inclusionary racial preference, and only 0.3% mentioned an exclusionary racial preference. These frequencies of occurrence are close to what Callander, Holt, and Newman (2012) previously observed in Manhunt.net: Around 9.3% of their 300-profile sample mentioned inclusionary racial preferences, and 0% mentioned exclusionary racial preferences. These relatively low figures in both studies suggest that while racism in gay men's digital dating has garnered increasing public attention in recent years, the prevalence of race-based sexual preferencing, regardless of being inclusionary or exclusionary, evidenced on gay men's dating profiles may have remained relatively consistent over time. The much higher frequency associated with the practice of inclusionary racial preferencing, in comparison to exclusionary racial preferencing, however, is notable. This suggests that Jack'd users are taking heed of campaigns to effect change in these spaces and largely avoiding expression of exclusionary racial preferences on their profiles; instead, opting to use inclusionary preferences in line with the recommendations of new equality guidelines emerging across the market.

Of course, this does not mean that Jack'd users do not harbor racial sexual preferences or broader racist viewpoints. For one thing, inclusionary racial preferencing languages are a manifestation of racial sexual preferences (Callander et al., 2012). The distinct relationship between inclusionary racial preference and individual psychological well-being is underresearched. Wade and Harper (2020) suggest that non-White sexual minorities will first evaluate the severity of the racial sexism they encounter, and such evaluation will lead to different levels of coping mechanism and psychological well-being. It is possible that a person of color perceives a less severe level of racial sexism in an environment full of inclusionary racial preferencing languages than in an environment full of exclusionary languages. However, this has yet to be studied. It is also entirely possible that dating app users simply display the majority of racial prejudice experienced on these apps in more cloistered exchanges, such as in private messages. Carlson's (2020) research into the use of dating apps by Indigenous Australians, for example, found that discrimination often came after Indigenous people revealed their Indigenous identity. She noted, "prior to the revelation, there is evidence of chatting and flirting and often an intention to 'hook up.' So, for Indigenous people then, 'sexual racism' is just racism" (p. 9).

A few users in Los Angeles (2.3%; $n = 16$) explicitly stated they were open to matching with any race. These statements included "age and race is [sic] not an issue" and "sexy is sexy regardless of race/age/body." These statements can be considered explicit efforts to address platform-wide or community-wide racial preferences. Future research can explore users' engagements in antiracism efforts and to what extent such acts can change the culture of their communities.

Behavioral Racial Preferencing

Prior studies in online dating among gay and bisexual men have revealed a racial hierarchy or its variant (Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Smith & Morales, 2018; Tsunokai et al., 2014). In these studies, White men were the most preferred race and Black men were the least. An intersectional view on gay sexuality

considers the gendered nature of race (Kandaswamy, 2012; Omi & Winant, 1994). Asian gay men are often the least preferred in gay communities due to their perceived femininity (Han & Choi, 2018), and Black gay men are often preferred due to their presumed masculinity (Smith & Morales, 2018).

The possibility that racial preferencing is widespread but simply less publicly visible on Jack'd users' dating app profiles is well supported by the behavioral preferencing insights found in this study. In our study, Asian users and White users in both cities preferred Asians over other races; Black and Hispanic users in Los Angeles preferred Blacks the most. This data basically subverts the conventional racial hierarchy because not a single racial group in either location preferred Whites the most. Perhaps on a platform such as Jack'd, which sells itself as the most diverse app on the market, it is not surprising that users' behavioral preferences tend not to support conventional racial hierarchies. The app's marketing approach suggests users are likely to have signed up for this platform on account of having preferences that are more diverse, or which sit outside traditional versions of homonormative attractiveness to begin with. Indeed, a reparative reading (Sedgwick, 2003) of these results—which do not align with key theories of racial hierarchy—might suggest that, as a platform, Jack'd provides an alternative space where norms of dating and sexual fantasy deviate from traditional models of desirability underpinned by whiteness.

Among the 16 users in Los Angeles who explicitly sought all races, we looked into their behavioral racial preferencing. The percentages of interests they expressed to different races were as follow: Blacks, 36.4%; "Other," 15.7%; Hispanics, 12.9%; Asians, 10.2%; and Whites, 8.5%. While the small sample size failed to detect any statistically significant differences between these percentages, the apparent difference between Blacks and Whites hinted that behavioral racial preferencing was in play, even without the awareness of the individuals themselves.

Therefore, what is important to note here is the extent to which this study showed that behavioral racial preferences on dating apps are not a strictly personal matter (or a matter of personal preference)—that, even when contradicting existing theories of racial hierarchy, users' behavioral preferences nonetheless exhibit systematic patterns. Across the two locations studied here, both Asians and Whites preferred Asians the most, while in Los Angeles Blacks and Hispanics preferred Blacks the most (see Table 4).

Limitations and Implications

Of course, this exploratory study is not representative of all dating apps, or all Jack'd users. For this reason, to better understand the extent of sexual racism in gay men's digital dating, both presently and as a longitudinal phenomenon, more quantitative studies of this nature will need to be conducted across a range of different platforms and locations. More qualitative studies (such as Han & Choi, 2018) asking people about their experiences of sexual racism in a range of different contexts would also be well worth the effort. We do, however, believe that our findings and in particular the juxtaposition between low levels of overt exclusionary racial preferencing on user profiles and users' systematic preferencing behaviors indicates further progress can be made on the part of dating apps to limit the extent of sexual racism impacting users' experiences on these sites.

This study has implications for the ways that dating apps, such as Jack'd, might approach the task of fostering inclusivity, for example. As noted above, gay men's platforms have gone down the path of appealing to users to behave in certain ways: to avoid discrimination by making only positive statements about one's preferences. But dating platforms could also make use of system-level interventions to help users avoid making sexually racist decisions or be more sensitive about their preferences. Bedi (2015), for example, has suggested that platforms should ban users searching for individuals of a particular race. Hutson, Taft, Barocas, and Levy (2018), have noted that platforms could also encourage users to categorize themselves according to attributes other than race and ethnicity. Given that we saw systematic racial preferencing behaviors occurring in this study, we contend that platforms could also work to alert users when racial patterns are detected in their behaviors. In the medical field, for example, where it is known that physicians tend to prescribe lower doses of painkillers to Black patients than to White patients (Singhal, Tien, & Hsia, 2016), scholars have suggested designing an alert system that will inform a physician about the average dosage of painkillers physicians from the same hospital have subscribed to Black and White patients, respectively, whenever the physician is prescribing painkillers, while ultimately leaving the final decision to the physician about how to proceed (Sieghart, 2018). Similarly, dating platforms could periodically alert users about their racial preferences and those of people who are similar to them—for example, by providing regular data about the kinds of people each user has interacted with. This, on the one hand, respects users' decisions, and, on the other hand, provides a mechanism to remind users about the prevalence of behavioral forms of sexual racism on these platforms.

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