Race-Related Discrimination is Linked to Body Image Concerns in Asian/Asian American Men

Alyson Sato ✧ Jessica Wilheim ✧ Rachel Couche
Claire Guidinger, M.A., M.S. ✧ Nichole R. Kelly, Ph.D.

Background

• Asian/Asian American men report higher levels of body image concerns relative to their ethnic peers

• Experiences with racism may precipitate body image concerns in this population, though no empirical studies have investigated this hypothesis

• A strong ethnic identity may function as a protective factor against these associations, as a greater sense of ethnic identity has been linked to greater subjective well-being and self-esteem in Asian/Asian American men

Hypotheses

1. Experiences with racism, both microaggressions and overt racism, would be positively associated with Asian/Asian American men’s body image concerns, including concerns with both muscularity and fat

2. Ethnic identity commitment and exploration would moderate (buffer) the positive link between racism and body image concerns

Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Survey</td>
<td>Self reported race/ethnicity, age, including income, education, presence of a psychiatric diagnosis, height, and weight (from which body mass index [BMI] was calculated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences with Racism</td>
<td>The Asian American Racism-Related Stress Inventory (Liang, Li, &amp; Kim, 2004) assessed experiences with (a) microaggressions and (b) overt racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (Phinney &amp; Ong, 2007) assessed two aspects of ethnic identity: (a) exploration of ethnic identity and (b) commitment to ethnic identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Image Concerns</td>
<td>The Revised Male Body Image Attitudes Scale (Tylka, Bergeron, &amp; Schwartz, 2005; Ryan, Morrison, Roddy, &amp; McCutcheon, 2011) assessed concerns with: (a) muscularity and (b) body fat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analytic Plan

• All analyses adjusted for income, education, presence of psychiatric diagnosis, and BMI (kg/m²)

• Hierarchical regression models were conducted

• Covariates were entered into block 1 of the model, centered independent and moderator variables were entered into block 2, centered interaction terms were entered into block 3

Results

• Sample = 266 Asian/Asian American men (18-30y; Mage = 24.4±3.6; MBMI = 24.2 ± 5.6 kg/m²)

• Both experiences with microaggressions and overt racism were significantly and positively associated with muscularity and body fat concerns, B’s = 1.19-1.32, p’s<.05

• Ethnic identity commitment buffered the link between experiences with microaggressions and muscularity, B = -1.22, p<.05. There were no other moderation findings.

Discussion

• Findings suggest that experiences with racism are positively associated with body image concerns in Asian/Asian American men

• Ethnic identity commitment buffered the link between experiences with microaggressions and concerns with muscularity

• Prospective and mechanistic studies are needed to identify intra-ethnic variations in Asian/Asian American men’s experiences with racism and disordered eating symptoms

Key Findings

Experiences with racism (microaggressions and overt racism) were significantly and positively associated with Asian/Asian American men’s body image concerns

Ethnic identity commitment buffered the link between experiences with microaggressions and muscularity concerns

Study findings highlight the detrimental link between racism and Asian/Asian American men’s body image