

From Marginalization to Empowerment: the Perceived Effects of Viewing Sexually Explicit Material on Queer Asian American Men's Well-Being

Introduction

- Asian American (AA) lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) adults report higher rates of **fair or poor overall health** (16%) compared to AA non-LGBT adults (12%)¹
- Across all LGBTQ+ AA communities, **mental well-being** is **poorer** compared to cisgender heterosexual white counterparts¹
- **Minority Stress Theory** and **intersectionality** provide frameworks for conceptualizing the pathways to the poor well-being of the AA LGBTQ+ community^{2,3}
- **Racist stereotypes manifest in non-heterosexual sexually explicit material (SEM) with AA actors**⁴
- AA actors are cast in **submissive, dependent, and emasculated roles** as an act of **submission rather than pleasure**⁴
- Context of SEM often **appropriates, fetishizes, exoticizes, and aggregates** multiple AA cultures⁴
- **Racist stereotypes** of AA bodies contribute to **internalized racism** and **poorer mental health**⁵
- Literature shows that **SEM play a role in shaping the well-being and behavior** of its viewers⁶
- **Very few studies** investigated effects of SEM on non-heterosexual AA men⁷

Aims

- **Aim 1:** Explore the **perceived inclusiveness** of non-heterosexual AA SEM
- **Aim 2:** Investigate the **relationship** between **inclusiveness** within non-heterosexual AA SEM and **well-being**
- **Aim 3:** Obtain suggestions for **improving** the inclusivity within non-heterosexual AA SEM and **addressing** the perceived relationship between non-heterosexual AA SEM inclusivity and well-being

Methods

- 40-60 min. **semi-structured interviews** over Zoom
- **Eligibility criteria:** (a) self-identify as an Asian or Asian American, (b) non-heterosexual man, (c) has watched pornography with at least one non-heterosexual Asian American, (d) between the ages of 18 and 24
- **Thematic coding** and **inductive analysis** through NVivo

- Participants: N=18
- Mean age of participants: 22.25 years

Participant Demographics

Figure 1: Participant Ethnic Demographics

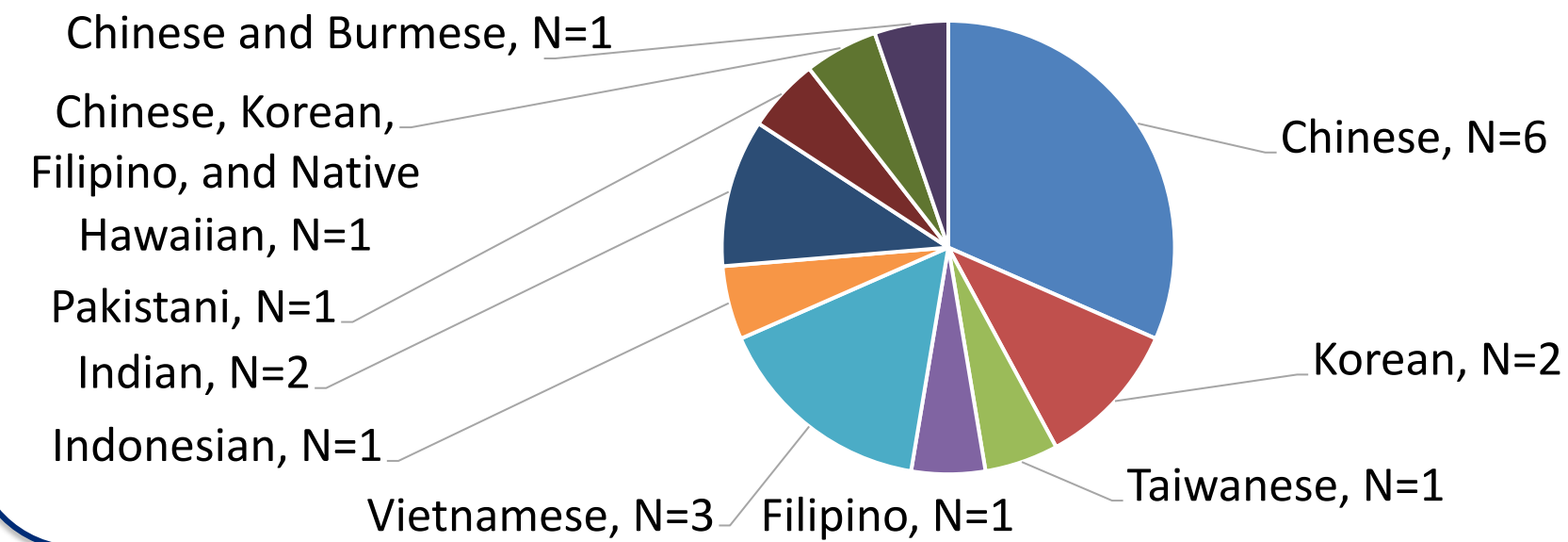
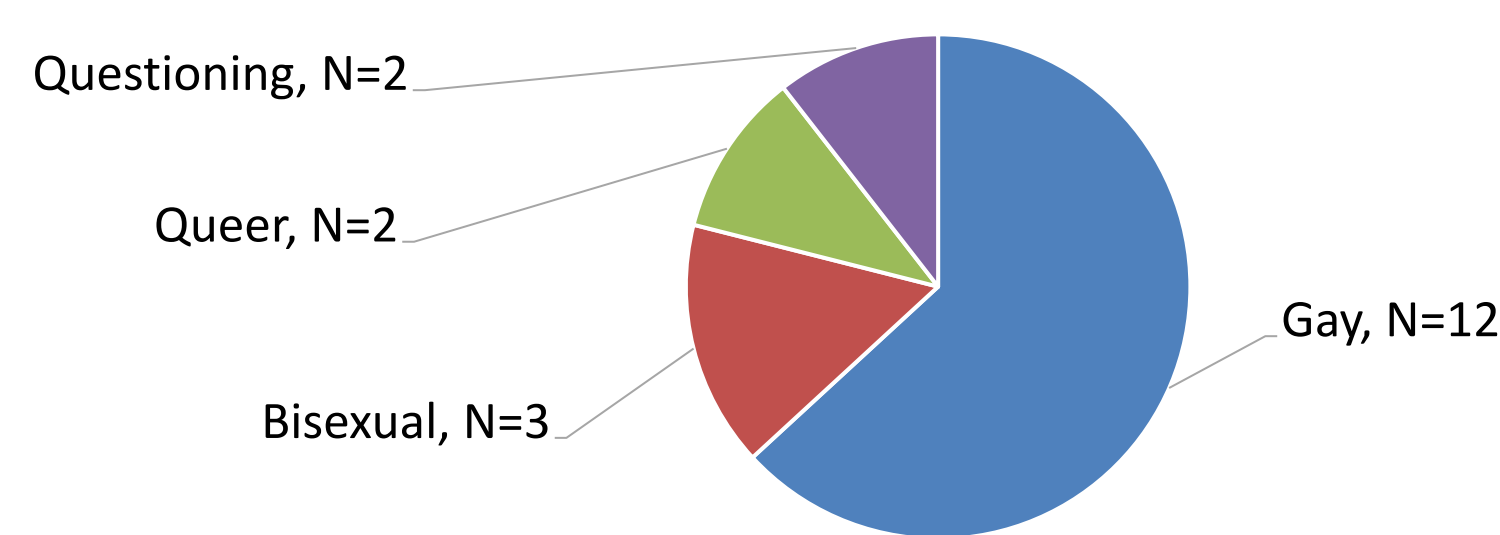


Figure 2: Participant Sexual Orientation Demographic



Quotes

"I must also try to be petite and small and 'twinkie' in order to be desirable as an Asian. I was feeling sad cause I definitely questioned whether or not I would be desirable from the perspective of someone who's not Asian because it has always been the way we're pictured, so [SEM] definitely made me feel sad and like very self-conscious. It was a lot of being insecure and those types of things."
- Mateo, 21 y/o gay Indonesian male

"When I had met with some of these guys, I feel even though they are verse and I am. I already felt the vibe that they wanted me to be the bottom. This was three out of four times. I had a feeling that'd I would be the bottom first, but we would switch cause they proclaimed 'verse,' but that switch never even happened. That rubbed me the wrong way."
- Shvavy, 21 y/o questioning Korean male

"In the media itself, there are not a lot of sexy gay Asian men. It's too many 'intersectionalities,' so I think just seeing porn that is that very specific niche makes me feel sexy myself."
- Koala, 24 y/o gay Korean male

Results and Discussion

Aim 1

- Bodies **objectified, exoticized, or fetishized**
- **Blatant racism**
- **Underrepresentation of South Asian bodies**
- **Larger platforms and company** produced SEM were described as **less inclusive** than smaller platforms and self-produced content

Aim 2

- **Stereotypical portrayals** contributing to feelings of body **insecurities and undesirability**
- **SEM contributing to feeling pigeonholed** regarding sexual roles, **consenting to uncomfortable actions, lacking rational thinking during sex, normalizing harmful stereotypes, and experiencing racial slurs during sexual encounters**
- **Internalization of stereotypes and racism**
- **Improved feeling of self-confidence and self-desirability** after seeing SEM with two non-heterosexual AA performers
- **Inclusion of culture in SEM increased feelings of self-desirability**
- **SEM with AA performers more erotic** for AA viewers

Aim 3

- **Creating SEM that empowers** non-heterosexual AA actors, portrays them in **active roles, humanizes** their representation, includes **diverse ethnic and physical characteristics**, and **centers the communities' desires**
- Want broader audience to know that the **racialization and portrayal of AA bodies does not transfer to the real world**

Conclusion and Future Directions

- **Non-heterosexual AA SEM appears to both facilitate and inhibit** mental, physical, and sexual **well-being**
- **Future studies should diversify participants** and could include **intervention-based or biometric research**

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