

Gay men's risky sexual behavior linked to feeling undesirable

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Gay men who are not considered sexually desirable are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior according to new research out of the University of Toronto. They may also develop psychological problems as a consequence of feeling undesirable.

Adam Isaiah Green, Assistant Professor of Sociology at U of T, interviewed dozens of gay men in Toronto to determine what qualities made some men more sexually desirable than others, and what the consequences of being undesirable might be on mental and physical health.

"I found that young, white, middle-class men are considered much more sexually desirable than men who are racial minorities, over 40 and poor," says Green. "I also learned that for gay men, being considered sexually undesirable can have serious health consequences ranging from psychological issues to risky sexual behaviour."

The study – among the first to examine the link between sex and mental health – found that undesirable gay men face stigmatization, avoidance and outright rejection, which can lead to depression, anxiety and alcohol abuse. It also highlighted cases whereby undesirable gay men will forego safe-sex discussion and, in some cases, condom use, in the context of sex with a more attractive partner.

"We tend to devalue sexual life as something that is extracurricular and frivolous, but this research shows a significant link between sexual desirability and health," says Green. "Men with low levels of 'erotic capital' are systematically marginalized, which can take a real toll both physically and psychologically."

Source: University of Toronto

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