# SEXUAL RACISM IN AN ONLINE GAY COMMUNITY: HOW RACE, GENDER AND BODY-TYPE CONSTRUCT DESIRE AND IMPACT LIVES

A Dissertation

by

JESUS GREGORIO SMITH

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| Chair of Committee, | Joe R. Feagin |
| Committee Members, | Verna Keith |
| | Sarah Gatson |
| | Tasha Dubriwny |
| Head of Department, | Denis O'Hearn |

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ABSTRACT

Past literature examining race and sexuality has revealed the ways the two intersect to construct racial bodies in sexually stereotypical ways on and offline. Still, while these studies have made tremendous contributions to the field, they have lacked strong theoretical grounding, often settling on terms like prejudice, and stereotyping to describe phenomenon more accurately explained through the lens of structural and systemic racism. Similarly, sexuality studies have often been restrained in their assessment of racism in regards to sexuality, often assigning greater autonomy to sexual minorities but absolving them of their role in the maintenance of systemic racial domination. This project builds on prior studies by also investigating the intersections of race and sexuality online by means of Systemic Racism Theory and the Sexual Fields, synthesizing both into a theory of Sexual Racism. A goal of this project is to explore sexual racism within the website for men who have sex with men called Adam4adam.com. In doing this, another goal is to explore the parameters of sexual racism theory and their impact on sexual health behaviors and negotiations.

Sexual Racism theory includes four parameters. These parameters include; 1) the role of the owner and creators of the website being analyzed and how they establish the sexual field that perpetuates racism within it, 2) the racial hierarchy of desire established via sexual racism that sets the *Ideal White Male Archetype (IWMA)* as the most desired male atop the hierarchy and other deviations of this archetype below, with varying degrees of erotic capital distributed throughout, 3) an accompanying ideology of preference that justifies sexual racism and, 4) the resulting impact of sexual racism on

the lives of the men impacted by it, such as increased sexual risk behavior and targeting by White men towards men of color. Taken together, the theory seeks to explain the way race and racism along with sex and sexuality intersect online and impact the lives of those found least sexually desirable.

# DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family including my mother and father, Johnny and Sonia Smith, as well as my siblings; Johnny, Tommy, Darlina and Michelle. The love you all give me and provide me has helped me get far in life. I also dedicate this project to my best friends Tori, Chantel, Arthur, Oscar, Claudia, Jesse and Veronica. I love you guys will all my heart. Finally, to the gay fat, femme and men of color who are told we are undesirable, this one is for you!

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*Student/collaborator contributions*

All work for the dissertation was completed independently by the student.

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# NOMENCLATURE

| | |
|---|---|
| MSM | Men who have sex with Men |
| Top | Insertive partner during anal intercourse |
| Bttm | Receptive partner during anal intercourse |
| Versatile | Willing top or bottom partner during anal intercourse |
| Blk | Short for black |
| Wht | Short for white |
| Fem | Short for effeminate |
| Brutha | Another way to say black man |
| Gl | Good Looking |
| Masc | Short for Masculine |
| Pix | Pictures |
| Dl | Down Low or closeted men who have sex with men |
| FWB | Friends with Benefits |
| FB | Fuck Buddy |
| FWB | Friends with Benefits |
| LTR/LT | Long Term Relationship/ Long Term |
| NSA | No Strings Attached |
| Gf | Girlfriend |
| Str8 | Straight |

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# CHAPTER 1:

# INTRODUCTION

## *1.1 Introduction: "Is Gay Dating Racism Causing an HIV Crisis?"*

In the fall of 2015, the Advocate, a popular American LGBT interest magazine, ran a series of stories called *Six-in-Ten-Men* (#6in10men) aimed at highlighting the HIV infection rate impacting the gay community presently[1] (Reynolds 2015). These stories brought to the forefront how, despite enhanced medication and improved community outreach, HIV infections are getting worse in the U.S. for Black and Latino men. Indeed, on February 23rd 2016, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2016)[2] announced in a first of a kind study that estimated lifetime HIV risk based on race that, "half of gay and bisexual Black men and a quarter of gay and bisexual Hispanic men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetimes." White gay and bisexual men, in contrast, have the lowest chance of infection, with a lifetime risk of one in eleven. Many of the explanations given for these rates of infection for both Latino and Black communities include "poverty, stigma, barriers to healthcare access and too few people knowing their status" all contributing in different ways to the epidemic (CDC 2016). Therefore, the CDC report and explanations only gave further credence to the Advocate series.

[1] http://www.advocate.com/hiv-aids/2015/9/21/gay-dating-racism-creating-black-hiv-crisis
[2] http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/02/23/cdc-half-of-gay-black-men-will-get-hiv.html

The most controversial piece from these series of stories was an article titled, "*Is Gay Dating Racism Creating an HIV Crisis*?" (Reynolds 2015). In it, the author argued that even though Black men use condoms at the same rate or more often than White men[3][4], Black men are less desirable and thus have a smaller pool of potential partners. Consequently, any case of HIV in the small dating pool for gay Black men dramatically increases the likelihood of infection[5]. Hence, the author points out how gay dating racism, often seen on profiles as "no fats, no femmes, no Blacks," may in fact be contributing to the HIV crisis.

Certainly, while other factors like poverty and a lack of knowledge about HIV status also contribute, the role that partner preferences plays in devaluing the bodies of men of color gets diminished. In fact, the article makes it a point to argue that ending racism and breaking out of the smaller dating pool is unlikely, and should not be the focus! While this may be true, the discussion that needs to be had around *sexual racism*, or racial discrimination in a sexual context (Plummer 2008), should not be minimized. By minimizing sexual racism, it trivializes *the way* racism operates in terms of attraction and desire, especially in the lives of men who have sex with men (MSM). Still, one has to wonder if the Advocate article has a point in mentioning how individual preferences in a partner could possibly lead to increases of HIV/AIDS in the gay community at large.

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[3] https://www.blackaids.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=677:condom-use-higher-among-blacks-than-other-groups-but-not-enough-to-beat-hiv&catid=53:news-2010&Itemid=120

[4] http://www.hivplusmag.com/research/2014/02/07/whats-really-behind-high-hiv-rates-black-gay-men?page=full

[5] http://www.hivplusmag.com/research/2014/02/07/whats-really-behind-high-hiv-rates-black-gay-men?page=full argues that racism is really the cause for the high HIV rates for black men

This is a project that takes serious the way racism shapes desire for partners in the gay community by taking the topic of our "preferences" out of just being about individuals and tying it back to the larger society.

Despite many of the explanations given by the CDC for the high infection rates among Black and Latino men, much was left out including how certain social locations may increase the chance of HIV risk. One such location is where MSMs and gay men often meet each other, which is online (Bolding et al. 2004; Chan et al. 2016; Lewnard and Berrang-Ford 2014; Paul, Ayala, and Choi 2010; Salyers Bull et al. 2004). The internet is one of the great connectors for people, especially gay men or MSMs (Miller 2015). For MSMs, they use the internet because they are either not out, or live in small towns, or a host of other reasons (Brickell 2012). The internet is their way to connect with other men like themselves. The internet is also a complicated space where race and sexuality weave in and between each other in unique ways. For instance, MSMs of color experience a variety of racialized interactions from subtle expressions of race based preferences to blatantly racial hostility and objectification (Paul et al. 2010). While most MSMs prefer to seek partners via the internet (Bolding et al. 2004), many MSMs face racism as an ongoing issue for seeking partners online (Callander, Holt, and Newman 2016). Not only that, odds of contracting sexual infections are increased by online use (Lewnard and Berrang-Ford 2014). Bolding and associates (2004) find a link between men's risky sexual behavior and internet usage to find sexual partners. To further complicate this, Klein (2010) finds that the most sought after profiles for men who specifically seek unprotected sex partners by means of the internet are the profiles of

men of color. This information illuminates the need to examine the role of the internet in the potential spread of HIV/AIDS for gay and bisexual MSMs.

Also, left out of this discussion is how marginalization in the online gay community based on body type (no fats), gender performance (no femmes) and race (no Blacks), together can limit the ability for certain MSMs to negotiate sexual behaviors. For instance, an increased BMI is associated with lower likelihood of rejecting sexual partners and decreased condom use (Moskowitz and Seal 2010). Fields et al. (2011) find that perceptions of masculinity is the primary contextual factor influencing partner selection, risk assessment and decision making regarding condom use for young Black MSMs. Likewise, the "sexual networks of Black MSMs is so stifled by a legacy of racism in the US that it forces Black men to be more highly interconnected than other groups with the potential consequence of more rapid spread of HIV" and "a higher sustained prevalence of infection," supporting the original Advocate article on gay dating racism in their #6in10men series (Raymond & McFarland 2009: 636).

Taken together, these three marginalizations, in the social context of the internet, create pathways to increased HIV risk and possible infection. This project seeks to explore the intersections of these marginalizations in cyber space to give a greater understanding of *how* racism in online dating and hook up sites constructs bodies and gender performances in ways that grant some bodies more sexual and social worth than others. By doing this, I hope to shed light on how and why the risk of HIV infection within the Black gay community has increased, thus illuminating the issues brought forth in the gay dating racism Advocate article.

This led me to specific research questions. First, how is sexual desire organized in U.S. society at large? Is the way it is organized replicated online? If so, how does the online environment reinforce the larger society's definitions of who is desirable and who is not? To answer some of these larger questions, my literature review delves into how desire is constructed offline, primarily through media and pornography. This then leads to how and why a tagline like "no fats, fems or Blacks" is even possible, and for some, necessary.

After establishing this larger context, I switch my focus to the micro level interaction between users of an online MSM website. Here, we see how desire is constructed offline and then replicated online, revealing how who society says is the most desirable is given the most sexual power. Thus, resulting in what Peter Jackson (2000) defined as a lesser form of existence. In fact, Jackson (2000) argued that "when desirability is linked with race, and when certain racial groups are ascribed a greater erotic interest than others, then to be a member of an 'unsexy ' ethnic group is to be equated with an inferior form of existence" (p. 184). Those who are seen as the most desirable in sexual spaces are also seen as those with the most social worth (Han 2015). This puts them in better positions to negotiate condom use with potential partners because they essentially have the most at stake when it comes to sexual power. Those who are constructed as less desirable must utilize different strategies to counter their marginalization in order to increase their pool of potential partners. This may mean even engaging in riskier sex so as to look more desirable and counter other features that maybe viewed as less desirable.

This led me to several more questions. One, how is racial desire organized online for MSMs? I break this larger question down by asking several specific questions. Does the internet make it an equal playing ground? What erotic privileges and power come from being in certain social positions? Two, in what ways do the men use their erotic capital (Green 2008) to navigate the marginalization they experience online? To break this question down I ask how does this then impact their condom negotiation within their online profiles? Answering these many questions would allow me to grasp how body type, gender performance and race collide online in the realm of desire, impacting condom negotiation for sex.

To answer these questions, I engage different techniques and research methods. I begin by conducting a qualitative content analysis of the profiles to capture the ways that users engage in condom negotiation online in real time. In doing this, I racially stratify my sample along body type and sex role in order to engage in a rigorous analysis of race, gender and sexuality. The result is a data set split into 48 different groups. I then compare within groups and across groups, the differences pertaining to race, sex role and body type. This allows me to see how, unlike surveys and interviews where people may modify what they say in terms of sex because of social desirability, online they are more willing to be explicit and less likely to hide their wants and desires.

I focus largely on the race, gender and body type individually and then complicate the discussion by examining how the intersection of the three then influence desire. This is done so that it is clear how marginalization based on race, gender and body type impact condom negotiations. Therefore, I focus a considerable amount of the

project specifically on the men who are considered the least desirable; fat men, feminine/bottom men, and men of color.

### *1.2 The mechanisms of marginalization*

One goal of this project is to add to the discussion on HIV/AIDS risk by examining how multiple marginalization's intersect online, impacting sexual risk negotiations for MSMs and exacerbating the spread of the disease. To do this, I take the popular tagline "No fats, no femmes, and no Blacks" within many MSM's online profiles as a starting point for and basis to my analysis. The tagline is usually deployed by MSMs and gay men in one way or another to block out, cleanse and remove the men who fall into any of three categories from view (Robinson 2016; Han 2007 & 2008). This tagline's popularity is so great that academic articles have been written about it[6], a documentary is being created regarding it by Black queer performance artist Jamal Lewis[7], think pieces have proliferated in the opinion sections of respectable news sources[8], and even merchandise has been created regarding it[9]. Quite frankly, the taglines popularity demands a sociological analysis, and I am responding to the call.

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[6] No fats, femmes, or Asians: The utility of critical race theory in examining the role of gay stock stories in the marginalization of gay Asian men. Contemporary Justice Review is one of the first major publications on the tagline as a whole in an academic press

[7] https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/no-fats-no-femmes-documentary-lgbt explores the issues of gender and masculinity in the gay Black community

[8] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-cooper/grindr-discrimination_b_1948766.html explores no fats no fems in Grindr, a popular web-based mobile app

[9] https://mic.com/articles/141960/this-no-fats-no-fems-shirt-reveals-a-sad-truth-about-the-gay-community takes a look at the popularity of a "no fats no fems" T-Shirt in the gay community

### *1.3 No Fats*

The research on the body and its intersection with race and HIV risk has begun to take shape. Past research has focused largely on the stigma of obesity towards women, with very little attention on men (Hebl and Turchin 2005). Newer studies demonstrate that men are also stigmatized for being overweight. Furthermore, men expressed a heterosexual masculinity through their bodies and used masculine forms of body control like going to the gym and exercising to fight off the feminization brought on by fatness (Hebl and Turchin 2005). Although the media presents the ideal body-type for gay and bisexual men as White, fit, masculine and muscular, gay and bisexual men of color would actively battle against their bodies being racialized by the White mainstream (Brennan et al. 2013). While there isn't much difference in the desired body types gay and straight men have for their own bodies (Swami and Tovée 2008), men who are more engaged in the gay community at large are exposed to more opportunities for sexual objectification, which is related to higher body image concerns (Davids et al. 2015).

Racial difference for men concerning the body were also clear. Black and Latino men seem to embrace medium to larger sized bodies in comparison to White men (Glasser, Robnett, and Feliciano 2009; Hebl and Turchin 2005). Thin White men were often times seen as more intelligent and more competent than thin Black men but overweight Black men were seen as more intelligent and more competent than overweight White men (Trautner, Kwan, and Savage 2013). This is possibly due to the feminizing effect of body weight and it softening the threatening stereotype of the hyper-

masculine Black man whereas the overweight White man is penalized for not upholding the White male norm for body expectations (Trautner et al. 2013). However, both White gay and bisexual men and gay and bisexual men of color who were disappointed with their body's lack of muscularity and who viewed body image and penis size as indicators of masculinity had increased chances for HIV sexual risk behaviors (Brennan et al. 2015). Lastly, because fat gay men are so maligned in the gay community to the point that actually having a partner for anal intercourse is rare, some evidence suggesting that the overexcitement of the occasion can lead to inconsistent condom use (Moskowitz and Seal 2010), and that young MSM's who had high Body Mass Index (BMI's) also had greater odds of being the receptive partner during unprotected anal intercourse.

### *1.4 No Fems*

Masculinity functions in gay spaces and during male-on-male sex as an objection to gay effeminacy, as a marker for sexual positioning during anal intercourse, and as a signifier for sexual risk behavior and a risk assessment for HIV/AIDS. By adopting hegemonic masculinity and the title of "straight acting," some MSM's embrace heteronormative ideals of gender performance by embracing traits and features that are stereotypically associated with masculine, heterosexual men and by enacting in anti-effeminate behavior (Eguchi 2009). Masculinity is an important trait for MSM's to have in a partner and in oneself, with some men wanting to be less feminine and more masculine (Sánchez and Vilain 2012), and many MSM's expressing negative attitudes

towards effeminate gay men (Borgeson and Valeri 2015; Sánchez, Blas-lopez, and Vilain 2015).

Sexual roles during anal intercourse have also been mitigated by the social construction of masculinity in society. For example, dominant society's hegemonic masculinity has been replicated in gay society through strict gender roles based on perceived masculinity/femininity, creating a hierarchy between tops/bottoms (Reilly 2016). In order to accurately deduce sex roles in same-sex relationships, people often "rely on perceptions of characteristics relevant to stereotypical male-female gender roles and heterosexual relationships" (Tskhay and Rule 2013: 1217) to accurately infer sexual roles in same-sex relationships. This means that same sex relationships and behavior may be structured similar to heterosexual relationships. The insertive partner during anal intercourse (tops) were typically viewed as dominant, muscular and tall whereas the receptive partner during anal intercourse (bottoms) were viewed as submissive, slender and small (Johns et al. 2012). Lick and Johnson (2015), found that "cultural stereotypes, interpersonal perceptions, and individual self-labels" merge to illustrate "Asian men as feminine bottoms, Black men as masculine tops" and "White men consistently as neither tops nor bottoms" (p. 1479). Although through time there were changes in sexual role identity thanks in part to changes in sexual role behavior but not necessarily sexual fantasies (Pachankis et al. 2013). Penis size was also associated with masculinity, with tops reporting having larger penises than bottoms (Moskowitz and Hart 2011) and penis size playing a significant role in who topped and who bottomed (Grov, Parsons, and Bimbi 2010).

Lastly, sexual negotiations around power relating to topping or bottoming, whether sex was with a hook-up versus a long term partner and whether it was with someone who is HIV negative versus HIV positive also played a role in sexual positioning with tops seen as having more sexual power, hook-ups being largely based on sexual stereotypes for tops and bottoms whereas long term relationships have more fluidity and HIV negative men typically being tops during anal intercourse and positive men being bottoms (Dangerfield et al. 2016). In terms of sexual risk behavior and risk assessment, masculinity was closely related. Sexual prowess demonstrated through multiple partners, bareback or condom-less sex, drug use, condom decision making, refusing to get tested and failure of treatment compliance are all heavily associated with masculinity and/or perceived as masculine behavior (Fields et al. 2012; Wheldon, Tilley, and Klein 2014; Zeglin 2015).

### *1.5 No Asians or Blacks*

Racism in the gay community operates in three ways; exclusion from the mainstream White gay community, sexual rejection due to race, and sexual stereotyping based on race, with all three yielding negative outcomes on the mental health, stress management and sexual behaviors of gay and MSM men of color (Choi et al. 2013; Han et al. 2014; Ro et al. 2013; Teunis 2007). Racism shapes the personal identity of gay men of color and their interactions with the mainstream gay community (Ro et. al 2013). Han (2007), for example, revealed that gay organizations worked towards acceptance from the mainstream rather than liberation from it through “various whitening practices”

(p. 54). These practices introduced gay America to the mainstream by excluding men of color and selling gay as White to gain economic power and make profit (Berube 2001: 246). For example, as more people of color are identifying as poor, uneducated and LGBT (Gallup 2012)[10], most mainstream LGBT organizations portray the gay community as White, affluent, and longing for marriage rights above all else. Discrimination in admittance to bars, in advertisements, and in employment are all noted (Loiacano 1989). Raymond & Mcfarland (2009) found that racism affects the lives of gay men of color, especially gay Black men. In their study they found that Black men who have sex with men (MSMs) were significantly more likely to have same race sexual partnering than would be expected by chance alone (Raymond and McFarland 2009).They also found that Black MSM's were reported as the least preferred sexual partners, believed by other racial groups to be at higher risk for HIV, counted less often among friendship networks, considered the hardest to meet, and Black MSMs were perceived as less welcome at the common venues that cater to gay men (Raymond & McFarland 2009).

Another way racism operated in the gay community was through sexual exclusion. As Callander et. al (2016) points out, race is seen by many as a way to articulate desire and perceived as an individual preference with no intent for harm. White gay men yield the largest influence in dictating the physical requirements of potential sex partners including race, being the group to reject men of color most often

[10] http://www.gallup.com/poll/158066/special-report-adults-identify-lgbt.aspx

(Callander, Holt, and Newman 2012). Many MSM's of color may also internalize this racism by rejecting other men of color as unsuitable sexual partners (Han 2007). Also, the dominate White gay male group creates a narrative around racial desire as preference that reproduces inequality, and MSM's of color help maintain this inequality by adopting this language of preference (C. Han 2008). Finally, men utilize the social environment of the internet hook-up sites in order to racial cleanse their partner pools (Robinson 2015).

Racism in the gay community also sexually stereotyped groups. Black men continue to be socially constructed as aggressive, dominant and hyper-masculine tops with large penises and Asian men as smooth, feminine and passive bottoms (Grov et al. 2010; C. Han 2008; Wilson et al. 2009). White men are seen as the default of desire, and as the preferred sexual partner with other racial groups competing for their attention (C. S. Han 2008). This racism has impacted the mental and physical health of many MSM's of color. Stigma due to race resulted in many men having psychological distress and engaging in risky sexual behavior (Choi et al. 2013; Kyung-Hee et al. 2011). Gay Asian men experienced higher levels of racial rejection as partners, resulting in stress that was felt more intimately than other forms of rejection (Han et al. 2014). The results of this racism have also increased the chances of HIV/AIDS infection for gay men. Exclusion form gay spaces kept men of color from having access to sexual health related resources and racism in the gay community resulted in increased drug use as a coping mechanism for such racism, both factors that increase the risk of HIV/AIDS infection (Ro et al. 2013). Racism in the gay community marginalized gay Asian/Pacific Islander men, constructed them as feminine and placed White men at the top of desirability (C. S. Han

2008). Since White men less frequently view Asian men as sexually attractive, Asian men compete for the attention of White men by taking on anally receptive roles and leaving condom use decisions up to their tops (C. S. Han 2008). This then also increases their chances of HIV/AIDS infection.

### *1.6 The Need for a Study like This*

When these sets of marginalizations are added together, they construct what is desirable in a partner and what is not. The most desirable partner is: in shape, masculine, and White while the least desirable partner is fat, fem, and Black/or Asian. This is very much in line with the Green's hierarchy (Green 2008). There is a great deal of importance in studying this phenomenon, because what many see as sexual "preferences" innocently being spelled out in the form of "no fats, fems or Asians/Blacks" on profiles, I argue are actually reflections of larger systems of stratification operating in tandem. The aim here is to increase sexual risk behavior and HIV/AIDS infection among marginalized groups, leading to the elimination of those determined to be sexually undesirable.

Throughout this project, I grapple with these ideas in various ways. I do this for many reasons; 1) to wrestle theoretically with race and sexuality as they pertain to bodily desire in order to expand the research for the two areas of society, 2) to make the larger connection between systems of oppression and their impacts in our everyday lives and 3) to highlight the strength of particular theories in enabling a clearer interpretation of the data and analysis. For instance, by exploring the body, I can break down the process of

objectification of particular body parts that then influence desire, such as heterosexual men's desire for larger breast on women or gay men's desire for larger penises on men. By mapping race onto those bodies, I can then investigate the process of racialization the body takes in order to communicate different erotic schemas to different actors. This process, for instance tells us what racialized bodies are expected to look like in order to entice the erotic imagination of other actors, whether it be chiseled bodies on hung Black men or tight, little and soft bodies on Asian men. Last, by examining the erotic process in the racializing of those particular bodies, I can then reveal what that means in terms of the gendered presentations those bodies are expected to perform.

To explain, if the Black male body is expected to be muscular and endowed with a large penis, then the history of animalization of Black men suggests that Black men better be aggressive enough to know how to use those Black penises for the pleasure of White men or be penalized and lowered in the hierarchy of desire. Taken together, I demonstrate how this tagline, "no fats, no fems, no Blacks" is a purposeful way to establish a racial hierarchy of sexual desire, in which White, in shape and masculine men rein on top as the archetypes of desirability. In contrast, fat, effeminate and men of color reside on the bottom as the archetypes of non-desirability. I then theorize why the three (body type, gender performance and race) are so commonly mentioned together in one way or another.

Not only does this project engage both quantitative and qualitative methods, it also challenges existing theories on race and sexuality, builds on them, combines them and presents new ways of looking at race and sexuality. By grounding this project in

systemic racism theory (Feagin 2006) and a sexual fields framework (Green 2011), I present the internet as a social, racial, and sexual 'field' that replicates the offline world in organizing people in a hierarchy of race, sexuality and desire itself. I argue that this racial hierarchy of desire tells us what bodies, gender performances and sexual positions are valued and imbued with the sexual power to reject lovers without worry, engage in risky behavior without consequence and say who is valued and who is not.

More importantly because of the extent of systemic racism in our society and how it has impacted the lives of people of color, I argue that the racial component of sexual desire holds the deepest dimension of this hierarchy, that is, the salience of race in society constructs bodies and gender performances. It is a history of systemic racism that takes the body and changes its worth based on race, highlights its sexual expectations based on racist stereotypes, and yields privileges and capital based on where that body resides in the racial hierarchy of desire. Thus, I argue that a new theoretical understanding is necessary for use to grasp why men of color are more at risk for HIV/AIDs in the online age of sexual desire. This theory, I call *sexual racism theory*, encapsulates how racism has impacted every aspect of our lives, including our desires, thus illuminating why even among the marginalized among the marginalized, race yields particular capitals that elevate certain actors above others.

### *1.7 Towards a Theory of Sexual Racism*

Sexual racism theoretically is situated within and builds upon the ground work laid out by Feagin et al. (2000, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). Systemic racism

theory understands that anti-Blackness and White racism is based on a "complex array of anti-black practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racist ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power" (Feagin 2000: 6). Reworked from the past and continuing into the present, systemic racism is further maintained with the White Racial Framing (WRF) (Feagin 2010) of society. This framing is a meaning making system developed by Whites in order to create racialized knowledge and understanding that is not only cognitive, but encompasses "racial images, interpretations, emotions, and action inclinations that are closely tied to racial cognitions and understandings therein" (Feagin 2010). Together, the systemic racist structuring and White framing of society allows Whites to unjustly gain politically, economically, and even sexually at the expense of people of color. Where systemic racism theory presents one of the more fully developed understandings of race and racism in social science literature, in contrast, racial desire in terms of sexuality has been under theorized.

The sexual fields framework (Green 2011) presents an attempt to fix this with a complex way in understanding desire. The sexual field "emerges when a subset of actors with potential romantic or sexual interests orient themselves toward one another according to a logic of desirability imminent to their collective relations" constructing systems of stratification (Green 2013:28). Sexual life is connected to particular sites, like a night club or in the case of this study, a website, where people with similar sexual interests, resulting in an erotic habitus. Per Green (2008), the "erotic habitus is a socially

constituted complex of dispositions, appreciations, and inclinations arising from objective historical conditions that mediate the formation and selection of sexual scripts" (p. 614). The erotic habitus is not meant to be an all-encompassing way of understanding sexuality, but more of a sociological way of understanding sexuality connected to the psychological (Green 2013). To the extent that sexual interests in a particular site coalesce, a system of valuation and judgments is created, resulting in a structure of desire. Structures of desire then assign erotic value to bodies, affects, and presentations while rendering others undesirable through the distribution of erotic capital (Green 2013).

Together these concepts, that of systemic racism and the sexual field, help me to understand why a statement like "No fats, fems and Blacks" is so popular online. Combining the two helps to clarify how White supremacy operates at the individual level, in that all sexuality becomes understood through *Ideal White Male Archetype (IWMA)*, resulting in sexual racism. This frame suggests that young, in shape, masculine, White men are the epitome of desirability, reining at the top of the racial hierarchy of desire and exploiting others to stay there. The IWMA, building on a similar concept by Drummond (Drummond 2011), is a necessary concept to connect the principles of the sexual field to the components of systemic racism. This project will explore this concept in more detail in future chapters.

My effort at sexual racism theory helps articulate a sociological understanding of desire, much like Green's (2008), that is tied to a sophisticated understanding of race and racism that encapsulates gender, bodies, and sexuality from the perspective of Whites

and people of color. Where systemic racism theory lacks, is in its ability to account for quotidian racism in desire. Where sexuality is accounted for, it is most often in the way White men exploit and subjugate men and women of color through acts of White-racist framed dominance. In doing this, it makes sense of the negative fears of many, but not all White men who have sex with men of color. Yet, we are still left to wonder what about gay men of color in consensual sexual relationships with White men and the intricacies of homosexuality?

While I am sympathetic to systemic racism's reasoning, a concept more focused on the erotic and sexuality is needed to address the complexities of personal desires and well as the social organizing of desire. Conversely, where the sexual field does in fact equip sociology with a better tool for grappling with sexuality, Green (2008) still maneuvers his way through conceptualizing the erotic by means of the White logic and White methods (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva 2008) of scholars before him, never once questioning the way sexuality scholarship, even those conducted by people of color, continues to operate from White framed epistemological standpoint. This perspective misunderstands how the racist ideology shapes all peoples' understanding of the erotic and how systemic racism limits the autonomy of people of color.

Sexual racism borrows from both theories by capturing the parts that work well together and reworking them to understand sexuality in a new way. From this perspective, I argue in a way that Green (2008) would be unwilling too. *Sexual racism posits that our desires are not our own* but reflections of systemic racism in larger society reflected in sexual fields by means of the *Ideal White Male Archetype*,

reproduced in micro sexual interactions by means of the erotic habitus, and resulting in the distribution of erotic capital in an unequal manner. Racism impacts erotic capital in such a way so that it tells us what bodies, behaviors and sexual practices are desired from and by who and to the benefit of whom. With sexual racism theory, we begin to understand more accurately why men of color are continuously at risk for HIV/AIDS and why White men are less so.

Sexual racism theory has its parameters that can be broken down and understood in four parts. First, sexual racism is White created and White maintained. That is, the role of the owner and creator of A4A and well as the architects of the website must first be considered in order to understand the significance of race in the construction of the sexual field. Much like the White racist founders of the U.S., their ideals and values trickle down into the very foundation of society. The same can be said for the creators of A4A. Thus, the first parameter is the role of White elites in creating the sexual field. Unlike other scholars examining sexual racism (Callander et al. 2016; Green 2011; Robinson 2015), this project includes the White creators into the analysis.

Next, the second parameter of the theory is the racial hierarchy of desire that sexual racism establishes. This hierarchy, by means of the *IWMA*, puts in shape, masculine, and White men at the top of the hierarchy and fat, fem, and Black and Asian men near the bottom. While Green (2008) argues that the men can trade off erotic capital in the sexual field to move up and down the tiers of desirability, I argue that this still maintains sexual racism. For example, while Black men may take up sexually racist stereotypes to offset marginalization (Green 2008), they take up stereotypes created by

Whites for them, thus maintaining White Supremacy. Yet, even though a hierarchy does exist, there is still room for resistance and counter framing from marginalized men that allows them to accentuate their humanity despite sexual racism saying they're not desirable.

Following the racial hierarchy of desire, the third parameter of sexual racism is the ideology of preference. That is, with sexual racism there will always be an accompanying ideology of preference that suggests that all the men have choice in their desires, despite them mostly desiring the same thing. This ideology is language used by sexual racist that disguises their actual intent behind the smiling face of racism. Regardless of the change in sexual field, sexual racism will always have the ideology of preference to hide behind.

Finally, the fourth parameter of sexual racism is its impact in the lives of MSMs. Sexual racism will always have a negative impact in the lives of these men because it will pit the men against each other for the desire of the limited IWMA. It will also tell the men that if they do not fit the IWMA, they are of less value. This devaluing of the MSMs creates a space that is ripe for sexual risk behavior. Thus, sexual risk behavior flourishes where sexual racism remains unchecked. In the results chapters of this project, the four parameters of sexual racism will be explored.

### *1.8 Project Breakdown and Direction*

My project is organized in several chapters. Chapter 2 of this manuscript focuses on the theoretical foundations for this study. That is, I go through the current debates

surrounding race and racism research, from the early schools that saw the construction of race as a solely an idea, to those who argued race is more commonly understood by way of racism. I take this time to explain in detail the strength of the theory I use for this project.

The next part of the chapter then explores the current debates surrounding sexuality work. I graph the path of sexuality research that grew from biological determinism, to functionalism, towards a sociology of sexual life that is tied to social structures. I then make the argument for the sexual field approach to this project as well. The last part of this chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of intersectional work and I examine the prominent research on the intersections of race and sexuality. This helps explain what led me to *sexual racism theory*. I begin by laying out where race scholarship is today and its lack of thorough engagement with sexuality. I then follow this up with a discussion about sexuality work that also fails to properly engage racial theories.

At this crossroads, I engage intersectionality and how it has helped illuminate the relationship between race and sexuality in everyday life. Building from the intersectionality work, I arrive at my theoretical argument for sexual racism. At this point in the chapter, I explore the previous and current theoretical, philosophical, and empirical worked centered on sexual racism as a concept, demonstrating the strengths and limits of past work on the concept and situating my own. I make the argument that we need a theory of sexual racism so that we can tether desire, which is usually seen as individualized, back to the racist social structure. By doing this we can grasp why race is

so prominent in online desire, how it shapes gendered performances and body expectations and the role it plays in sexual risk decisions.

Chapter 3 focuses on the quantitative and qualitative methods I employ throughout the project. While I do conduct a logistical regression analysis to see if there is a difference between racial groups when it comes to condom use, body type and gender role vis-à-vis sex position, I focused most the project on the qualitative means that users engage to negotiate race, gender, and condom use within their online profiles. Taken together, the quantitative method gives me the numbers and the qualitative method explains those numbers.

Chapter 4 is the first results chapter of the project. Here I explain the role of the owner of Adam4adam.com and his engineers, in constructing a website where sexual racism can flourish. This is a top down approach to how systemic racism is replicated in the sexual field of A4A, resulting in the tagline, "no fats, no fems and no Blacks." This chapter connects the *Ideal White Male Archetype* to the White racial framing of several developers of sex apps, explaining how their racial ideas later influence the construction of sex sites and the interactions on those sex sites. This demonstrates the thought process behind the scenes that leads to the development of websites and apps like adam4adam.com, answering the questions relating to how desire is organized offline and on. In this chapter, readers become knowledgeable of how an everyday user of this site comes across body types, gender performance, sexual positioning and race and racism. The reader also learns how the mechanisms of the website help to cater to a vision of what is desirable and thus what all users should strive and compete for.

Chapter 5 centers on the micro interactions of the users of A4A. This chapter reveals the way sexual racism theory results in a hierarchy of desire, with the *Ideal White Male Archetype* being desired in one way or another. In contrast to the tagline "no fats, fems and Blacks," the most desired men are have the ideal body which is a mixture of athletic, lean and muscular. They are also masculine and express their masculinity by disparaging femininity. Whiteness is both normalized and desired, giving erotic meaning to the bodies and gender performances. The most desired men have the most erotic capital and sexual power while those who deviate from the most desired use different forms of erotic capital to make up for their deficit in desirability. The least desired men or most marginalized counter their framing by emphasizing their best attributes and attempting to humanize themselves in the face of loneliness and being ignored.

Chapter 6 of this project explores the ideology of preference that accompanies sexual racism. In this chapter, it is explained how preference provides the ability to "choose" a partner, despite the overarching framing of the *IWMA* as most desired. It also provides cover to men who might be considered sexual racist by progressing the negative language of "no fats, fems and Blacks" to more neutral and positive language like "into" and "prefer." Last, the ideology of preference also uses words that are like or what I call "adjacent" language in place of other words to say something sexually racist while not being sexually racist.

Chapter 7 concludes the results section and ties the entire project together by returning to the question of how sexual racism impacts the lives of gay men through sexual risk and HIV/AIDS. It is done by focusing on the language of sexual risk in

relation to body type, gender performance, and race. Here I delve into how users of the website engage in different sexual negotiations on their profiles based on body type, gender performance, sexual positioning and race. Here we see the minutia that goes into making decisions for sex such as who is interested in what, who is willing to do what, and who is at most risk. I focus on how the men online negotiate condom use using just their profiles. I then answer the question of if there is a difference in those who are willing to put "anything goes" in place of "safe sex only" within their profiles to communicate their willingness for condom-less or bareback sex. I then explain the reasons why this might be.

I finish the project with chapter 8 by concluding my findings, expressing my limitations and pointing the direction for future implications. The imperative in understanding why men of color continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDs demands our attention but in order to understand the complicated and multifaceted reasons why infection maybe higher for men of color, we must examine all the ways that they may be marginalized, such as anti-effeminacy, fat-phobia, and sexual racism. This not only suggests why certain groups maybe more at risk, but how they are as well. By challenging our very assumptions about race and desire, we can begin to piece together how and why things in the digital era aren't getting better.

One point of reference for this project will be the way I oscillate between men who have sex with men (MSM), and gay men. For many men of color, the term gay has been associated with white gay men and a discriminatory White community. Therefore, the adoption of MSM has become a way to associate a sexual behavior outside of a

seemingly White identity. For many men as well, using the term MSM helps to describe behaviors of many of the men who may in fact actually identity as straight. Still, a recent poll has found that more people of color are identifying as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender. For that reason, I use both terms interchangeably in some instances, although I use MSM most commonly. A second point of reference is the fact that this study is centered on men and not all people. Some people might argue that the focus on interracial heterosexual couples is important because the children that are produced from such union's impact race relations and since children cannot be produced in same sex relations, the imperative to study this community does not exist. I counter that studying MSM's is important because it demonstrates new ways in understanding power dynamics for interracial couples, especially in the regards to sexuality when controlling for gender. Also, investigating this project from the perspective of MSM's opens us up to new ways of not only understanding masculinity and gender, but race and racism as well.

### *1.9 Conclusion*

Many factors may be contributing to the increase of HIV in the gay community and among MSMs, including the marginalization of those seen as fat, fem and men of color. This is important to consider because it reveals who is most at risk for infection and who must be targeted in campaigns to decrease the spread of HIV. The advocates *Six-in-Ten-Men* does an excellent job of bringing to light the increasing threat of HIV in gay communities while also daring to stress the importance of also considering gay

racism and its impact on the spread of the disease. Certainly, many factors are causing the HIV crisis in gay communities, including the gutting of funds for HIV testing in states like Texas[11] and a hostile administration towards Black and LGBT rights[1213]. Nonetheless, the gay community itself maybe contributing by marginalizing members who are fat, fem and Black. All these factors must be considered when exploring the causes of the crisis in order to find effective solutions that embrace the multifaceted causes. By taking seriously the way racism impacts our own sexual desires, we may be able to begin the slow process of dismantling racism in the most hard to reach spaces, our own bedrooms.

[11] https://www.texastribune.org/2015/12/22/texas-drops-planned-parenthood-hiv-prevention-prog/
[12] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trumps-antigay-cabinet-and-lgbtq-rights_us_584c7744e4b0171331051158
[13] http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/01/trumps-top-civil-rights-pick-has-bad-record-on-civil-rights.html

# CHAPTER 2:

# TOWARDS A THEORY OF SEXUAL RACISM

## *2.1 Introduction: Theories of Race and Sexuality*

There is much to be said about the current dialogues and debates surrounding theories of race and ethnicity today. These debates often times are based on the ideas of what constitutes race and how is it created, what is racism and how is it employed in everyday life, who is utilizing racism and to what ends, and consequently who is benefitting from these constructions of race and racism in society? To properly engage these current discussions, we must first understand their historical developments, how they arose in the U.S. and changed through time and lastly, how they have reached their current standoff in philosophical and scientific debates. The aim of this section of the chapter is to explore the different racial theories pertaining to inequality. I argue that a theory of systemic racism more accurately captures the historical and structural oppression of people of color in U.S. society than previous theories have done in the past and are doing presently. To defend this position, I will systematically break down the entirety of my argument in three folds: first by establishing the ongoing meaning of race in society and how it began from biological paradigms about racialized others, to the current acceptance in social science literature that 'race' is in fact a social construct; secondly, I will then discuss the relationship of racism to race also through its historical employment by members of society; and lastly, I will discuss how these two conceptual ideas around race and racism have led to the current debate around racial formation in

the US, structural racism in society and systemic racism and how these theories critique each other in an effort to improve the ideas behind them but also build on past histories and ideas in an effort to more accurately describe society. To this end, I will conclude with the new directions racial theory can head towards in order to again describe racial realities in society.

### *2.2 Race and Biological Determinism: Religion, and Science*

The evolving meaning around race through history is important to note because it established ideas about hierarchy. This hierarchical belief in racial groups was divided into two core principals by Gould (1996) that of monogenism or the "scriptural unity of all peoples in the single creation of Adam and Eve (p. 71)," which asserted a degeneration of the races and produced ideas of a great-chain-of being (Feagin 2013) and polygenism which held that 'human races were separate biological species (p. 71). As Feagin (2013) notes, early religious groups established hierarchical ideas about race through the belief that we are all created by God, who sits at the top of this chain and as we descend down we get the other races of man who are distinguished by sin as it's expressed through race. Graves (2001) further supports these early beliefs in this theory when he discusses biblical treatments of race. Giving the example of Noah's son Ham, Graves (2001) argues that misappropriation of the story during the 2$^{nd}$ and 6$^{th}$ century A.D. have allowed religious leaders for centuries to claim that black skin was a result of the sin of Ham and therefore justified Blacks lowly positions in the racial hierarchy. As the enlightenment led on, ideas about race changed and polygenist beliefs that the

European and Black racial groups were so different that they could not possibly be from the same race became popularly promoted through pseudoscience. As Miles & Brown (2003) state, “with the development of science during the Enlightenment, 'race' took on a new meaning.” From this time, race increasingly came to refer to a biological type of human being, and science purported to demonstrate the number and characteristics of each 'race', and a hierarchical relationship between them (p.39)."As Gould (1996) discusses, craniometry was then used by leading scientist Morton to prove that there was a cranial distinction between racial groups which demonstrated their capacity to learn and retain knowledge. These scientific beliefs in the validity of the biology of race despite its historical development and transformation has led to gross atrocities in society including the eugenics movement, the social and political power behind the Nazi movement in Germany and present day I.Q. testing in the U.S. (Gould 1996; Graves 2001; Dupre 2008; Carter 2007; Bolnick 2008). As these atrocities developed based on false and untestable assumptions, other scientist established that ‘race’ in fact was a social construction based on widely held beliefs about said racial groups and loosely defined by arbitrary characteristics.

### *2.3 Race as a Social Construct: Racial Groupings, Caste Systems and Hierarchy*

The idea of ‘race’ was not static either but changed through time and by circumstance to adjust to the political needs of the time (Miles & Brown 2003) although theories often during this period conflated its meaning with caste systems in order to explain away the racial hierarchy. This is thoroughly explained in the work of the

pioneering and radical African American sociologists Cox (1948) and W.E.B. Dubois (1940). One of the first proponents of the racial construction of 'race' was Cox (1948) who defined 'race' as "any people who are distinguished, or consider themselves distinguished, in social relations with other people, by their physical characteristics (p. 402)." Here, we see how racial grouping takes place by outsiders of that group socially defining them as a 'race' as well as the insiders of that group defining themselves as a 'race'. This can be seen in the work of Dubois (1940). As Dubois (1940) described his genealogy and family line, we see how for African Americans race was tied to an in-group association with Africa as a continent. Yet, Dubois did not have a family tie to the actual continent and his parents never came from Africa. Race then meant his exploration and journey into finding a place with a racial group and developing an identity based on that "race." Dubois (1940) demonstrated the constant changing of the concept of race throughout different periods of his life. Once again, the way 'race' was used to establish racial hierarchies becomes clear.

Still, early theories about racial groups conflated racial grouping with caste systems. Within his work, Cox (1945), aimed to show that race relations are not the same as a caste systems and he used the Indian caste system as an example of this. Caste systems, Cox (1945) argued, are based on heredity and hierarchy while race relations are *more based on competitive exploitation*. Cox argued that the race system in the US arose out of the need to keep Blacks in the working class. The slave master distinguishes his role from the slave through exploitation while there is no need to justify the lowly position of those born into it in caste systems because they accept their positions in life

(Cox 1945). There are not bosses or slave owners keeping people in their place so that they can have production because in a caste system goods produced by the lower caste are kept for that caste (Cox 1945). The way in which Cox (1945) establishes the difference between the two systems highlights how *racist ideology* was needed to justify the slave master having domination over the slave and how this ideology affected the scientific racism of the time and resulted in the conflation of race and ethnicity and race and caste systems in racial theory. It is this moment that theories of race and ethnicity begin to spend less time defining 'race' per se and more time understanding how these definitions of race give way to racism.

To sum what has been discussed, I have demonstrated how historical ideas about particular topics have affected the current debates of race and ethnicity thus far. One of the critical conceptualizations in these theories is that of race and I have utilized historical research to illuminate its position as an important issue in today's debates. Up to this point, you will see how I used quotations over race in order to signify the historical changes to its meaning and the social construction of its essence. I use the concept of 'race' to explain its development from one of a religious ideology, to that of a scientific form of measurement, and lastly to its role in the establishment of racial hierarchies. I do this in order to set up how the current debate around racial formation, structural racism and systemic racism align and differ in their approach to 'race'. Before I can begin that discuss, we must explore how the idea of 'race' developed into the ideology of racism.

### *2.4 Racism as the ideology of Race*

The following section will show the evolution of theories of race and ethnicity as they developed from ideas about race into ideas about racist ideology. To do this I will begin with the class based ideas of race and racism that sought to describe the relationship of the two with each other and then how they grew into race based theories of oppression. This will then lead us to the present day debates. By doing this, I will be able to show the shift in paradigmatic thinking around race and how this continues into the current debate over racial formation and systemic racism.

In order to demonstrate how racism operated in society, theorist began to explain how racism was utilized in order to accomplish specific feats. To be clear, I argue above how 'race' was not necessarily a fixed term but historically a malleable one that was socially constructed and widely used to establish a racial hierarchy in society. From here I seek to show how racism is then used to defend this hierarchy. As Miles & Brown (2003) noted, "Magnus Hirschfeld set out to refute arguments about hierarchical races in his work in 1933 titled *Racism* but he did not distinguish it from xenophobia (p. 59)." By not explaining the difference between the two, Hirschfeld (1933) did not exactly explain what racism was or how it operated differently from xenophobia. Miles and Brown (2003) then aim to explain this difference. According to them, the concept of racism is utilized in the scientific and philosophical body of literature at that point in two ways. One was the growing body of evidence that undermined the idea of racial groups as

natural, discreet and fixed (Miles & Brown 2003) as discussed in the race as biology section of this paper. The other was a reaction to fascism in Germany and Hitler's claim to the inferiority of the Jewish race (Miles & Brown 2003) as mentioned by Hirschfeld. Ideas about racism continued to change as arguments about the discursive nature of racism took shape. The point then is not so much about whether or not 'race' is real, to the contrary, 'race', according to Miles & Brown (2003), is irrelevant to the discussion.

Racism as an ideology is what is important and that racism is part of the human condition and relied on superiority/inferiority complexes as well as "othering." Since then, writers have taken the study of racism in two directions, either racism is a process that results in the exclusion of a group or racism is activities and practices intended to protect the advantages of a dominant group (Miles & Brown 2003). In Carmichael and Hamilton's (1968) work, which is part of the bases of the Black intellectual tradition, they defined racism as "the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group (p.3)." This definition of racism distinguished between overt individual racism and covert institutional racism and laid the ground work for current structure and institutional based theories proposed by Feagin (2010) and Bonilla-Silva (2010). In fact, Feagin and Bonilla-Silva draw heavily from this Black radical tradition including; W. E. B. Du Bois, Oliver C. Cox, Derrick Bell, Bob Blauner, Kwame Ture, George Fredrickson, Bell Hooks, and Joyce Ladner, to name a few, establishing theories of institutional, structural, and systemic racism in the process that would go on and inspire this current project.

Miles & Brown (2003), on the contrary, reject these arguments based on racial essentialism, countering with the fact that there is a long history of Whites being involved in anti-racist movements (Miles & Brown 2003), while failing to consider these Whites role, however minute, in maintaining racism. They offer instead a theory of racism that is rooted in class struggles. Racism, per Miles & Brown (2003) is "the specific form of evaluation representation that is a specific instance of wider (descriptive) process of racialization that is necessarily a contradicting phenomenon, with only the effectivity of racism known" (P. 109). Racialization then is "a process of categorization, a representational process of defining the Other, and is historically specific (Miles & Brown 2003: 103).

With the major publication of *Racism* by Miles & Brown in 2003, we see how race is no longer important to the argument but the historically contingent racialization process that yields specific racism during specific times. Therefore, in a capitalist society, race is used by the bourgeois to divide the classes amongst themselves and racism is used to maintain the division. This version of racism certainly had its critiques. As Hall (1980) points out, the idea of ignoring race seems misplaced because it is an open political construct and even though 'race' maybe in a biological sense not a real phenomenon, it has real life implications. An example of the idea of race operating in society, he says, can be seen in the Civil Rights movement of the 60s where people united behind the idea belonging to a race and establishing a racial group movement (Hall 1980).

As we move from ideas about race and ethnicity in the earlier part of the twentieth century and into ideas about racism in the 60s, 70s and 80s, major advances in how race and racism operate begin to take fold. Where Miles & Brown (2003) argued the process of racialization, much of their theoretical perspective on this process is shared with, in part, Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation theory of the United States, a prominent theoretical apparatus, in the realm of race and ethnicity. Taking a cue from Hall (1980), Omi and Winant (1994) traced the transformation in thinking about race and racism from the 1960s to the 1990s by exploring the political and social events of those times. Omi and Winant (1994) argued that the voting rights movements and boycotts to desegregate public facilities led to another great paradigm shift in intellectual thinking; from biological reality, to ethnicity and caste based conceptions, to constructionist ideas of race and then to class and nation based views that contested hegemony. As a result, a new social movement took shape due to the contestations over the social meanings of race, creating new collective identities and ushering in a wave of democratic reform (Omi & Winant 1994:138).

Omi and Winant (1994) suggest, unlike Miles & Brown (2003), that race should be considered but as an organizing principal of society that works to shape the social life of all people and influences the identity of individuals. They define racial formation as "the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi & Winant 1994: 55). This process is historically situated, much like Miles & Brown's (2003) theory, but linked to the evolution of hegemony by way of racial projects or the "interpretation, representation, or explanation

of racial dynamics and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along racial lines (Omi & Winant 1994: 56). With this being said, racism according to Omi and Winant (1994: 71), is part of a racial project that reproduces structures of domination based on the essentialization of a race and they conclude that based on this, anyone can be racist. Instead, the state acts as the site for racial contestation and minorities and non-minorities alike can develop identities based on this.

Up to this moment in the history of the race and ethnicity debate, there were no real alternatives to the class based models. Omi and Winant (1994) offered an alternative that centralized the role of race and racism more immediately. Still, the theory was limited. As Bonilla-Silva (1997) wrote, with its emphasis on racism as an ideology, the proper attention to racial groups as social collectives take a back seat to their racial projects. In order to address the inadequacies of racial formation theory, Bonilla-Silva (1997) developed his own structural approach that accepted Miles & Brown's (2003) racialization process as well as Omi & Winant's (1994) idea of race as an independent social organizing principal in society.

### *2.5 Racism as a Social Structure of Society*

Calling this present form of racism *Color-Blind* racism, Bonilla-Silva (2010) sought to explain through a structural examination, how most Whites today would say they are not racist but racial differences in life outcomes are still possible. This colorblind racism allowed Whites to rationalize inequality as a product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and Blacks cultural limitations (Bonilla-Silva

2010: 2). For Bonilla-Silva (2010), ‘race’ is still a social construct but racism for Whites is individual prejudice and racism for Blacks and other minorities is systemic or institutional. He also argues that a racial structure does exist, as this chapter has suggested and that this racial structure gives way to a hierarchy with Whites at the top.

To maintain this order, a racial ideology is utilized with four basic frameworks, abstract liberalism or the idea that individual choice is an excuse for racial unfairness, naturalization as the belief that racism is a natural occurrence, cultural racism or the idea that deficiencies in minorities cultures are to blame and minimization of racism or the declining significance of racism, that justify the status quo. This structural interpretation maintains the idea that racism is an everyday occurrence and normalized through color-blind racism in society. Up to this point, ‘race’ has moved from a biological fact that described inequality in society to a social construction that is central to the racial formation thesis purported by Omi & Winant (1994). For this reason, systemic and structural theorists have been critical of its usage whereas with colorblind racism, racism becomes more of the central component to the theory and to the maintenance of White on Black oppression. This brings us to the most current and I argue most thorough articulation of racial theory in the U.S. today, that of Feagin’s (2006) theory of systemic racism.

As I mentioned, the aim of this section of the chapter is to explain why systemic racism is the soundest of these theories, and to do so, I must revisit how I reached this conclusion. Earlier theories of race and racism again argued that race was a biological reality or religious truth, conflated with caste and ethnic theories, socially constructed

and ignored by Miles & Brown (2003) in place of racism, placed front and center by Omi and Winant (1994) with racism possible by all people, and structured through a racialization process by EBS (2010) in which a new discursive practice of color-blind racism shielded Whites from criticism of racism. Systemic racism (Feagin 2006) is a theory to interpret the racialized character, structure and development of U.S. society and it maintains a deliberate, structural based idea of racism but identifies more accurately that elite White males are mostly at the center of its creation and that all whites maintain it. This then explains the purposeful positioning of elite White males such as religious leaders in the 16th and 17th century in their justification of the cruel system of slavery and the elite white male scientist who purposefully established supposed objective science to support the lowered positioning of Blacks in society.

Where Omi and Winant (1994) argue that race is mostly a political principal, Feagin and Elias (2013) make it clear that race based oppression was a foundational component to the development of US society and argue that Omi and Winant's failure to attach 'race' to the racial structure renders the theory incapable of understanding the racial realities of minorities in U.S. society. If Omi & Winant (2009) have an issue with Feagin's (2006) white on black oppression focus, Feagin & Elias (2013) have countered that Europeans have centered the oppression of Blacks in the development of U.S. society, and that they serve as the archetype of oppression for all other racial groups. Had Whites central and powerful role in shaping attitudes about race been focused on by Omi & Winant (1994), Feagin & Elias (2013) argue that racial realities in the U.S. would be more accurately understood. Also lacking from Omi & Winant's (1994) theory

but accentuated in EBS's theory (2010) is the racial hierarchy established among the different 'racial groups.'

Systemic racism as argued by Feagin (2006) accepts this hierarchy but also suggests that this hierarchy is maintained by thoughts, feelings and behaviors of all Whites because they have a stake in its maintenance. To explain this, the White Racial Frame (WRF) is utilized in order to understand how Whites have passed on these ideas of racial inferiority through generations. In understanding how racism operates, Omi & Winant (1994) employ an apple to oranges argument that all racial groups can be racist. This, according to Feagin & Elias (2013), is only possible by explicitly ignoring the racial histories and power and privileges of Whites over Blacks in society. To this end, systemic racism more accurately captures the processes ignored in previous theories of race and current theories by Omi & Winant as well as EBS because it names the actors involved in the perpetuation and the maintenance of racism, attaches current realities about race and racism to historical ideas about them through discussions of slavery (Feagin 2010), the development of U.S. society (Feagin 2000) and uses the White Racial Frame to better explain how feelings, thoughts and ideas about racism are generationally maintained. Feagin's (2006) use of an extended case study of U.S. history as well as the empirical evidence deduced from his hundreds of interviews helps further support his theory.

### *2.6 Racial Theory Conclusion*

In this section, I have aimed to do several things in order to bring us a clear understanding of racial theory to this point in society and the ongoing debates surrounding some of the major theories. I did this because it connects the reader to the major theoretical thinkers of the time on race and racism and because tracing the historical development of these theories enabled me to establish *how* certain theories developed and *why* they did as well as how they are being used today. I also did this so that the failure of mainstream racial-ethnic theories (biology based, religion based, class based) to consider theoretically accenting institutional racism (EBS 2010) as well as systemic racism (Feagin 2006) was more clearly understood. To explain the conceptual issues in these areas, I chose to explore the historical development of race and the historical utilization of racism in regards to theories of race/ethnicity. This way I could explain how race was used and is currently being used to explain social facts and how racism developed and is currently understood. I argued towards the end of this section that systemic racism is currently the most clearly developed theory on racism today and used its criticism of racial formation theory to maintain this position. Certainly, systemic racism is not without its drawbacks. Current debates surrounding gender oppression and sexual oppression of minorities can demand that the theory expand to incorporate these other groups in order to more accurately tie in their oppression with those that are racially oppressed.

## *2.7 Theories of Sexuality*

Up until the coining of the term intersectionality, research on gender, sexuality, and race were often times thought of as exclusive in the social sciences. Conceptual ideas about sex for instance almost always saw the theories of race as completely different in the histories of their development and exclusive to the research methods employed. Intersectionality allowed these supposed distinct worlds to collide and revealed new forms of analysis of the material world not before considered. Being that this was not always so, it is important to consider the development of sexuality in the social sciences and how it eventually embraced intersectional analysis for the larger project on race, gender and sexuality. To that end, the aim of this section of the chapter is twofold, to discuss how sociology makes sexuality comprehendible in terms of measurement, analysis, and subjective experience by exploring the historical development of the science as well as how the incorporation of intersectionality into sexuality research is moving the study of sexuality forward in the analytical sense by understanding the impacts of race and gender on sexuality. To do this, I will begin first considering the research models employed in the sciences for the study of sex and sexuality in order to ground a current understanding of sex in a constructed history as well as to utilize this moment as a means to increase knowledge on some of the major foundational thinkers on the science of sex. After this, I will consider the work of some scholars of sex on the intersections sexuality has with other majorly studies theories such as race and gender and how these studies are moving the science forward in our thinking about sex. Lastly, I will engage in an exploration of my past empirical research on these

intersections, and how currents modes of thought about sex will help me consider new pathways for my research to go. To this end, the hope is to demonstrate not only my knowledge on the field of sexuality, but how this knowledge pertains to my own research agenda and how it impacts the empirical world I analyze.

### *2.8 Sexuality as Biology*

The development of the scientific study of sexuality has a short but interesting history that takes us from the psycho-analytical realm of psychological studies, to the structural word of modern day sociology and the post-structural world of historical and philosophical analysis and beyond. Earlier researchers remained consistent on their suggestion that sexuality was a biological reality and conducted studies based off this assumption. For example, Weeks (Weeks 1985) and Robinson (Robinson 1976) "believed that they could explain the properties of the complex of sexuality by reference to an inner truth or essence and they set out to discover this truth in biology, to devise a "science of sex" which would reveal a single, basic, uniform pattern ordained by nature itself" (p. 2). What developed from zoology as a study of the mating habits of certain mammals came the belief that sex was biologically driven behavior for homo-sapiens as well leading to the belief that sex was a natural, biological and unchanging force from birth on to adulthood (Stein 1989). There were early flaws in this thinking that led to different forms of analysis because as Stein (1989) argued, that by "drawing a strict separation between the researcher as "subject" and sex as "object" of study, such positivistic explanations failed to consider that humans, unlike animals, have the

capacity for self-reflection, and that this capacity plays a powerful role in shaping the expression of seemingly physical drives" (p. 3). That is, unlike an animal that may be solely pushed by biological mechanisms to mate, humans worked out mating patterns in the mind, giving rise Freudian (1905) thoughts of sexuality.

Sigmund Freud (1905) revealed operations of sexuality via analyzing the psycho-analytical relationship between subject and patient. Klein (1976) argues that Freud worked on sexuality from predominantly two perspectives, the clinical theory method that look at the values and meaning associated with sensual experiences form childhood to adulthood as well as the meta-psychological theory that emphasized sexuality as a force that needed discharge. Freud believed that the libidos of a child lead them to want or desire their parents in an incestuous manner but that social norm would teach the child to repress their sexuality (Freud 1905). This repression as a child stays with them as they mature into adults but as adults it allows them to express themselves in unique ways, thus advancing civilization (Freud 1905). Essentially, Freud (1905) argues that sexual repression from childhood to adulthood is a building block of society but, he continues, if these sexual urges do not have a proper object for which to be channeled, sexual perversions were the result, i.e. homosexuality and lesbianism. So, Freud's theory, based on the assumption that sexuality was a "drive," produces a universal theory of sexual development that became the model of psychological studies of sex at the time but it did not take into account sexual diversity and social change (Stein 1989). Freud's (1905) theory then moves us beyond the biological determinism of early sexology (Weeks 1985) but his drive model was solely focused on the family structure of children and

their parents that it failed to consider the way society may influence sexual desire and behavior outside as well as within the family (Stein 1989). This is where we begin to see the beginning of sexual functionalism and how developed from earlier assumptions about sexual drives but incorporated the impact of society on sexuality.

### *2.9 Sexuality as Functionalism*

From here, functionalist sexuality grew out of the sociology of sexuality, using the assumptions of sexual drives developed by Freud (1905) but insinuating that society played more of a primal role in the development of sexuality because society is what determined marriage was a better institution than any other and to a lesser extent religion played a role in normalizing sexuality (Stein 1989). Still there were flaws in this method of thinking as it was tied to the functioning of sexuality and the notion that this function in society was then internalized (Stein 1989). Couple this with the work of Kinsey et al.'s (1948) and Humphries (1970) study of the undercover sexual relations of men in public restrooms, and the end of functionalist studies of sexuality were all but certain (Stein 1989). Kinsey's and company surveyed American middle class families on such ideas as homosexuality, masturbation and premarital sex in relation to class, gender and age and found to the surprise of many Americans that human sexuality was fluid in many ways and could be mapped across along a continuum (Kinsey 1948). As Kinsey (1948) states,

> "Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor

> all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex. . . . (p. 897)."

Kinsey (1948) helped us see beyond the normalized ideas produced in the social structure and how they impacted everyday beliefs regarding sex by demonstrating empirically that this was not necessarily the norm in middle class America. Humphrey's (1970) work had much the same effect, calling into question those who are made deviant in society by showing such deviant behavior is often times normally engaged by those less than expected. Humphrey followed some men, some presumably straight and some gay, as they engaged in sexual acts within public restrooms or what the gay men called "tearooms" or spaces where gay men meet for sexual activity. There, they engage in oral sex or mutual masturbation with 'trade' or men who do not consider themselves as homosexual (Humphrey 1970).

This work complicated again the societal belief that one was either homosexual and ill-respected in society or heterosexual and praised by not only showing how men who considered themselves heterosexual during the majority of their lives could seemingly engage in homosexual behavior at particular moments, but that many times these men were in fact the most respected men in society, from lawyers and politicians,

to businessmen and doctors (Humphrey 1970). Post-functionalist like Kinsey (1948) and scientists like Humphrey's (1970) studies on human sexuality and behavior called into question these ideas of socially produced sexual norms that are then internalized by individuals (Stein 1989). Kinsey's (1948) scale that put homosexuality and heterosexuality on a continuum debunked this belief (Stein 1989).

### *2.10 Sexuality as Symbolic Interactionism*

Still Kinsey's (1948) work, and to a much less degree Humphrey's (1970) work drew links between sexuality and the structure while failing to properly grapple with sexuality and the self. This gave rise to identity models of sexuality founded in symbolic interactions which "combined a critique of internalization with an extension of socialization's relevance to the individual, incorporating elements from interpretive and behaviorist viewpoints (Stein 1989: 6)." In relation to the scientific study of sexuality, interactionism described "the processes by which sexual meanings are negotiated through interaction (Stein 1989: 6)." In this sense, "sex is not a drive; it has no existence outside of society but is itself a product of social forces, shaped through daily overt influences, part of a lifelong learning process" (Gagnon, J. H. and Simon, William. (1973) as cited in Stein 1989: 6). Therefore, sexual behavior was a result of interactive processes that created sexual scripts.

Gagnon & Simon (1973) built their scientific study of sexuality from out of Kinsey's (1948) work and sought to explain how sexual scripts worked in society, off the assumption that everyone seeks out sexual gratification and it is through socialization

that we learn what means and ways we can fulfill that gratification. As they saw it and pushed within their work, “the sexual takes on its shape and meaning from its social character” and that "implicit audiences and explicit audiences (i.e., the self and others as audience) are present in every sexual encounter and the judgments and views of these audiences are considered, even if only in their denial” (Simon & Gagnon 2003: 492).

### *2.11 Sexuality as Labeling Theory*

From the symbolic interactionist theory of sexuality that dominated sexuality studies up to this point, labeling theory sprung fourth into the lexicon. Labeling theorist argued that fixed social roles constrained behavior, creating deviant people such as those in Humphrey’s (1970) study and categories to put those people into (Stein 1989). Mary McIntosh’s (1968) work is the pivotal examination of such labels. The aim of her work was to problematize the way science and society had constructed the homosexual as abnormal (McIntosh 1968). Going through and comparing the homosexual role in different societies, she established that the homosexual role was not fixed but malleable and what being a homosexual is and what is expected of the homosexual change depending on the time and context (McIntosh 1968). McIntosh (1968) called out other sociologist who worked from the assumption that homosexuality was deviant, suggesting that the label only worked to make heterosexuality the norm, stating that “for it is not until he sees homosexuals as a social category, rather than a medical or psychiatric one, that the sociologist can begin to ask the right questions about the specific content of the

homosexual role and about the organization and functions of homosexual groups" (McIntosh 1968:192).

Other sociologist like Weeks (1985) and D'Emilio (1983) continued to build off of this tradition and began to see the homosexual as an identity instead of just sexual behavior and as socially constructed based on combined nature and nurture arguments. Still, symbolic interactionists and labelist were not able to answer how desire developed in the individual and on the macro level what created and enforced certain environments that made specific sexual scripts more desirable then others? (Stein 1989), bringing Foucault (1978) into focus within the sociology of sexuality.

### *2.12 Sexuality as Power*

Current sociological trends in the study of sexuality are embracing the work of Foucault (1978) more readily than ever before. One of the first sociological writers to call for this was Namaste (1994). Namaste's (1994) work goes through the history of postmodernism according to Foucault (1978) and Derreda (1967) and explains how Foucault focuses on discursive developments of sexual identities and contrasts this with how Derrida (1967) talks about boundary formation and how what is normalized discursively creates these boundaries. Namaste (1994) calls upon sociologist to think of ways to work inside and outside of these boundaries by incorporating both Foucault (1978) and Derrida (1967). This will allow queer theory to be incorporated into sociology thinking and more accurately include trans and bisexual people while also understanding how heterosexuality is constructed and theorized (Namaste 1994).

Certainly, to speak to Foucault we must know more accurately what he was arguing and theorizing and to do this we need look no further than his own *History of Sexuality*. Foucault (1978) argued that everything from the media, police, and family, to religion, education, and medicine mobilized sexuality into heterosexual, monogamous marriage and punished anything that deviated from this norm through surveillance and early socialization that included forms of stigmatization against those that did not follow the norm. From the Foucault (1978) perspective, sexuality is viewed as a power struggle between censorship and liberation with systems of control determining the outcome of sexuality. Power, per Foucault (1978), is the "multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" and whose "general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies" (Foucault 1978: 92-93). In other words, "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" (1978: 93). From this position, power must be understood from a bottom up approach and not a top down approach. This means that power can then be embodied by people and not necessarily something people have and it can be discursive and used in language and not just utilized as a means to force people to behave certain ways (Gaventa 2003: 1). For Foucault (1978), power is not a force that can be wielded as a means of domination and therefore there are neither structures involved nor the agency of people. By using the prison system as an example, Foucault (1978) was able to describe how surveillance systems produced norms in society in regards to sexual behavior. This in turn creates a discursive

body of knowledge that defines what is normal (Foucault, 1978). This perspective adds to the constructionist paradigm by adding power to the conversation.

But there are limits to this thinking as well. As Stein (1989) says, "Foucault fails to provide an understanding of either the grassroots reality that was the object of strategies of control, or a real sense of how that control might be resisted (p. 10)." Precisely, this is indirect contrast with other research including those conducted by Laumann et al. (2004) which suggested Foucault's (1978) take on power is detached from the social structure and limiting to agency. Evidence to the contrary can be found in the literature on the gay community that has suggested that there is in fact gay resistance to the safe-sex paradigms and "consistently high rates of premarital sexual activity and the liberalization of attitudes toward sexuality" all seem to point to the declining influence of surveillance through the socializing powers of religion or family (Joyner & Laumann 2001 as cited in Laumann et. al 2004: 25).

### *2.13 Sexuality as a Social Structure*

Laumann (2004), in contrast to Foucault, has established himself as one of the top sociologist in the field of sexuality, helping the field currently grasp how to measure and analyze sexuality while also incorporating the subjective experience. He uses the sexual market metaphor because the social organization of sexual partnering and sexual relationships within the concept help to clarify how "local social and cultural structures" (Laumann et.al 2004:8) increase or decrease chances for sexual liaisons. Laumann et. al (1994) argue that desire for sexual partners is not something innate or biological but

social, reinforcing past theoretical and empirical work but utilizing the stratification of society in the realm of sexuality. This means that depending on the way people are socially stratified and who makes up their social networks will influence who they pursue in terms of sexual liaisons (Laumann et. al 1994). This is in contrast to previous beliefs that sexuality was solely biologically motivated and society merely constrained sexual relations (Laumann et. al 1994). Considering the local and cultural structures and using the allegory of the markets and marketplaces, it becomes more understandable how the way in which neighborhoods, locations and networks that are socially stratified within cities, towns, or spaces affect the way in which people desire, engage, and meet potential sex partners. To put it another way, Laumann and colleagues state that, "we emphasize the way in which social embeddedness in personal networks, meaning systems and sexual scripts, local organizations, and urban spaces leads to different patterns of sexual partnering, sexual behaviors and sexual-relationship outcomes" (2004:8).

Currently, recent researchers have critiqued and built on the dominance of Laumann's work in order to move sexuality in a scientifically more concise direction, bringing us to the current literature in the sociology of sexuality. Martin & George (2006) take to task the concept of the sexual market as well as the circular arguments made in Laumann's (2004) work. The sexual market place begins with discussion about the importance of norms but often times ends up without any norms per se, demonstrating the problem of sociological studies using the market metaphor to explain social regulation (Martin & George 2006). As a result, the market metaphor fails because

it “dissolves into tautology when there are unobservable utility functions” (p.114) and no objects are exchange that carry prices, making it hard to “separate the price of the object, its utility for a purchaser, its intrinsic value, and the object itself” (p. 114). Utilizing Bourdieu’s (1980) field theory, Martin & George (2006) used the analytic of the sexual field and theory of sexual capital to not only describe the social organizing of desire, but to also formulate an understanding of it that does not have the answer built into it. Adam Green has furthered this step in the analytics of sexuality in sociology by writing about the social organizing of desire with a sexual fields approach (2008).

According to Green (2008) the sexual field has three structural features, structures of desire, tiers of desirability and the distribution of erotic capital or the traits in an individual that elicit an erotic response. The structures of desire are reflected in the “bodies, fashion, décor, local print med, sexual practices, and sexual identities” of its actors and they are “the source of a field’s currency of erotic capital and tiers of desirability” (p. 32). These actors are then stratified in the field via tiers of desirability revolve around physical, stylish and affective features that hold erotic value (Green 2008). The way the erotic capital is distributed depends on what site the distribution takes place, the actors involved and what capital they have, and lastly the occasion they are in (Green 2008).

Green’s work (2008) bring us to the point in the history of sexual analysis within sociology that the particulars of intersectionality were used to describe erotic desires, the area in which my work is currently situated. By examining how gay men exchange their erotic capital during sexual liasions, Green (2008) found that “Black gay men engaged in

a pattern of effective and behavioral negotiations," that includes taking up Black sexual stereotypes enforced in the dominant society such as emphasizing penis size to reaffirm the myth of the Black mandingo as well as deemphasizing their Black facial features, to increase their erotic capital. Also the Black men would take up "the enactment of sexual practices to offset sexual marginality" (Green 2008:27) such as engaging in unprotected sex with more desirable White men. In the case of Black men, Green (2008) argued they use erotic capital as currency in exchange for mobility up tiers of desirability. Green's (2008) work more readily engaged an intersectional analysis and set the grounds for my own future work (Smith 2014), bringing us to the current trajectory in sexuality research that analyzes the erotic world with a sexuality, gender performance, and race intersection. But what future sexuality work must do is not only utilize intersectionality as a framework for the study of sexuality, but also it should be used to bring past theoretical frameworks into discussion with each other, in order to capture the nuanced ways certain oppression's operate in society.

### *2.14 Sociology as Intersectionality*

Intersectionality, as coined by Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) is a frame of analysis that seeks to examine how different structures of oppression impact the lives of given actors, in her case, those of Black women in the legal system. This was furthered by Collins (2000) in her work on black sexuality and Black feminist thought, as she pushed researchers to consider the historical and current ways sexuality and race intersected in the lives of people of color. Currently, the discussion of intersectionality has allotted for

scholars of race and scholar of sexuality to reveal new ways to understand how the two influence each other, as race and sexuality happen simultaneously and not without each other. Given the work of Sommerville (2000) as she analyzed the historical development of race and sexuality against the color-line, we see how scientific racism of the time happened alongside the development of the medicalizing and institutionalizing of homosexuality. This coincidence was not an accident, but purposeful, as the science at the time aimed to keep Blacks and Whites from engaging in sex that could result in mixed race infants, children viewed as the epitome of queer. Studies such as these do not take for granted in the way that Green's (2008) might, that systems of sexual stratification and racial stratification are often times happening simultaneously and affecting the way the erotic is conceptualized. This brings us to my critique of Green's work and where I find my research heading.

Green develops a theory of sexuality and ways to measure this theory that are often times divorced from a theory of race and racism. As a result, he almost suggests that Blacks and White actors have erotic capital that can be exchange in the sexual field equally. By not naming White gay men as the main culprits behind the sexual racism gay men face in the gay community, he ignores the fact that gay Black men may exchange erotic capital but only to the pleasing of gay white men. That is, the competition in the sexual field, if we may, is for the attention of gay White men, therefore Whiteness is valued above all. Being Black, no matter how much erotic capital you have, will always limit you in the sexual field. Racism is arguably one of the more powerful traits of the field, as it dictates who has erotic capital and why. This brings me to my final point, as

Holland (2012) has suggested, sexuality work need to move in a new direction, one where sexual frameworks are put into dialogue with critical race frameworks, and one where Black feminist dialogue is incorporated into sexual and racial dialogue. Together, they can begin to see the erotic life of racism.

Imperative to this current study is the way that intersectional work has examined how race and sexuality impact interracial relationships on and offline. For instance, heterosexual studies on the intersections of race and sexuality in regards to dating and relationships have found that women in general prefer Whites as partners over others (Tsunokai, McGrath, and Kavanagh 2014) and that White women in particular are more exclusive in terms of dating than White man (Hwang 2013). In terms of potential dates, Whites tend to be exclusive to each other and exclude Blacks as potential partners (Herman and Campbell 2012; Lundquist and Lin 2015), and even education does not change this factor as college students are still more likely to exclude Blacks as potential partners (Bany, Robnett, and Feliciano 2014; McClintock 2010). While Whites are the least likely to date outside their race, Asians and Latinos also are least likely to date Blacks (Robnett 2011). These partners are not exclusive to the U.S. as places such as Sweden and Australia also demonstrate that Whites are usually most preferred and Arabs and Blacks least (Jakobsson and Lindholm 2014; Riggs 2013).

Studies regarding the intersections of race and sexuality in relationship to dating for homosexual men have also concluded similar things. Regarding a sample of online profiles of urban men, Asian men were the least desired racially for sex (White et al. 2014) and marginalized in the gay community (C. Han 2008). More notably, studies

have suggested that a racial hierarchy exist in gay spaces with Whites and Latinos as usually the more desirable men and gay men of all racial groups preferring to date Whites rather than non-Whites (Robinson 2007; Tsunokai et al. 2014).

The connection of race studies with those of sexuality studies through intersectionality is vital here because it demonstrates that the manner in which individuals discriminate against potential sexual and relationship mates in intimate settings is similar to the manner that others discriminate in public settings. For example, employers use similar examples of desirability in potential employees when it comes to work in the private sector (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). Landlords also use race in determining who they want to rent to (Ewens, Tomlin, and Wang 2014; Hanson and Hawley 2011). Finally, banks have been known to racially discriminate against non-Whites regarding loans for housing and businesses (Kau, Keenan, and Munneke 2012). Connecting the larger work on race and racism with the work on sexuality demonstrates how the intersections work in similar fashions, operating from the same logic of individual 'preference'.

To conclude, I have traced the history of the science of sexuality from biological determinism to Freudian psycho-analysis, and from constructionist in sociology to discursive practice in the Foucault tradition, from sexual markets and sexual fields, finally, to intersections of race, gender, and sexuality and the erotic. By doing this, we are able to see how sociology makes sexuality comprehensible in terms of measurement, analysis, and subjective experience and how my work fits into this framework.

### *2.15 Defining Sexual Racism*

One of the issues concerning sexual racism studies are that they tend to describe similar patterns about the same phenomenon but never in detail describe what the phenomenon is. That is, many times scholars use weak concepts like prejudice and discrimination to define sexual racism (Callander et al. 2012; Plummer 2008). Or they just fail to give a satisfactory definition to sexual racism period, never mentioning that it is White created and disseminated racism that organizes sexual desire. Is sexual racism about individual preferences? Is it about constructing particularly racialized bodies in certain sexual ways? Is it about cultural interactions regarding sex between racial groups or is it about social structures? If it is about social structures, then who is responsible for the social structures? The following section explores the most prominent studies regarding sexual racism with the goal of situate this current study within the parameters of these past studies. The result is clarity in who creates and maintains sexual racism and how it reproduces itself in different ways.

The first group of studies by Stember (1976), Plummer (2008), Tobias Coleman (2012), and Bedi (2015) seemed to define sexual racism as something relating to racial preference in individual actors. Callander et al (2012, 2015, 2016) empirically tested these definitons to see if this form of racism related to others. Because of this definition, much of the work focuses on or ties back to individual behavior and less on the larger social structure, resulting in the use of terms like discrimination and prejudice to describe the phenomenon and not racism. For example, one of the first large scale studies of sexual racism was conducted by Charles H. Stember in 1976. Stember (1976)

defined sexual racism as "the sexual rejection of the racial minority" and the conscious attempt by the majority to prevent interracial cohabitation (p. ix). His book, *Sexual Racism: The Emotional Barrier to an Integrated Society*, argued that the emotional reaction from White men regarding interracial sex with Black men and White women played a key role in the hostility Whites expressed towards Black integration in society.

In his perspective, White men were aghast at the idea that White women might gain greater sexual pleasure from Black men, who are inferior to White men, and thus White men resisted school and housing integration to limit White women's contact with Black men. Stember (1976), often critical of the scientific measures utilized by sociologist of his time, does not use quantitative or qualitative methods to support his claims and instead ends up with a book that is mostly speculative at most and racist at best. For Stember (1976), Black male sexuality is nothing more than an impulse driven need to defile White women, instead of the complex psycho-socio-historical reality that it is. For being a first of a kind study to tackle the issue of sexual racism, Stember's (1976) work failed to do much then speculate from racist assumptions.

Also, working in the realm of the social psychological, Mary Plummer's (2008) dissertation examining sexual racism in the Seattle area, used a grounded approach to develop theory on sexual racism that also built off of Stember. In her complex study, Plummer (2008) discovered that sexual racism establishes itself in different locations such as "the internet, pornographic media, gay clubs and bars, casual/anonymous sexual encounters, and romantic relationships" (p. 7-8). In these spaces, sexual racism operated as stereotyping people of color based on racist stereotypes, and either fetishizing those

stereotypes or rejecting people of color based on those stereotypes. People of color internalized sexual racism, resulting in "decreased self-esteem, and psychological distress" (p.7-8), the result often being the increase in sexual risk behavior (Plummer 2008).

Plummer's (2008) work has very much laid the foundation for a framework in which to question the assumptions of her theory, test the validity of her findings and replicate her methodology. There have also been attempts to expand on her study, including where and how sexual racism operates in other geographic locations, explorations of how it manifests in different social settings, varied methodological examinations of the phenomenon outside of the social psychological and lastly, it's diverse relationships with HIV/AIDS. Yet again, Plummer's (2008) work uses weak terminology, like stereotyping, instead of structural racism (Bonilla-Silva 2010) or systemic racism (Feagin 2006) in order to move her analysis from the individualizing of racism preferences into the organizing of sexual desire.

Philosopher Nathaniel Adam Tobias Coleman was concerned with defining what sexual racism is and who could be a sexual racist. In a speech he gave at the Leeds Art Gallery[14], Tobias Coleman discussed Jesse Matheson's December 2012 opinion piece in the Star Online titled "I am a sexual racist" as well as popular US musician John Mayer's comments in Playboy Magazine on his racist sexual preferences. In the first address, Tobias Coleman shuts down one by one the arguments Matheson makes for

[14] https://aestheticsforbirds.com/2015/06/10/race-aesthetics-2015-a-retrospective/

being shameless in his sexual racism. Where Matheson makes the argument that being sexually racist is no different than gay men having sex with men instead of women, Tobias Coleman counters with the power difference of men and women in society and how those power differences are not the same as racial power differences.

Similarly, when musician John Mayer was asked in a March 2010 Playboy interview if Black woman threw themselves at him, he stated: "I don't think I open myself to it. My dick is sort of like a white supremacist. I've got a Benetton heart and a fuckin' David Duke cock. I'm going to start dating separately from my dick."[15] Tobias Coleman addresses this point by suggesting that John Mayer stop using racist language, date aside from his penis and to not date types but date people. For all the intellectually interesting arguments that Tobias Coleman presents, his definition of sexual racism is trapped in defining individual actions and not the social structure that influences these behaviors (Tobias Coleman 2015).[16]

Sonu Bedi also developed a theoretical argument for sexual racism based on the idea that it is a matter of justice. For instance, Bedi posited that "the opportunity to be a part of a reciprocal romantic relationship is a primary social good" (p. 999) and that using racial hierarchies and stereotypes in determining sexual relationships is unjust (Bedi 2015). For Bedi, sexual racism is like past bans on interracial marriage public

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[15] The original Playboy piece is no longer available but has been discussed at length in the popular media including in this Huffington Post piece: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/12/john-mayers-penis-speaks_n_459842.html

[16] Tobias later addresses this fact in his dissertation pages 31-57 and where he argues that the term sexual racism itself is problematic and that a new term maybe needed to discuss this phenomenon

racial integration. While some would argue that preferences for race are no different than preferences for height and weight or sex, Bendi rejects these comparisons (Bedi 2015).

Bedi (2015) argues that race has a political salience in society that is exceedingly different from height and weight and thus should not be compared. When it comes to racial preferences, they reinforce the racial hierarchies and stereotypes created and maintained by Whites (Bedi 2015). Also, unlike height and weight, which can be objectively measured, race has been discredited as a biological reality (Smedley and Smedley 2005). Also, those who discriminate based on sex (male and female) or orientation (homosexual and heterosexual), do so based on a desire that is consequential to their identity and not on coincidence. For Bedi (2015), sexual racism is philosophically about what is just and what ought to be done in the fight for racial justice. Still, sexual racism for Bedi is simply a rejection of sexual partners based on race. Bedi later admitted that not all "preferences" are problematic, such as people of color preferring each other to avoid racism from Whites. Accordingly, this definition of sexual racism is insufficient.

Last, Callander et al. (Callander et al. 2012, 2016; Callander, Newman, and Holt 2015) empirically investigated the sexual racism phenomenon through their *Just a Preference Project*. First, they explored racialized language in online profiles for gay men and found that Whites and Asians used racialized language to describe their potential partners, while non-White men used racialized language to describe themselves (Callander et al. 2012). In fact, Callander et al. (2012) found that as evident in their profiles, White gay men dictated the physical requirements of potential lovers, including

race and although they infrequently did so, they were the most likely to discriminate against partners using race. Pivotal to this study is their finding that White men were the most likely to employ race based language and critique race based language, resulting in a normalizing of racialized language by people of color that is produced primarily by Whites (Callander et al. 2012).

Following this study, the research team empirically tested whether racial preference were actually racism (Callander et al. 2015). Through survey methodology, the researchers found that those that expressed sexual racism were more likely to resist multiculturalism and racial diversity. Generic ideas of racism had a strong relationship with those that expressed a positive view of sexual racism. In their final study examining the topic of sexual racism, Callander et al. (2016) found that sexual racism utilized sexual stereotypes to categorize racial groups, employed subtle and blatant forms of racism when it came to requesting a partner, and that people of color reacted to experiences of sexual racism in ways that are similar to racism in broader society (Callander et al. 2016). This again reinforced that sexual racism was like racism in society but in a sexual context with particular behaviors and effects (Callander et al. 2016).

While all three of the *Just a Preference* studies moved the conversation around sexual racism forward, they were limited by their use of prejudice and discrimination to describe racism behavior. Also, the focus on individual preference forces the discussion to be inevitably about individuals and not about systemic racism in society. While they do mention the dominance of White men within these spaces, they never name White

men as the creators of sexual racism and the enforcers of it. As a result, their studies are limited in their power to describe the power of White racism in society.

The next group of studies by Hutchison (1999) and Han (2008, 2016) used sexual racism to describe the way bodies are constructed racially and sexually and how that results in hierarchy of power. These studies are less about individual's preferences and more about how racism constructs bodies sexually. Borrowing the concept from Stember (1976), Darren L. Hutchinson (1999) used sexual racism to explain how critical race studies and anti-racist scholars often ignored the sexualized nature of racial oppression. Hutchinson (1999) gives the example of Loc Minh Truong, a 55-year-old Vietnamese American who was attacked by a gang of 8 White teens who beat him, stomped his head and smashed a rock into his skull, permanently disfiguring him. The attackers later admitted to using a sexual epithet during the attack because the man was attacked on a popular gay and lesbian side of Laguna Beach. Taken together, Truong was attacked for not only his raced status in a White Supremacist society, but also his gender and interpreted sexuality (Hutchinson 1999). The way that race, gender and sexuality intersect here constructed Truong's body as "effeminate, asexual and weak" ( Hutchinson 1999: 24). Here, sexual racism is not just about sexual interactions but about the sexualization of race that results in particular kinds of subjugation. While Hutchinson's (1999) work is exceptional in its enunciation of race and sexuality as mutually constructing phenomenon's, the focus is primarily in the law field and thus concerned with intent behind victimization. While this is a step in the right direction, the

role of elite White males in constructing sexual desire is less of the focus in Hutchinson's work and the main focus of my theory of sexual racism.

Similarly, Chong-suk Han (2008) made major headways in his description of sexual racism by pointing to the dominance of Whiteness in constructing and marginalizing other racialized bodies. Using critical race theory as a theoretical backdrop as well, Chong-suk (2008) used the counter stories told by gay men of color to reveal that the gay community was largely welcoming to gay White and middle class men, while less so to other men. The stock story of the LGBT community told by Whites is that it is a welcoming and multiracial place while the counternarrative told by people of color suggests that racism is still rampant in the community, resulting in subtle forms of racism. Also, the primacy of White masculinity in the gay community positions Asian men in a place of wanting to be chosen by White men and limits their ability to choose a sexual partner, thus limiting their own power in sexual choice altogether (C. Han 2008).

Han (2016) later built on the power of sexual racism to simultaneously construct racialized bodies in gender sexual ways by exploring Asian male representation through media past and present. There Han (2016) found that the stereotype of the effeminate Asian man in the media concurrently created and defined the boundary of acceptable masculinity, which belonged solely to White men. Particularly, "the racial objectification of bodies has worked to link desirability to race" (p. 62), resulting in the bodies that are within the appropriate boundaries granted erotic worth, and the bodies outside the boundaries, mainly Black and Asian, are devoid of erotic value. So the "racialized ranking of bodies is intimately tied to the racialized ranking of masculine "worth"'

(p.62), and not so much about aesthetics. In essence, the taglines “no fems” and “no Asians” is meant to intentionally bankrupt Asian men of their sexual power by constructing them as both feminine and Asian. Han’s (2008) work does an excellent job in giving purpose and meaning behind the sexual racism of White gay men. Where it’s lacking is naming the role of the elite White males in creating and maintaining sexual racism. For instance, while Han (2008) highlights the role of everyday White gay men in marginalizing people of color within LGBT publications, he does not give as much attention to the role of the editors in the decision to allow racist discourse in their publications.

The last group of studies that name and define sexual racism are from those that see it as a social structural force that impacts partner selection such as Sharon Holland (2012), Brandon Robinson (2016) and Jason Orne (2017). Holland’s (2012) work on the erotic life of racism sought to connect the quotidian practices of racism with the erotic. Queer theory up to this point sought to make queer desire a personal endeavor that liberated queer people from the constrains of society. With this, discussions about problematic practices relating to sexuality were obscured. This process resulted in personal preferences being seen as devoid of racist intent (Holland 2012). Holland (2012) taking a critical race perspective and black feminist approach instead sought to tether race back to desire, arguing that it is racism that gives race meaning in society and therefore racism cannot be removed from intimate practices (Holland 2012). It is systemic racism and the racialization process that produce the quotidian effects of desiring a particular race (Holland 2012). Holland (2012) like Han (2016) uses critical

race theory to make the case that racism is in everything, including our erotic desires and that it is made invisible through everyday practices. The strength in Holland's (2012) theory is how she suggests that racism gives racial preferences meaning in personal preferences and that the erotic is a racist project. Using this perspective allows me to see the racism even in practices that on the surface seem devoid of racism.

Using Holland's (2012) theory of the erotic life of racism, Brandon Andrew Robinson (2015) also explored the everyday life of racism but made more evident the role that larger society plays in influencing desire. Exploring the website adam4adam.com, Robinson (2015) argued that "structures of inequality and sexual stratification limit erotic desire" (p. 324). Robinson (2015) unlike Holland (2012) empirically demonstrated that the structure of adam4adam.com aided in this stratification by allowing users to racially cleanse their profiles of bodies that were undesirable by means of the search "quick search" feature, popular on many dating and hookup apps, that allows for users to read the race of others and remove them from sight (Robinson 2015). This process gives Whiteness more value by highlighting Whites and removing people of color. The language of personal preference is seen as neoliberal discourse that works to normalize Whiteness and again remove the racist intent behind the practice (Holland 2012). I also make similar arguments as Robinson (2015), seeing these cyber websites as racist social structures that are a reflection of society at larger. Unlike Robinson (2015), I also examine the role of the elite White men who create the website, implicating them in the process and arguing that sexual racism is a result of their desire to maintain sexual dominance.

Unlike previous efforts to define sexual racism as either individual actions, psychological manifestations or philosophical proclamations of what one ought to do, Jason Orne (2017) argued that sexual racism was "a system of racial oppression, shaping an individual's partner choices to privilege Whites and harm people of color" (p. 67). For Orne (2017), sexual racism establishes itself in three ways, structurally, culturally and in everyday interactions. Structural sexual racism was related to how segregated a space was and how common interracial interactions were in that space. Therefore, a space can be racially diverse but if there is little interaction between racial and ethnic groups in these seemingly racially mixed spaces, then sexual racism still flourishes. Sexual racism was replicated culturally through imagery in sexual spaces, who was considered beautiful and sexually desirable in those spaces and how race is being constructed in those spaces (Orne 2017). The everyday interaction of sexual racism results in profiles that say "no Blacks or Whites only", it's when people fetishize people of color or when they warn other to not attend gay bars on certain nights because it gets too "dark" or in other words too many Black people attend. This last expression of sexual racism is more associated with individual prejudice.

Orne's (2017) take on sexual racism gives it more complexity and more explanatory power. Still, Orne (2017) argues that what he calls sexy communities or a hybrid collective sexual space such as gay bars, are less sexually racist than heterosexual spaces. This is because, as Orne (2017) argues, queer spaces that become more mainstream become more White because being White is mainstream. Hence, sexy communities that resist assimilation are less sexually racist than integrated sexy

communities (Orne 2017). Also, per Orne (2017), while race is a "source of pleasure, exclusion and fetishism in these spaces", race does not "foreclose other possibilities" (p. 75). These opportunities being diversity in sexual positions and expansion beyond racial stereotypes.

While Orne's gives us more understanding into the ways sexual racism interacts in society, he does little to name Whites as the creators and maintainers of sexual racism in society. In fact, while he argues that sexy communities present different opportunities for racial pleasure, he fails to consider that pleasure and desire in much of these spaces is still White defined and White dominated. That is, even though the men of color might be flipping the stereotypes on their head with Asian men being the aggressors or Black men being receptive partners during sex, this does not change the racial power dynamics in these sexy communities. Often Whites construct the exceptional personal of color for precisely their own pleasure. A counter frame by people of color is needed to contrast the way Whiteness constructs desire with the way people of color construct desire that is outside of White norms and White pleasure.

### *2.16 Sexual Racism Theory: An Intersection of Systemic Racism and Sexual Fields Theory*

I place my work in relationship with these previous arguments and studies on sexual racism, but unlike them, I utilize systemic racism theory (2006) as a superior theory in understanding the maintenance and power of racism, even in sexual desire. Systemic racism has stronger explanatory power than words like discrimination and

prejudice. It also takes into the account the role of elite White men in creating and maintaining racism as well as the resists of people of color to the systemic racism. For these reasons, I argue that systemic racism is necessary for an analysis of sexual racism.

Along with Feagin's (2006) work on systemic racism, he developed the *White Racial Frame* (WRF) as an accompanying framework to systemic racism that explains how racism is developed, and replicated through time by Whites, for Whites and accepted by non-Whites. The WRF has many components to its function, encompassing "racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions…as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate" (p.3). Feagin (2013) argues that this frame is an embedded perspective in individual persons, as well as in shared histories, which is used in processing everyday circumstances and interactions. This framing of people of color is important to the argument I am making about not only the prominence of race in sexual desire, but essentially how it functions as one of the strongest aspects to sexual desire. This is an important contribution of my argument because often the intersections of race, gender and the body become so complicated that it is difficult to tear them apart. For this reason, I situate racism as the deepest element to desire, aiding us in interpreting the meaning of racial difference in bodies and gendered expectations of those bodies. To explain this in more detail I will explore the way the psychic life of racism exploited bodies and sexes and how this was needed to produce sexual racism.

Hyper-sexualized depictions of Blacks embedded in society fueled sexual fantasies, desires and fears in Whites about participating in sexual liaisons with Blacks

(Nagel 2003). From the moment that White Europeans encountered Africans, they developed a White sexual sub-frame to the White Racial Frame. This sub-frame used many of the components of the larger White frame to then rationalize the sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the Africans, from the exposed breast of the women, to the elongated penises of Black men. Here attitudes of the sexual animalistic nature of Black men were first developed, as part and parcel to the larger WRF. Hyper-sexualized depictions of African slaves are embedded in society through stereotypes about the sexual immoderation of Africans (Nagel 2003). By means of the White Sexual Framing of Black people by Whites, "claims and concerns about the physical sexual endowments of Black men and the sexual appetites of Black women circulated back and forth across the Atlantic in the minds and publications of Europeans who settled the America's" (Nagel 2003: 11). The result was the belief that non-White's sexuality needed to be controlled (Collins 2004).

During the Jim Crow Era in particular, Blackness was constructed as sexual savagery, allowing Whiteness to then be framed in contrast as sexual civility and the race to desire to be (D'Emilio and Freedman 1998). Since White men historically were the protectors of White women from non-White sexuality, this legitimized their standing in the social hierarchy as colonizers over the colonized (Collins 2005). White men then were the archetype of what a man is; masculine and brave and White and healthy. Men of color on the other hand were feminine or hyper masculine, dark and dangerous.

While systemic racism organized racial groups in society, sexual racism as a component to systemic racism, organizes the racial groups in terms of sexual desire.

That is, Whites sit at the top as the most sexually desirable race, and people of color remain dispersed throughout the hierarchy in lower positions, with elite Whites creating the system and everyday Whites maintaining it. Founding fathers Thomas Jefferson's and Benjamin Franklin's explicit racist frame, for example, that White skin is more desirable than Black skin has been likened to present day mainstream media representations (Feagin 2013). This is important to note because Jefferson and Franklin represent elite White males that helped found and develop U.S. society. Their thinking not only went into the construction of society, but trickled down from them into the way everyday people saw and understood White framed beauty. How sexual racism could do this was through the racialization of sexual desire and the organizing of this desire in a racial hierarchy.

Where Green (2008) made clear that the sexual field has structures of desire, tiers of desirability and the distribution of erotic capital or the traits in an individual that elicit an erotic response, I contend that systemic racism is the actual foundation in which the sexual field springs from. Thus, race and racism are the predominant features in all three structures. The problem with Green's (2008) analysis, and many sexuality scholars in general, is what I see as a lack of emphasis on exactly how deep the dimension of racism runs in US society, especially in regards to the lives of people of color, in effect they work from White logic and White methods (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva 2008). As a result, they write about sexuality and engage race almost as a second-hand part to the story when in reality, race's dominance is vital. Because of this theoretical mishap, many sexuality scholars discuss race as pertaining to situations, and engage the issues of those

situations (whether they be race, gender performance or all three). The question we must ask ourselves is when is race not always included? While many might point to interracial relationships as the place where race and sexuality collide, others have mentioned correctly that the absence of people of color does not make a situation race neutral. Thus, situations where Whites are only having sex with Whites are in fact racialized sexual actions (Weiss 2012).

In this definition, sexual racism is the White created and White maintained system that organizing racial groups so that White, masculine and muscular bodies are the most desired, have the most erotic capital, and are the most selective to maintain their position atop the racial hierarchy. Because of White supremacy in society, we all view desire through a sexual sub-frame of the White Racial Frame, that posits the Ideal White Male Archetype as the most desired. This means that the acceptable and desirable gender performances and bodies are always racialized. So even if a person is racially open to different partners but demands a particular gender performance from their partners, this too is still sexual racism because gender performance is seen through the White frame that posits what is desirable and what is not. Same for bodies. While erotic capital can be exchange for movement within the racial hierarchy, this theory of sexual racism suggests that erotic capital is still created and dispersed by Whites. Thus, Whites remain in power during the sexual interaction and the hierarchy remains insurmountable. Fortunately, this definition of sexual racism does allow for counter framing by people of color, albeit there is less autonomy than sexuality scholar suggests.

Others may argue that this theory is too all encompassing, too rigid and does not account for diverse desires. For instance, what about people of color who desire people of color? Do they view people of color through the White Sexual Frame of desire? This of course depends on how what people of color are being desired. When Black people use racial stereotypes about Blackness that are constructed by Whiteness, such as wanting a thug Black man or submissive Asian woman, than this is very much an example of desiring through a lens created and maintained by Whites. How desire looks outside of this frame is something I would argue has not been theorized yet and is beyond the scope of this project (i.e. Black desire for Blacks that is not impacted by colonization).

Aiding in the preservation of sexual racism is a discourse that mimics the White semantics of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva 2002). Usually through frontstage and backstage upkeep (Picca & Feagin 2006), Whites will carefully engage in semantic strategies to say racist things and avoid sounding racist. Racial desire and preference in contrast, tends to be open and public, complicating the discussion around race and desire. This suggests that the linguistic strategies maybe different. Thus, an ideology of preference works to allow Whites to publicly state their racial desire and not be seen racist, as well as their gender and body desires while hiding racist, sexist and fatphobic intent.

Finally, the impact of sexual racism in the lives of men of color can be detrimental. If certain racialized bodies are not desirable, then the idea is to remove them from the equation. One of ways to do this is to create sexual racism, so that it segregates

the erotic bodies of value from the ones that lack value and pits them in competition with each other. In the clearest since, sexual racism functions like unregulated capitalism, where competition is theoretically meant to develop better products. Thus, undesirable bodies and gender performances that are competing for White desire than are supposed to perfect themselves, through the White sexual frame, in the image of the desirable White male in order to win him over. Like survival of the fittest, those who fail to assimilate to the archetypical most desired eventually die off. In this way, racism becomes a necessary commodity in ridding non-desirable bodies from the presence of the most desirable. Thus, those who are less desirable are more at risk of contracting HIV/AIDs. I intend to demonstrate how this theory of sexual racism plays out within this project.

### *2.17 Conclusion*

The complex histories pertaining to theories of race and sexuality play a vital role in the development of sexual racism theory. The development of race as a concept for analysis began first as a disputed category of analysis and later it shifted into a racist ideology and framework. Early scholars grappled with different language and concepts to aid in understanding race, with some of the most sophisticated tools being developed by Omi & Winant (1994), Bonilla-Silva (2010) and Feagin (2006). Similarly, sexuality research has had a complex and storied history focusing on sexuality as individual analysis, and eventually in a form of structural analysis. Green's (2011) sexual fields approach and Feagin's (2006) systemic racism are the basis for this study. Much like

previous studies on how racism operates offline, the same rational explains racism online and in individual preferences, intersecting race and sexuality studies. Taken together, systemic racism and sexual fields have helped develop a theory of sexual racism that identities elite White males as its creator, resulting in desire being constructed through the lens of young, in shape, White, masculine men. This theory is maintained through a White Sexual Frame and sexually racist language that justifies the social hierarchy. Still, people of color find ways, no matter how small, to resist this hierarchy. This will be explored in the rest of the project.

# CHAPTER 3:

# DATA & METHODS

## *3.1 Introduction: A Mixed-Method Approach*

For this project, I utilized a mixed method approach to data collection and data analysis. The purpose behind this design was to take advantage of the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodology (Magee et al. 2012; Mustanski et al. 2014). The quantitative method was used to predict the relationship between certain descriptive variables and condom use (Mustanski et al. 2014) while the qualitative analysis was to explore meanings themes that emerged from profiles online in regards to race, gender and sexuality (Magee et al. 2012). Taken together, the two methods provided a more complex and thorough representation of the intersections of race, gender and sexuality online. The data collected, method of analysis and step by step procedure will be expanded on below.

This project takes place within the popular gay men's hookup site adam4adam.com (A4A) (Robinson 2015). While some may consider A4A to be outdated in terms of usage, I assert its relevance still to this day. For one, A4A is a social site for men looking to find friends, love, or sex with other men that was once the most popular website for men who have sex with men (MSM) (Dawley 2007). While today, mobile apps such as Grindr, Scruff, and Jacked, may be rising in popularity, I contend that A4A continues to remain a staple among MSM's now that it too has a mobile app (A4ARadar) that improves the ease of sexual contact. Second, while many of these

mobile apps share similar mechanisms, such as free access, profile building and partner searches that allow users to stratify along race and body type lines, I assert that these mechanisms were originally perfected by A4A. For instance, A4A not only included the location of potential sexual mates, stratification searches, and easy access, it also paid for itself through pornographic ads that littered the sides of profiles and the main website (Robinson 2015). This method of free usage by means of ad space would later be adopted by Grindr and other mobile apps. I allege that the use of the pornographic ads does much to subtly impact how users portray themselves within their profiles, what they come to expect from potential lovers, and to increase the desire for sexual risk. I will support this claim in later chapters. Last, A4A continues to be a popular site for men of color, an important group to this study. For these reasons, I see the research imperative in studying the website and its users.

The data and methods were approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). All work conducted followed carefully constructed procedures that protected the identity of adam4adam.com users. I immediately disposed of any information that could potentially be traced back to users, to maintain their privacy and protect their identities. This study was conducted during the months of August of 2014 and completed by May 2016. Once I obtained IRB approval, I created a profile on the website (Appendix B). To do this, I used a working email that could be verified by the website. The website requires users to select their body descriptors, providing all the options and not giving users the chance to write in their own definitions. Thus, the race options were provided to me, including White, Black, Asian,

Latino, Mixed Race, and Native American, among others. Also, age, waist size, height and other mandatory descriptors were provided for me to select from. I then filled out all the requirements needed for creating a profile, such as location, race, body type, age, height, weight, and named the profile student aggiephd. I left the profile picture less so as not to give the impression that I was on the website for any other reason than research. While this method did insure that the profile received fewer hits, I was still accosted by users for reasons other than the study. Any emails my profile received from users were ignored and not opened.

### *3.2 Description of Sample*

Adam4adam allows for a method of stratification that is precise in so much that you can chose the state, city and part of town in that city that you want as your location or that you want to peruse. I chose the online setting for this study to be in the city of Houston, Texas. Per Census figures (Census 2010), Houston is the largest city in Texas and the fourth largest city in the United States. It is also the largest city in the Southern United States (Census 2010). The racial makeup of the city is also very multicultural. The census (2010) puts Houston's racial demographics at 25.6% for non-Hispanic Whites, 23.7% for African Americans, 43.7% for Hispanic's of any race, and 6.0% for Asians. The Annual Houston gay Pride Parade is the largest gay pride event in the Southwest region of the U.S. (Hlavaty 2015). The city is also home to many gay owed restaurants, bars and stores. This large makeup of a racially and sexually diverse, metropolitan area in the South of the U.S. made it a significant location for research on

race and sexuality. Previous studies have examined California (Choi et al. 2013; Han et al. 2014; Ro et al. 2013), Seattle (Plummer 2008), and (Fields et al. 2012) amid many other locations. Yet few, if any have examined Houston with its rich history in regards to race and the LGBT community.

### *3.3 Procedure for Data Collection*

The method of data collection required that I quickly collect as many profiles as possible in the shortest amount of time. A4A is a website where, because of the simplicity of using it, new users get on and create and delete profiles daily. This can be due to a variety of reasons including boredom, men who are just momentarily curious, and men who are cheating on spouses and only have a short period to do so. Thus, those profiles will more than likely have the bare minimum on them and not have pictures. Instead, when the need arose for those users to meet up with other members, they could send pictures via private emails. This method maintains many men's anonymity online. Also, some profiles are created that may have been active in one period, but now are not used much at all. This could be because users forgot passwords, or created new profiles or both, amid other reasons. These factors alone meant that I had a limited amount of time for which to collect profiles.

To do this, I entered the A4A database which is open for all users. This data keeps a record of A4A users. There, I stratified along race within the search space provided by the website. I chose each major race group, Black, White, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander to sample from so that I could capture differences that may be

found between and within racial groups. Eighty pages' worth of profiles were populated for Latino, Black and White users, and 20 for Asian/Pacific Islanders, with 15 profiles per page except for the last page for each racial group, which would stop a few profiles short of covering the whole page (Appendix B). I screen shot all 80 pages for the Black, White and Latino users and all 20 pages for the Asian/Pacific Islander users in one sitting on March 4th 2015. The pages were saved in a private folder for only my viewing and destroyed once I was done with the data.

Once all the profiles were collected, I then assigned each racial grouping of profiles all numbers in numerical order. I then used a random number generator to pick two numbers (6, 11) for the Black, Latino, and White profiles. On each page the 6th and 11th profiles were selected out of the 15, with the aim of collecting approximately 160 profiles for each racial group. For the Asian/Pacific Islander group, since there were so few, I chose 8 random numbers with the random number generator and those 8 places were selected out of the 15 on each page, totaling approximately 160 profiles.

Collecting data online was not without its flaws, since some of the profiles went missing the next day when I went to input the data in excel. The following day after all profiles were collected and sealed, I searched for the randomly selected profiles individually to input their data into an excel spreadsheet. While over 99% of the profiles remained intact the following day, few did vanish, suggesting that the users deleted their profiles overnight. The final count for the users who had partial or all of their profiles filled out was 628. The number of profiles that vanished overnight was 21, dropping the total down to 607, with the final number count for each racial group being 145 for

Blacks, 154 for Whites, 156 for Latinos, 152 for Asian/Pacific Islanders. The website did not include more profiles beyond the 80 pages for Black, Latino, and White, which suggests that there might be more but that only a certain number are accessible. Therefore, the sample represents the users of A4A that were accessible but not necessarily all of them. Since there were only 20 pages for the combined Asian/Pacific Islander, it can safely be concluded that that is the entirety of the Asian/Pacific Islander profiles.

After, renaming and assigning values to the variables in STATA quantitative software, I ran cross tabulations and summations in order to populate the demographic table. I then generated a variable *touse* to make sure my cases were consistent from model to model. This is because not all profiles filled out all the optional data including condom use. This resulted in the profiles shrinking down to 300 cases and only 300 being used for the analysis. Missing cases were accounted for.

The demographics of the sample population included in this study are as follows (Table 1). A higher proportion of minorities in the sample are younger than Whites, with more Black, Latino and Asian men falling in the 18-40 age range and a majority of White men falling in the 41-50 and up age range. A higher proportion of Blacks identify as tops (42%), while higher proportions of Whites, Latinos and Asians identify as bottoms (36.59%, 43% & 33%). Larger proportions of Blacks (40.58%) and Whites (43%) identify as having the ideal body type. Conversely, a higher proportion of Latinos (53%) and Asians (47%) identify as average bodied. The majority of men had safe sex only on their profiles (88%) compared to those who had anything goes on their profile

(12%), with largest group of men to have anything goes on their profile being White men (24%) and Black and Asian men being the least likely to have anything goes on their profiles (4%).

**Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics**

| | Blacks | | Latinos | | Asians | | Whites | | All | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| **Age** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-30 | 31 | 27.68 | 34 | 30.36 | 38 | 33.93 | 9 | 8.04 | 112 | 37 |
| 31-40 | 23 | 23.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 27 | 27.00 | 26 | 26.00 | 100 | 33 |
| 41-50 | 12 | 19.67 | 16 | 26.23 | 6 | 9.84 | 27 | 44.26 | 61 | 21 |
| 51+ | 4 | 14.81 | 1 | 3.70 | 2 | 7.41 | 20 | 74.07 | 27 | 9 |
| **Sex Roles** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bottoms | 18 | 26.09 | 25 | 33.33 | 32 | 43.24 | 30 | 36.59 | 105 | 35 |
| Tops | 29 | 42.03 | 23 | 30.67 | 18 | 24.32 | 24 | 29.27 | 94 | 31.33 |
| Versatile | 18 | 26.09 | 23 | 30.67 | 22 | 29.73 | 23 | 28.05 | 86 | 28.67 |
| **Body Types** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Slim | 14 | 20.29 | 8 | 10.67 | 19 | 25.68 | 4 | 4.88 | 45 | 15 |
| Average | 20 | 28.99 | 40 | 53.33 | 35 | 47.3 | 36 | 43.9 | 131 | 43.67 |
| Ideal body type | 28 | 40.58 | 23 | 30.67 | 18 | 24.32 | 36 | 43.9 | 105 | 35 |
| Large | 7 | 10.14 | 4 | 5.33 | 2 | 2.7 | 6 | 7.32 | 19 | 6.33 |
| **Sex Practice** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Safe Sex Only | 66 | 95.65 | 65 | 86.67 | 71 | 95.95 | 62 | 75.61 | 264 | 88 |
| Anything Goes | 3 | 4.35 | 10 | 13.33 | 3 | 4.05 | 20 | 24.39 | 36 | 12 |

*3.4 Dependent variable*

Per the literature (Raymond & McFarland 2009, Green 2008, Han 2007), race and racism, gender performance and sexual positioning all impact condom use (Klein 2009, Han 2008, Grov et al. 201 5). Based on this information, the dependent variables

that was selected was based on profiles that put “Safe Sex Only” meaning always wears condoms during sexual intercourse, or “Anything Goes” suggesting condom-less sex as a contrast. A dummy variable was created and named “condom” to measure responses to this question. For this variable 0 represented “Anything Goes” and 1 represented “Safe Sex Only.” A tabulation of the variable revealed that 36 had “Anything Goes” on their profiles, while 264 had “Safe Sex Only” on theirs.

### *3.5 Independent variables*

The independent variables used in the study include race, body type, and sexual positioning. These variables were selected based on the literature that suggests men at the margins of race, gender performance and sexual positioning will be more at risk for HIV/AIDS (Han 2008, Smith 2014, Robinson 2014, Klein 2009, Green 2008). Age was used as a control variable, being that the website did not provide other traditional control variables such as education and employment. The profile provided the options for race, breaking them down into Black, White, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Mixed, and Other Ethnicity. From these, White, Black, Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander were chosen and made into dummy variables for the logistic regression. For body type, A4A provides seven options; slim, swimmer’s, average, athletic, muscular, bodybuilder, and large. Based on the literature ((Brennan et al. 2015; Moskowitz and Hart 2011; Swami and Tovée 2008)), I combined the variables swimmer’s, athletic, muscular and bodybuilder into one large variable called *idealbt* or ideal body type. This was because in some way or another, these variables represented bodies that were more

physically in shape and healthy than the "average" body. The other variables were then made into dummy variables. Last, although the option to identify as feminine or masculine was not available, past research (Johns et al. 2012) has argued that often times the man in the "bottom' sexual position is more likely to be associated with femininity. Although some newer research seems to counter this claim (Robinson and Vidal-Ortiz 2013), a larger portion of the research seems to be in line with the past research (Dangerfield et al. 2016; Grov et al. 2010; Johns et al. 2012; Zeglin 2015).

I used sexual positioning to address the "no fems' part of the argument. Sexual positioning offered seven choices; bottom, top, versatile, oral, foreplay, verse top, and verse bottom with bottom representing the sexually receptive partner, top the insertive partner, and versatile the men who took on both sex roles. The men who identified as verse bottom or verse top I collapse with the larger groups that were not versatile, meaning verse tops were combined with tops and made into a new dummy variable group called tops. This was because despite the selection of verse/top, if the participants were mostly just versatile then why not just select versatile? Arguably, the men were more likely to be willing to go versatile in very particular situations with particular men, thus top being their *preferred* position all other times. Same would be said for bottoms. For that reason, I combined them with the top profiles and created the variable *tops.* The same was done for bottom profiles and I created the dummy variable *bottoms*.

### *3.6 Quantitative Analysis*

Since the dependent variable is dichotomous and not continuous (Tremain 2009), I used logistical regression analysis. This method is necessary because while Ordinary Lease Squares can handle categorical independent variables, they are not appropriate for dichotomies (Tremain 2009). I began with a regression of the prominent variable of race onto condom use, to identify if there is significance.

In the first model, I look at the relationship between race and condom use while controlling for age. The second model examined body type and its relationship to condom use. The third and final model examined sexual positioning in relationship to condom use. A combined model of all three independent variables onto condom use was not possible because the number of cases was too small. This presented some limitations to this current study but possibilities for future research, something that will be discussed in the limitations and future research sections of Chapter 8. After running several logical regressions, items significant at the .05 and .01 level were included.

### *3.7 Qualitative Methodology*

By means of perusing the profiles of A4A and interacting with the interface of the website (Robinson 2015), I became a participant experiencer, where I experienced the website in a similar fashion as other users (Garcia et al. 2009; Gatson 2011). Through this method, I took note of how profiles were organized, how people could

interact within A4A, search for partners, and how advertising was conducted online. All this was used to contextualize the sexual field (Green 2011) which is elaborated on in Chapter 4 of this project. Attention was paid to the website in its entirety including the pornographic images that littered the sides of each page of profiles in order to capture the prevalence of what type of pornography was show and how often, the images users included in their own profiles, and the language they used to communicate through their profiles. After ridding of blank and missing comments within profiles, 550 profiles comments were investigated through a qualitative content analysis.

### *3.8 Qualitative Content Analysis*

How the users of Adam4adam (A4A) promote themselves on their profiles suggests that they are doing so in a way that communicates with other users how and why they are using the website. This process of using their profiles in dialogue with each other, as well as using images or a lack thereof pointed me in the direction of a method of analysis that was all encompassing of the multiple descriptive uses of the website. For this reason, I used qualitative content analysis. According to Sandelowski (2000) for descriptive studies, it is best to use qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is not concerned with numbers as a means to an end, unlike content analysis, but instead it's codes are developed mostly from the data (Sandelowski 2000).

### *3.9 Deductive/Inductive Process and Code-Book*

First, a systematic analysis of the content was performed. Based on previous literature (Han et al. 2014; Johns et al. 2012; Trautner et al. 2013), codes were deductively developed regarding race, gender, body type and sexual behavior. That is, whenever race was brought up, such as preferring people of a certain race, describing racial desire or how they spoke about themselves in racialized language, those comments were placed under the code of race. The same was done for body type, gender, and sexual positioning. So, if someone described their bodies in certain ways or the bodies they preferred or did not want, I placed these under the code body-type. If they described being a top or a bottom, preferring one or the other, or if they described themselves as masculine or feminine, these were coded as gender performance and sex position.

Inductively, I read through the content of the profiles to see what sorts of themes might emerge. Here I followed the data closely to make sure as well that the themes were as close to the data as possible. Themes that arose from this method included what people were looking for on the website, the language they used to articulate their wants and desires outside of blatant race, gender and body descriptive, counter framing to the dominant idea of sexual attraction and discussions around sexual health. Codes from both the inductive and deductive process were compared with each other, revealing relationships from one set of ideas with another.

A code book was created (Appendix C) to track both the quantitative and qualitative codes. For the quantitative codes, the variables and their values were provided as guidance in the analysis process. For the qualitative process, the codes were

broken down into three sets. The primary sets examining major themes within groups and between groups[17]. The second sets were definitions of the primary sets (i.e. how Whites talk about a topic within their profiles) and (i.e. how Whites talk about a topic in comparison to Blacks, Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders). The third sets where sub-codes of the second set (i.e. race, gender, bodies and health) within several different stratified groups. Together, there were 48 different groups compared to each other[18]. An example of a group would be (Black, Tops with Ideal Bodies) compared to (Black Tops with Large Bodies) compared to (Black Bottoms with Average Bodies) and etcetera until all possible groups were compared. By doing this, I was able to explore the nuances of race, gender, body type and sexual behavior between all the different arrangements and to see how different shifts in race, gender performance or body type signify different power dynamics at play.

### *3.10 Researcher Positionality*

My position as a researcher is important to the current study. As a dark skin, Afro-Latino who identifies as fat, fem and Black, I am aware of the implications of my role in this research. When I first collected data off of the website, I made sure to be honest and upfront of who I was and filled out the entire profile like any user, mentioning my race, sex position and body-type. In my profile, it stated:

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[17] A complete table of the qualitative process is outlined in the second part of the codebook
[18] A complete table of the break down by race, body type and sex role is available in the second part of the codebook

My name is Jesus Gregorio Smith and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at Texas A&M University. I am conducting a research project on Adam4adam.com. Specifically, I am exploring the role of race, gender and body-type online.

Although I made no contact with other profiles, I felt like this was important to do because it made clear that I was on there as a researcher. As soon as I was done collecting data, I deleted the profile. By being up front with who I am, I hoped to be transparent in my role as a researcher in society. I was aware of my position while I collected, analyzed and interpreted my data as well as when I wrote the findings in the next few chapters.

### *3.11 Conclusion*

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were necessary for the complexity of this project. Quantitatively, I ran a binomial regression on the descriptors of the profiles in order to investigate whether there were relationships between race, sex position and body-type and condom use. This demanded that I systematically collect the data in a timely fashion, input the data and clean the data set, as well as create dummy variables in order to measure what I was looking for. The data was collected within the Houston area of the adam4adam.com website where the population was racially diverse and LGBT friendly.

Qualitatively, I used qualitative content analysis to illuminate themes that emerged between different compared groups. I stratified between race, sex positon and

body-type till all possible comparisons could be made between groups, totaling 48 different collections. Codes and themes that were consistent between sets were kept and used. I created a code book to establish a comparison to check the similarities and dissimilarities between the collections. Finally, I stated my position as a researcher to maintain validity in the research design. After analysis of the data, the results were interpreted through the theory of sexual racism, which are explored in the next several chapters.

# CHAPTER 4:

# SYSTEMIC RACISM AND THE ONLINE SEXUAL FIELD

## *4.1 Introduction: Constructing the Ideal White Male Archetype*

The construction of apps and websites, from their home pages, to their internal interfaces and even to their exit pages, all communicate to users messages the website owners want them to know (Nakamura 2008). That is, from the very first image on a page, to the way users click on and engage the website, users are being inundated with ideas and beliefs purposefully so that the goals of the website creators become the goals of the users (Nakamura 2008). If the goal of a website is to get users to shop and buy products, the website is constructed in such a way that makes shopping easier and buying necessary. Similarly, this plan can be found in online hookup and dating sites, where users are subtly fed ideas about race, gender and sexuality, with the end goal of selecting a partner that meets societal standards of what is most desirable. Yet to reach these goals in non-discriminatory fashions, the owners of these apps and websites have their engineers create pages that reflect the desires of the owners broadly, so that the message is inconspicuous. They then argue that the websites are not reflections of the owners, but the wants and desires of the users. This is so they can purposefully shift the blame from the owners of the websites, to the users, in order to normalize racial, gender, and sexual discrimination as something every user does.

This could be argued on behalf of adam4adam.com (A4A) as well because A4A, much like web based mobile apps like Grindr and Scruff which are arguably heavily influenced by A4A, provide the racial, gender, and sexual categories that users can select from, pigeon holding users so that they must choose a race provided and not be able to not put their race or write their own racial identity on their profiles. I argue that these choices reinforce racial stereotypes and shape users' attitudes based on the interface and infrastructure of the website. A4A's use of paid for ads by pornography websites frame desire for its users by reiterating what is sought-after and what is not, who is attractive and who is not, and why they are wanted. Similarly, the owners of these websites and the engineers who create these websites often operate out of the White Racial Frame (WTF) (Feagin 2010). From this perspective, all Whites are taught the pro-White-superiority center and anti-Black sub-frame of the WRF early in life. This results in racially unequal outcomes regardless if it is intentional or unintentional in motivation (Feagin 2010). In fact, a key contribution of the WRF concept is that it Whites operates out of it with or without the prejudicial intent (Feagin 2010). Therefore, the creators of Adam4adam.com, whether intentional or not, have created a website that maintains racial inequality in its very infrastructure.

This chapter will demonstrate that systemic racism was replicated in the creation of the website A4A by means of its creators and owner Marc Parent. They then created a space where discrimination would flourish in the form of "no fats, fems or Blacks." The focus on the creators of A4A and the website itself contributes to the literature in ways other studies have lacked, by placing their role front and center. Also by focusing on the

creators it not only demonstrates how these other web based apps like Grindr and Scruff have followed its lead, but how A4A continues to influence sexual desire to this day.

To get to this understanding, I will explore how systemic racism is embedded in the interface of the website through the images on their front page, to the options they provide users to racially, and physically describe themselves, and how these options are then seemingly grouped together in the search database. A4A provides free usage of images and the website for academic purposes (Appendix D). Next, I will explore how A4A's use of free online pornography ads throughout their website reinforces the larger society's definitions of who is desirable and who is not and how this impacts sexual interactions online through the websites and among the users. Last, I will close this chapter by making the connection between how the construction of the A4A along with the pornographic ads was an intentional ploy by the creator to tell users what is desirable and what is not, thus encouraging the "no fats, fems and Blacks" dialogue within the website.

If we are able to look closer at how desire gets created, manipulated and enforced online with these gay spaces, we will be able to understand why "no fats, fems and Blacks" is even a possible tagline on profiles. Yet, in order to understand how Adam4adam.com (A4A) maintain these systems of oppression online, we must understand the thought process of the creators and owner of A4A. Unfortunately, not much is out there in terms of what the owner and creators of A4A have to say about their website. So, to gather a greater understanding of how A4A functions, I utilize a method of triangulation (Davis 2014) in order to reveal the purpose behind certain elements of

the website. That is, I take a broader, less linear approach of examining different websites, analyzing the words and thoughts of different web-based app creators who were seemingly inspired by A4A, and perusing the A4A website itself to set up and strengthen my overall argument.

### *4.2 The replication of marginalization*

The internet is a complicated space in which race, gender and sexuality collide, allowing for resistance to marginalization in the creation of websites that call out racist, sexist and body shaming behavior, and allowing for the persistence of marginalization with other websites or web based apps. A fine example of this is the expression "No fats, fems, and No Blacks," which is commonly seen on different profiles for gay men. This tagline popularity has been so prominent that websites have been created to counter the marginalization caused by this tagline. Two websites are of note here, particularly DouchebagsofGrindr.com[19] and sexualracismsux.com[20]. Speaking to the prominence of this marginalization, Douchebagsofgrindr.com allows its users to posts Grindr profiles of men who express racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic and fat phobic comments.

Tracing back many years, the website is filled with hundreds of profiles of users stating such things as "I block more Asians than the Great wall of China." Where some men argue that dating preferences are just that, preferences, this website demonstrates the pattern in the way gay men express racial, gender, and body preferences that are

[19] http://www.douchebagsofgrindr.com/
[20]

reflective of what society says is most desirable and what is considered not desirable. Thus, it seems to suggest these "preferences" for particular bodies and racial groups are anything but preferences.

Where Douchebagsofgrindr.com focuses on many different oppressions including fat shaming, ageism and anti-effemacy, sexualracismsux.com is an entire website dedicated to "confronting racist behavior and speech in gay men, particularly those of us who use online personal services." Sexualracismsuxs.com has taken a very different approach to fighting racism online, particularly through educational literature on their website. The creators have laid out definitions to what racism is, how it plays out in sexual contexts and has provided readers with other ways to express "preferences" that are not seeped in blatant racism. One example is to say what one might prefer instead of what one doesn't like. An example of this is saying "I prefer whites" instead of "No Asians." Again, a website like this only suggests that the prevalence of such racist language online is consistent enough to create an entire website to counter the barrage of no's many people of color get from other users.

Even though the prominence of the "No Fats, Fems or Blacks" tagline has prompted many different reactions in the gay community, the creators of the websites and apps in which users most often express theses sayings often times do not recognize the way in which these sentiments may impact the targets of these comments. An example of this are the two extremely popular web-based mobile apps Grindr and Scruff. Both apps utilize much of the same website model for their mobile apps as the website A4A, such as free ads to pay for the subscriptions so most users could have free access,

allowing users to use the infrastructure of the apps to screen out undesirables, and most importantly, structuring the apps in such a way that they implicitly and explicitly influence the desires of their users.

In a 2011 interview with the website dailyextra.com, Joel Simkhai, a 33-year-old Middle Eastern man and creator of Grindr addressed the way that his app may have contributed to marginalizing different groups of gay men. When asked, "*Do you think the Grindr format, or internet dating in general, is dehumanizing at all?*" Simkhai responded, "*I don't know that that dehumanizes… It's a personal choice…As men, body image and what we look like are very important to us. That's why we chose the design of the app with the cascade of photos.*" Simkhai makes it clear that the way the app was created was with body image in mind and down plays the dehumanizing aspects of the app by simply stating it is a person choice, thus removing any responsibility for creating an environment for which marginalization can thrive. The beliefs and ideas from the creator of the web based app trickle down into the construction of it and in many ways influence the way that everyone interacts within the app. The interviewer continued to probe the creator of Grinder, asking him about his thoughts on racist users and the backlash the app received with the website douchebagsofgrindr.com. Simkhai tip toed around the issue, stating how hard it was to address the difference between racism and desire but denigrated the douchbagsofgrindr.com website as nothing more than bullying. He stated:

> "It's very tough when you open something up and create a community. You want to make everybody comfortable, give them a way to express themselves, but you

also want to protect others, those who might be minorities. It's a tough balance when you take the laissez-faire approach we do at Grindr."

As the creator of Grindr, Simkhai reveals how the app was created with a very particular community in mind, one most likely to be White gay men. Thus, protecting "others, who might be minorities" may be necessary. He also ties his approach to dealing with racism to the "laisse-fair" market capitalism of the US, thus leaving things be for the most part within the online space of the app. Here it becomes clear that racism and its relationship to capitalism help structure the hook up apps in such a way that desire is very much defined by the creators of these websites and apps, in what they think their users want, whether it be in body type or in the ability to express racist desire with little interruption. This plan was also discussed by the creator of Scruff.

Scuff is also structured in such a way that racial hierarchies offline repeat themselves online. Similar to other app creators, the developers of Scruff were non-apologetic about the way it marginalized certain bodies. Even though the app was created as a means to reject the everyday standards of beauty in the gay community by embracing the "hairier" man and even embracing transmen, chubbier men and HIV positive men, people of color continue to face race based rejection and sexual fetishizing. Eric Silverberg and Johnny Skandros, the Scruff app creators, defend the ability to do so. In an interview with Buzzfeed, they state:

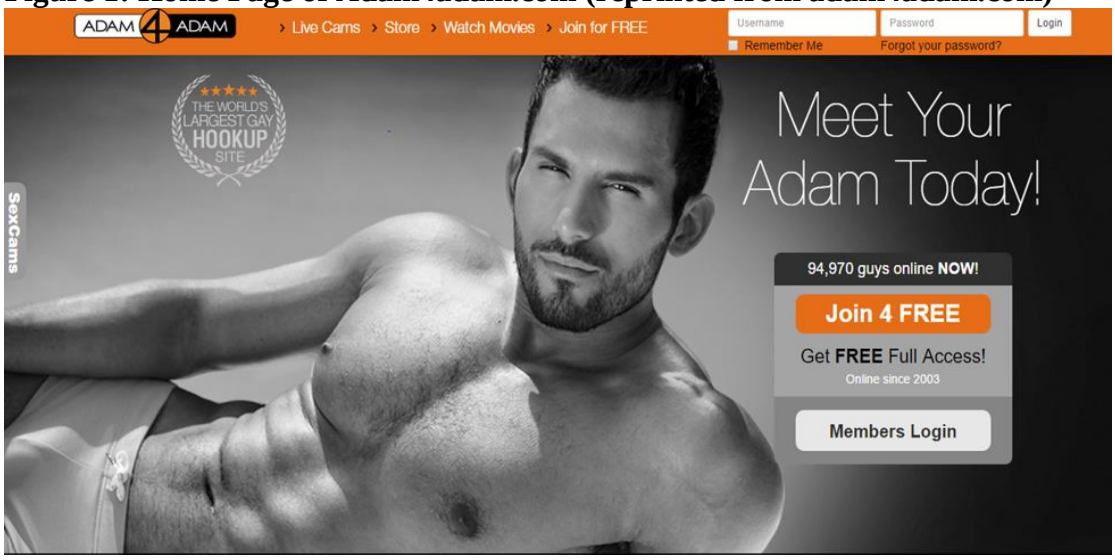
"'Ultimately we wanted to build an app and a service that enables guys to find the kind of guys they're into and for some people that includes…That can mean many things for different people. Sometimes they have ethnic preferences,

sometimes they have height/weight preferences, sometimes people have body hair preferences.'"

The app creators show us that even with spaces that arguably embrace more diverse representations of gay beauty, race seems to be the big difference in desire. For example, men of color can also fit into the categories of chubbier men, hairier men and transmen but the exclusion of race that the app allows means that people of color who fall into those other categories are erased. With both Grindr and Scruff, what becomes clear is that the developers create the apps with particular men in mind, making their ability to engage race based rejection difficult because as soon as race is introduced into the picture, it changes everything. This is made strikingly clear with A4A.

*4.3 Meet Your Adam Today*

**Figure 1: Home Page of Adam4adam.com (reprinted from adam4adam.com)**




Systemic racism is present in the very way that adam4adam.com (A4A) is laid out on its interface, constructed in its database and organized on its website. As a result of A4A being made this way, sexual racism prospers and manipulates desire for its users, reinforcing hierarchies of racial privilege and racial interaction found offline (Nakamora 2002, Daniels 2012). Thus using a historical understanding of race and racism and its current dominance in the organizing of society, race then tells us what bodies are most desired and how, and what gender performance are expected of those same bodies.

On the very homepage of A4A (figure 1), the creators have placed an image of a male that fits the Ideal White Male Archetype (IWMA). An example of this is found in the sign-on page of the website, where you accosted with a shirtless, presumably White male on the front of the website, reiterating what to come to expect from the website and

*who* is desired to enter. The man's physique is void of any body fat, graced with slight body hair to ensure the right masculinity, but not so much as to be overwhelming and teeter into the wrong kind of masculinity that might be associated with darker, hairier men.

Despite us being unable to know whether or not this person is *actually* masculine or not, we are given subtle signifiers of his masculinity instead. This is done with the beard on his face which suggests beards and body hair emulate a particular kind of masculine man. To further this point, the man has a shapely chest and six pack of abs, again reinforcing offline stereotypes of embodied masculinity. Taken together, the first image you see on A4A of the White, shirtless man with the chiseled body and bearded face personifies who is desired in contrast to who is not. That is, athletic built, masculine and White, as stated by the IWMA, versus fat, fem and Black.

**Figure 2: Adam4adam.com Profile Setup ((reprinted from adam4adam.com)**

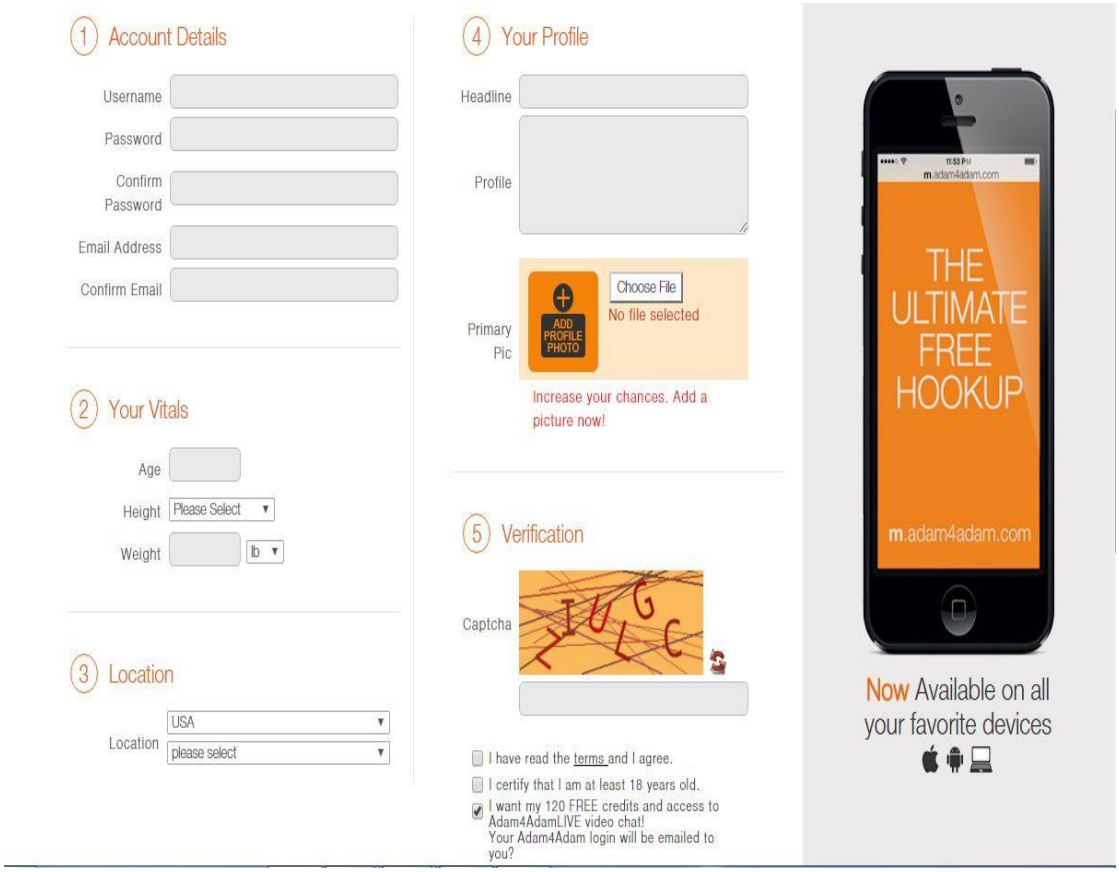
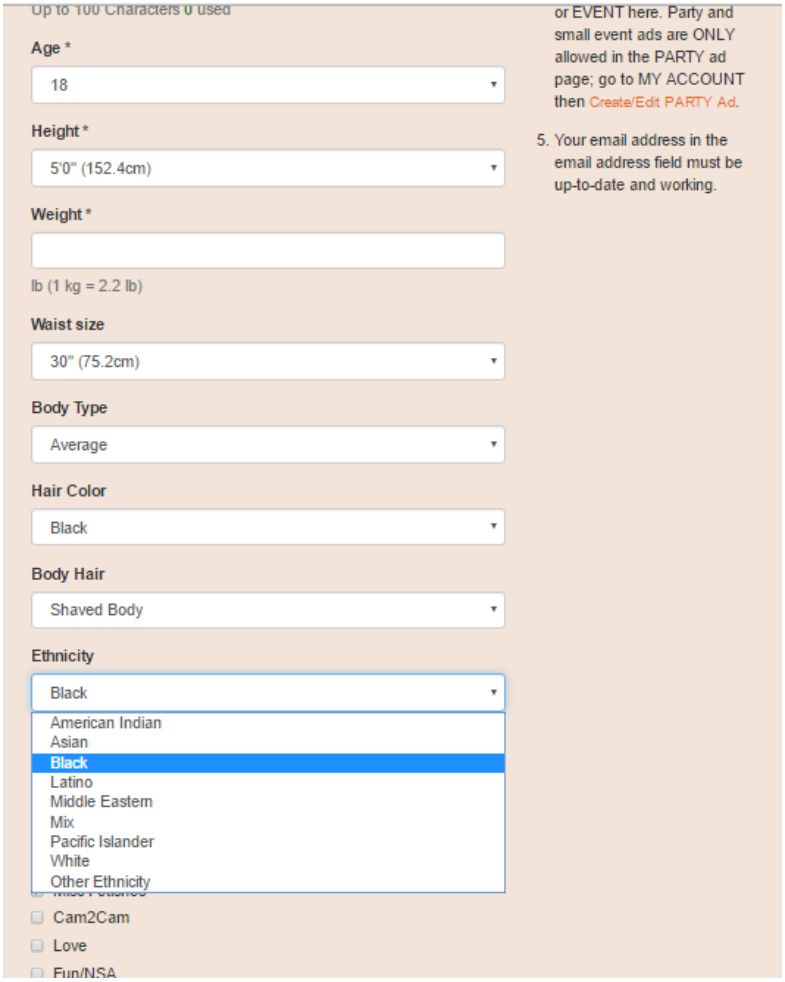


**Figure 3: Adam4adam.com Race Selection (reprinted from adam4adam.com)**

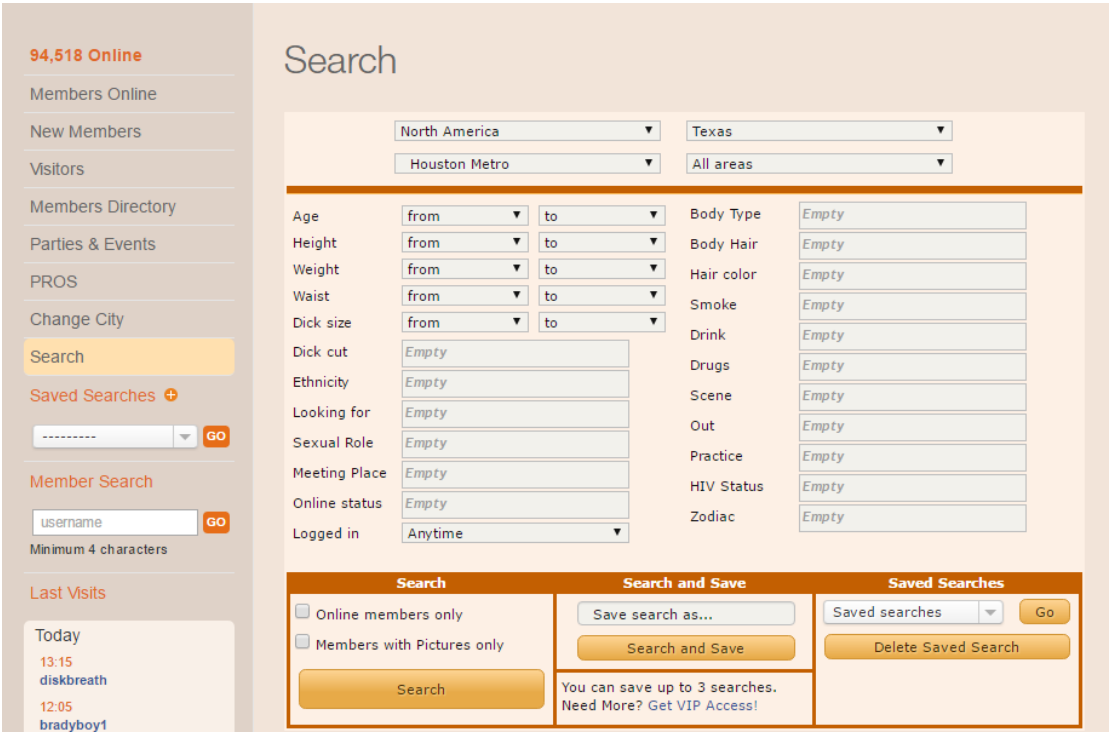



Once a user creates a profile on A4A, they are immediately forced to give specifics about their body and image in order to continue on (Nakamora 2002). To do this, the website offers a space for users to put their height, age and weight first before they are able to move on to more in-depth questions (figure 2). While users can write weight in pounds within the space provided, they must select from a drop box their height and age. The ranges for height are from 5'0 to 7'5". The range for age is from 18 years old to 99 years old. The user is then encouraged to write information about

themselves in the free space provided under “profile text” and “heading” and then told “increase your chances… Add a picture now!” After this initial process, users are then forced to include more information into their profiles, including waist size, body type, hair color, body hair, ethnicity (race) and what they are looking for on the site including one on one sex, group sex, and/or friendship (figure 3).

Essentially all the things you see on the IWMA model on the homepage of the website are expected to be accounted for from the users, quantifying their bodies for consumption by others. Yet even though the user is told that by selecting an option provided to them by A4A they are increasing their chances of meeting someone, there seems to be a more to the story then just increasing your chances. The point seems to be to also allow other users to stratify along the very descriptors you provide as a means to either include you as a potential partner or exclude you.

**Figure 4: Adam4adam.com Search and Screen Page (reprined from adam4adam.com)**




As past research suggests, the online hookup environment operates much like the McDonaldization of society (Ritzer 1995) where users use the online landscape to have their fantasy lovers "their way." For instance, right after users are encouraged to create their profiles with the resources provided, they are then given the option to answer other specific questions relating to penis size, it being uncut or cut, HIV status and whether or not the user has a job or not, to name a few. Where the line is draw between what is desirable information and what is not is not very clear since only a few questions are mandatory and then other seemingly also important questions, become optional. Thus,

the website mobilizes its users to make an emphasis on certain attributes, like race, while making others, like career, optional.

While the website allows users to fill out their profiles how they like, it sets it up so that they can search out other profiles in an easier manner (figure 4). The mechanisms of the actual website allow users to bodily, and racially cleanse (Robinson 2015) users from their purview. Within the search section of the website, users are given options of ways they can stratify their searches along certain lines as a means to digitally block others they find less desirable. Starting with age, height and weight, the three variables users are forced to first select from, these variables get closely followed by penis size, penis cut and ethnicity. This arrangement of the variables is striking because instead of following a clear path of mandatory questions followed by optional, the questions are instead mixed together with the seemingly racialized questions grouped around one another and the other questions about body type grouped together and sexual positioning following not long after.

By grouping certain questions together, such as penis size, being circumcised or not and ethnicity, the very interface of the website subtly emphasizes particular racial, sexual stereotypes. The case here being large penises with Black men and uncut penises with Asian and Latino men. If the website uses a white male model with a chiseled body and body hair on the front of its website, then it is not a coincidence that body type and body hair are put together within the search space. The subtlety in positioning of these two variables reinforces ideas about bodies and expectations that masculine bodies should have hair.

Lastly, HIV status and practice are grouped together, allowing users to cleanse their profiles of users who engage in certain behaviors that they might perceive as risky, or to the reverse, seek out men who are engage in certain behaviors and are HIV positive or negative. This grouping furthers the argument that the positioning of these variables is not a coincidence but the intentions of the website creators as a means to help facilitate and ease the search while also influencing the selection process of users.

### *4.4 Bodies, Genders and Races in Porn*

The way that systemic racism is embedded within the very construction of the website is only furthered with the free pornography that graces the sides of the website. Adam4adam.com utilizes the free pornographic ads as a means to pay for the maintenance and daily operations of the website, and to provide the service for free to users. The pornographic ads thus run along the searches, along the profiles of users and almost every space of the website, implicitly influencing users body, gender and most vividly, racial desires.

Many of the pornographic ads stress racial and sexual stereotypes, ignore entire bodies from their spaces, and present most of their actors in particular fashions. Examples of this are the ads for Black and Latino men. Titles such as *Papi Lover* and *Thug Dick* show their often times Black and Latino male models and actors in the nude with elongated penises, chiseled bodies and available for consumption. The consistency of the images is also at play here, with the ads repeating themselves frequently at every turn of a page within the website. And while many of the pornographic websites

represent different racialized communities, the intention seems to be to tell the same sexually stereotypical story about these racialized communities.

Of extreme significance to the argument of systemic racism being replicated in the sexual field is the intentions of the website owner and creators to influence the racialized desires of its users. To reveal those intentions, one need only examine the 2014 federal lawsuit gay adult company *Flava Works* filed against adam4adam.com (Pardon 2014). *Flava Works* argued in the lawsuit that adam4adam.com and its parent owner and operator Marc Parent, a White Quebecois, illegally used copy written material from their company in order to mislead customers into purchasing the products and services (Pardon 2014). The content in question was images of models from their pornographic companies "ThugBoy.com, RawRods.com, PapiCock. com and CocoDorm.com sites, among others" (Pardon 2014). These websites in question all feature Black and Latino men in stereotypical fashion, from "thugs" to "papis," reinforcing racial and sexual ideas about masculinity and bodies to A4A users. Parent has not commented on the lawsuit and the outcome of it is still currently unknown. Despite this, the legal fight over this material and its use on the website suggests that the selection of pornographic material on the website is a reflection of the owners and not those of the users.

### *4.5 Conclusion*

The infrastructure of adam4adam.com, from its homepage to the use of internet porn ads, creates a sexual field that is drenched in systemic racism. From the very first

image of the nude, muscular, hairy white male, the creators send a clear message about what is sexually desirable and thus what one should expect within the website. Once users create their profiles, they are then forced to racially, gender and bodily identify themselves through drop-down menus that provide the options for them. They are then allowed to search for partners through specially crafted search engines that group racial and gender and body type variables together to signify what is expected by particular racialized bodies such as grouping race and penis size together to give the idea of sexual stereotypes based on race. Finally, the porn that litters the sides of the website are numerous, consistently shown and replicated, feeding users ideas about race, gender and body type as well as the sexual expectations that come from such racialized and gendered bodies. An example of this is the ads for Papicock.com and ThugDick.com. Similarly, the lawsuit against the A4A owner Marc Parent and its operators demonstrates that the selection of pornography was chosen by the elites calling the shots for the website. The tagline on profiles that request “no fats, fems, or Blacks” is not an accident but a naturalized result of the history of systemic racism in society recreated online within the sexual frame of A4A. This suggests that White, masculine and in shape bodies are most desired. Fat men and fem men are largely absent or not clearly demarcated. If men of color are to be desired, they too must resemble the White, in shape and masculine archetype, be there merely for the consumption of White men, and they must represent the sexually racist stereotypes and desires crafted by a White supremacist society.

# CHAPTER 5:

# SEXUAL RACISM AND THE RACIAL HIERARCHY OF DESIRE

## *5.1 Introduction: Trickle down racism and its impact on sex*

One of the ways sexual racism operates online is by socially organizing bodies into a sexual and racial hierarchy of desire. This hierarchy places men with the ideal body (muscular, lean and athletic), gender performance (masculine tops) and race (White men) at the top and disperses other men down the hierarchy based on their proximity to these desired traits (Green 2008). The most desired men, replicas of the *Ideal White Male Archetype*, sit at the top of the hierarchy. They are allotted the most erotic capital and the most sexual power in relation to others. Those men at the opposite end of the hierarchy (fat, fem, and Black/Asian) remain marginalized because of their inability to fit into the standards of erotic desirability established by White men, and thus are limited in their erotic capital. Men who are not situated atop the racial hierarchy of desire may emphasize other attributes in an attempt to offset their marginalization (Green 2008), as long as what they emphasize remains in congruence with the racial hierarchy of desire. For instance, fat men may emphasize their masculinity to offset the weight discrimination and exchange it as erotic capital in the sexual market so as it increase their pool of partners. Whereas fat men that revel in their fatness as opposed to downplaying it will be seen as outside the boundaries of desirability and punished by being ignored, resulting in less potential partners.

In the following chapter, it is explored how sexual racism constructs this hierarchy and how the men who have sex with men (MSM) participate in its development. In the previous chapter, the role of the creators of adam4adam.com was explored. This was done so that the connection between the owner and his engineers and their choices of what images to show, what porn to display and how to associate words with certain racialized bodies could be accentuated. Now in this chapter, it can be seen how the larger social structure of the racist sexual field of A4A trickles down into the interactions between the users. It can also be seen how the IWMA is referenced in some way or another, through body type requests, or gender or race requests, as the most desired.

The results of the analysis reveal several key findings. In terms of bodies, ideal bodies remain largely desired, being expressed explicitly in user's profiles. As for gender performance, masculinity was by and large the most referenced descriptor in user's profiles and it was typically at the expense of femininity. While race was not mentioned as often, when it was, it was typically a request for White or Latino men, usually together or White men alone. Some men of color who preferred Whites as sexual partners played up the racial, sexual stereotypes associated with their race. Marginalized men resisted the hierarchy of desire by requesting men of color as lovers, describing themselves outside the boundaries of desire, and emphasizing their self-worth. The results will be explored below.

### *5.2 The Ideal Body*

As previously documented, the users of A4A value muscular (Brennan et al. 2015), athletic (Robinson 2015), and lean (Swami and Tovée 2008) bodies. In fact, these body types were mentioned more often in profiles than average bodies even though most users checked average as their body type. This request for the ideal body suggests that the larger sexually racist field fashioned by the A4A creators has trickled down to the users. As the profile below describes:

> Into younger college age guys that are masculine athletic and fit. Especially interested in other young bi dudes who want to have some fun on cam and see if we can get a group together. – 26 y.o. ideal body, White verse/top

As can be seen with the above profile, the White top requests younger "college age guys" that are masculine and "athletic and fit," very much lending credence to the hierarchy established by sexual racism. The user in particular describes wanting to find other "young bi dudes" for group sex, suggesting that those who fit into the most desired mold are the in-crowd. This want for group sex with ideal bodies in vital. It suggests that those who can engage in sex with the best must be the best, resulting in an exclusive group of men. The use of both athletic and fit describes an ideal body, one that is in fine shape for athletic activity. Building on this description, another White MSM, this time a bottom, described essentially the same thing. He stated:

> I'm looking for a top that I can bottom for on a regular basis, not a one-niter. I'm passionate, willing to be a permanent bottom for someone and enjoy a dominant

> top. I'm athletic, in shape, and work out regularly. I don't expect you to be perfect (I like slender and athletic guys), but I'm not into overweight guys. Not much into heavily tatted guys either. I like natural bodies. And please people, do not ask me to unlock unless you have done so yourself. It's common sense.- 34 y.o. ideal body, White, bottom

This White bottom, similarly to the White top, describes the ideal body, reflecting the hierarchy established by sexual racism. First, he describes wanting to be a consistent partner for a "dominant" top, reinforcing the idea that the top is the aggressor. By describing the top as dominant, the user demonstrates the sexual power given to tops when it comes to controlling the sexual scenario. Next, the user describes himself as fitting the ideal body being that he is athletic, in shape, and works out regularly. This description is meant to signify to readers that he is in top shape and at the will of an leading top.

Aside from describing himself as having the ideal body, the user also makes a bewildering request in his potential top. After first saying he doesn't expect his top "to be perfect," the White bottom then states he likes slender and athletic guys, again reinforcing the hierarchy of bodies established with sexual racism. He then states that he is "not into overweight guys" or "heavily tatted," and prefers "natural bodies." Here the user is suggesting to others that "natural bodies" are not overweight or tatted, but slim and clear of ink, tapping into ideas of purity as the ideal type. Due to his status atop the hierarchy of desire, the White bottom has the erotic capital to demand what he wants in exchange for his great body. The top may not have "to be perfect," but if he is dominant,

tattoo free and has an ideal body, he will be submissive to him. White men were not the only ones to desire the ideal body. As the profile comment below demonstrates:

> I'm a chill masculine bisexual dude looking for the same. What am I looking for? A homie who's physique matches mine -Athletic-muscular body Handsome Nice dick ,cut/uncut it doesn't matter Nice ass Around MY AGE If you want to know more just ask.- 22 y.o., ideal body, Black foreplay

The Black MSM describes himself as a "masculine bisexual dude" who is "looking for the same." He then goes on to detail what exactly it is he is looking for, which is a "homie" whose physique matches his own in that he has an "athletic muscular body." The user, who correspondingly has an ideal body, uses the capital his body accrues to make the request. Physique, as mentioned by him and other men, elicits a strong erotic response in the sexual market and resultantly many men use their physique to their advantage.

The Black user not only reveals the prominence of the ideal body as athletic and muscular, but he ties it to other parts of the hierarchy, including gender performance. The MSM's use of words like "bisexual" and "homie" indicate to readers of his profile that his gender performance as masculine make him attractive to both men and women. The fact that he is looking for a homie like himself suggests that he is looking for someone who is not flamboyant in his gender performance but more restrained. He then states in capital letters that he wants someone around his "AGE." Being that he is 22 years old, youth seems essential and as a marker around ideal bodies. As the 26-year-old

White male who earlier requested young men, the younger men seem to have the ideal bodies for the sexual market. Still, even if one wasn't young, there were ways to compensate. For example:

> I am muscular, masculine, HIV-, attractive, into playing sports, hiking, blading , biking and almost anything active. Enjoy gardening, friends, family my dog. Play most sports and enjoy vacations in Europe and the Caribbean. – 41 y.o. ideal body, White, versatile

This 41-year-old White male might have been outside the age range of those who are considered attractive in the hierarchy of desire, but he made up for it in his body. As he stated, his "muscular, masculine, HIV-" appearance reinforce the hierarchy of desire established by sexual racism. This time, being muscular is placed next to the words masculine and HIV negative, so as to reinforce that he is both in shape and healthy. Yet, to drive home the point more, the MSM describes "playing sports, hiking, blading, biking and almost anything active," lending credence to his self-described "muscular" body. While youth might be associated with physical attractiveness, this White male counters by showing that with his age is also an increase in socioeconomic status. For instance, by stating that he "vacations in Europe and the Caribbean," he is using his race, body, gender performance and class status to make up for any loses in partners he might have due to his age.

The men above epitomize and desire the ideal body. They describe themselves as athletic and muscular and request partners who are active and healthy, so to maintain

their position at the top of the hierarchy. Other factors also relate to the ideal body including youth and masculinity. Where one might lack in any of the areas he can make up for in other, such as describing his physical activity to offset age discrimination and his socioeconomic status as a perk of his age. Taken together, the ideal body that graced the homepage of Adam4adam.com is largely desired in the micro interactions of the MSM online.

### *5.3 Rejecting Femininity and Upholding Masculinity*

As previously touched upon, the ideal body is often mentioned alongside the ideal gender performance. In this case, a request for musculature or athleticism is usually tied to a request for a masculine partner. As could be seen with Chapter 4, the two are intricately associated with each other with an in-shape body often being perceived as masculine. Nevertheless, masculinity was often cited in the data at the expense of femininity. The rejection of femininity in favor of masculinity echo's past research with similar findings (Miller and Behm-Morawitz 2016; Sánchez and Vilain 2012; Taywaditep 2001). This helps illuminate why "no fats and no fems" is so often seen together and related to sexual racism and its hierarchy of desire.

Sexual racism reinforces the standards set by White elites regarding what is desirable and what is not. While fatness is disparaged as laziness, femininity is depicted as a lesser form of the ideal man. This framing of the ideal man has persisted through time and impacted every aspect of life. Many of the men of adam4adam.com requested masculine men, emphasized their masculinity and negotiated their erotic capital through

masculinity. For example, the Latino male below mentions masculinity several times and disparages femininity:

> Looking for a nice masculine top guy who enjoys the company of a nice masculine bottom guy with extreme oral giving skills and mature enough for great fun encounters. Would be nice to find a regular guy to meet when time allows at your place, my place, or some place half way. Only interested in masculine guys. NOT into any femme types or styles, big turn off.- 35 y.o. average, Latino bottom

This Latino bottom not only describes wanting a masculine top, but also subscribes to that description for himself as well, highlighting the dominance of manhood. The Latino bottom repeats the word masculine three times to drive home the point that he desires and is masculine. If that was not enough, he then states in capital letters that he is "NOT into any femme types or styles," emphasizing the not here to make it clear to other readers that those who are femme or have femme "stylings" are not welcomed. He then states that femininity is a "big turn off" for him, marking it as a decrease in erotic capital. While underscoring his masculinity should have been enough, the user also goes on to denigrate femininity so as to distance himself from it, supporting the theory of sexual racism.

Certain behaviors were also associated with femininity. These behaviors were constantly casted in a negative light that was stereotypically associated with women. For

example, the Black male user below describes the difficulty in negotiating sex with the difficulty straight men have negotiating sex with women. He states:

> 24 Hr Fitness Wallingford/Westheimer 5x a week. Wanna see the booty in person? You can catch me squat pressing 200x at the gym. Its gotten fatter since the pics ;)Sexy black rican bottom here. I swear man, when it comes to just HOOKING UP some of yall really think yall are FEMALES! I mean its JUST HOOKING UP, damn! We're MEN. Its not difficult smh. Open to ltr/dating. I'm a passionate FLIRT. Most of us black ricans have alot of fire and passion. Why should I "work" for some dick I'm only gonna get once? Miss me with that bullshit 4real. -32 y.o., average, Black bottom

The 32-year-old Black bottom laments the difficulty behind managing sex with other men, something to which he associates with women. As he says, “when it comes to just HOOKING UP, some of ya’ll really think ya’ll are FEMALES! I mean it’s just HOOKING UP.” For this user, stereotypes about gender and sexuality abound, where men are assumed to want sex all the time with little difficulty and women are assumed to be more difficult when it comes to sex. He even capitalizes hooking up twice to underpin his point that it’s just sex and that men should have less difficulty attaining it with other men. He capitalizes females, arguing that the other men must think they are women, and then contrasts it by stating in capitalized letter that “we’re MEN.” This Black MSM constructs females as complicated creatures when it comes to sexual intercourse and as a

negative to the simplicity of men, buttressing the hierarchy of masculinity over femininity when it comes to sexual desire.

Despite the negative construction of femininity and the stereotypes assigned to it, the user accentuates his "booty" as a bottom in a form of erotic capital for trade. This is ironic given that the sexual positioning of men as bottoms has been frequently associated with femininity (Johns et al. 2012; Lick and Johnson 2015). He then plays on the stereotypes of Latinos as spicy and passionate lovers (Ibañez et al. 2009) by describing himself as a "passionate FLIRT" and Puerto Ricans as having "a lot of fire and passion." Where stereotypes of women are used to discourage certain behavior by men, the user exploits stereotypes about Latinos to defend other behaviors, such as flirting. The behavior is thus indefensible if it is associated with women, lowering you in the hierarchy of desire, but acceptable if it fits the racialized stereotype associated with different racial groups.

Another way femininity is disparaged through stereotypes is typically right after a user discusses his masculinity. While in the previous example, the Black bottom described men who make sex complicated as females, sensitivity and overreaction are seen as feminine behaviors as well, especially in regards to masculinity. As the profile from this versatile Black man demonstrates:

> I understand why a lot of you niggas just have nude pic on here because you know damn well if they see that face or body they wont reply back to ya!" No smiley face just say what you gotta say we all grown on here I hope, if my pic are revealing yours should b too if you hit me I wanna see who I'm talking 2!, masc

> cool laid back fellow pretty much looking for the same please no typical, sensitive, overly fem, trannies not interested oh420 buddies is cool with mePs4 on deck, gym- 24 y.o. slim, Black versatile

This 24-year-old Black user describes himself as masculine, cool and laid back fellow "pretty much looking for the same." He then pleads for "no typical, sensitive, overly fem, trannies" to message his profile. Masculinity is not only given president in this case, but also positive words like "cool" and "laid back" are associated with masculinity here where as negative words like "typical" and "sensitive" are associated with femininity. Here, femininity is emblematic of MSMs while masculinity is associated with top tier men, reinforcing the hierarchy of desire. If the user is laid back, the contrast is that feminine men are not, and are thus 'overly fem" and even "trannies," using the trans slur to reinforce the negatives of womanly behavior.

Something to note in the examples is that all three were men of color. This was not on purpose and speaks to the openness of anti-effeminacy among men of color. In fact, Black men overwhelmingly used statement like "no fems" versus other groups. This is not to say that they were the only one's upholding masculinity, but that the use of negatives was higher. This could be because no other racialized group has experienced more gender discrepancy than Black men. Black men have been denied their manhood through slavery as well as constructed as hyper masculine animals to be feared (Nagel 2003), which could explain the negative reaction to femininity in men and the embrace of a certain kind of "cool" and "homie" type of masculinity.

In contrast, White men are typically constructed as the right kind of masculinity, juxtaposed against the backdrop of the wrong kinds of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, the ideal White gay man is identical to the ideal White straight man because they are both the ideal kind of masculine man with other racial groups constructed as either hyper masculine to them (Black & Latino men) or feminine to them (Asian men) in comparison. Thus, White men do not have to be negative about femininity to distance themselves from it because it serves to paint them as normal and ideal, unlike non-White men. In any case, masculinity is upheld as most desired.

### *5.4 Whiteness as most Desired*

The desire for Whiteness was the least openly expressed within the profiles of the users and yet standardized throughout adam4adam.com. This is in line with past literature that has suggested that 'gay spaces' make Whiteness the norm (Teunis 2007) so it becomes unnoticeable. Per the profiles that openly requested Whiteness, it was consistent across all racial groups. Along with Whiteness was the request for Latinos, typically seen as not too much of a deviation from the White norm (Robnett 2011). Often following the request for Whiteness was also the request for both the gender performance and body type most associated with Whiteness as well, the ideal masculinity and in shape bodies. For example:

> Clean cut, tall lean dude here, seeing what's up. I'm nicely hung w/a bubble butt & love long sessions of expert oral & more. Good top here if it gets to that, or (?). White & Latin masculine men hit me up. R u lacking recent clear face and

> full-body photos? Muscular, hung party boys to the front of the line.- 43 y.o., ideal body, White verse/top

This 43-year-old White top describes himself as "clean cut," "tall" and "lean," reinforcing the White standard of male beauty (Collins 2004). Along with his race, body and appearance come the ideal erotic capital being that he is "nicely hung" and with a "bubble butt" and an expert at "long sessions" and "oral." In essence, this White top is quite literally the top of the racial hierarchy of desire. Going along with his description of perfection is also his request for White and Latino as well as masculine men who are "muscular, hung party boys." The "hung" penis, as used by the White male here, is a symbol of being on top of the hierarchy of desire, being an epitome of manhood. Taken together, the request for muscular, and masculine men along with only White and Latino partners characterizes the relationship between body, gender, and race all in one. Even if his age was considered outside of the range of desirability, the male elicits enough erotic capital to make up for it.

Whiteness was even strong enough to make up for deficits in erotic capital. For example, while the above White male fit the ideal White male archetype, fat White men on the other hand, are typically punished for their fatness because it is seen as a deviation from the norm (Trautner et al. 2013). As one large, White male stated:

> Good Looking all American looking for Friends and Fun. I enjoy all types of men Latinos are number one in my book! Not looking for a relationship... If it

> happens it happens. Just looking for good old Fun or a good chat. – 38 y.o., large, White, top

This 38-year-old MSM would be marginalized as a "fat" male had it not been for the erotic capital he elicits from being both White and a top. The user seems to be aware of this himself because he describes himself as "good looking" and "all American," with American often being synonymous with White (Rockquemore and Arend 2002; Waters 1996). This tops Whiteness lends credence to his claim of being good looking, and his position as a top gives him the necessary dominance to request lovers, especially "Latinos," who are his top choice. In this case, the supremacy of Whiteness gives this MSM enough desirability to overcome obstacles in his way due to his weight.

Whites are clearly not the only ones to request Whites. In fact, across all racial groups Whiteness was desired, supporting the theory of sexual racism. Just like the previous requests, these requests for Whiteness were also associated with desires for ideal bodies and masculine gender performances, tying the three intimately together. It is the body and the expected gender performances of those bodies that become more clear when seen through the prism of race. Whiteness gives each preference a deeper meaning in the racial hierarchy of desire, and the deepest level of eroticism, explaining why even those who do not have the ideal body can still have sexual power due to their race. To demonstrate, the profile below from a Black male describes the value Whiteness gives to body type and gender performance:

> Into clean, discreet, masculine white guys who are athletic to muscular, but also open to Latino. like to work out at the gym and go swimming. Total top here, very handsome, DDF discreet, NSA hookups or friends with benefits. Jocks with big butts definitely get my attention- 33 y.o. ideal body, Black top

This Black male with an ideal body requests only White men with "athletic to muscular" builds to message his profile. It is not just any White guy that is requested though, but "discreet, masculine white guys" who might be into no string attached sex or just being friends with benefits. Ironically, he never requests a relationship with these men, never mentions Black men but states that he is "open to Latinos." Again, Whiteness is associated with a masculine gender performance and ideal body. Here the preferred White bodies belong to "jocks with big butts," demonstrating the prominence of Whiteness atop the racial hierarchy of desire. Just like the previous profiles, Latinos become "honorary Whites" in many cases, suggesting that the preference is for skin color, since the assumption is that Latinos again are not Black.

In this scenario, the top is Black man, who also has an ideal body and is of considerable age, uses his "handsome" body and drug and disease free status, and stereotypical top position as erotic capital to offset his Blackness. He arguably is attractive enough to close off his pool of potential mates to just the elite Whites, at the expense of his own Blackness. When Whiteness reigns supreme in the realm of desire, people of color who are essentially just different shades of the same *Ideal White Male Archetype* compete amongst each other for the desire of White men. For this Black male,

it means cutting off Black and Asian men and only having sex with White men. Another Asian MSM did the same thing in requesting only Whites as partner. For example:

> I am a bottom. I like ages 18-23, white tops who love fucking Asians. I wanna bend over. I'm smooth naturally, nice asshole to fuck. Only like white, they fuck better, have big dicks and fine blonde, blue, so hot. I like that 18 yr old type AF, Hollister, preppy mommas boy, but rough aggressive top. I like jocks with gf, bi, in closet, love str8 guys who just love head and plow hole. Love guys who can play football, basketball, after practice. Go Seniors! I want regulars who txt. stop by, get to business, I'll be ass up, use me, safe and leave. NO BB EVER, always safety. Into guys ages 18-23, prefer 18-20 tops jocks with gf bi not out in the closet freshman in college - 22 y. o., ideal body, Asian versatile

This 22-year-old Asian MSM desires the ideal White male, perpetuated in larger society, throughout the media, on the home page of Adam4adam.com, and in the profiles of A4A users. The Whiteness described here ties back to the athletic bodies from previous profiles, the bisexual and closeted men, and the aggressive tops during anal intercourse. As this Asian male describes it, White tops "fuck better," have "big dicks," with "blond" hair and "Blue" eyes. He then provides the age ranges for his ideal White male not once, but three times, stating he likes them between the ages of 18-23, or 18-20, before settling on the 18-year-old Abercrombie and Fitch and Hollister model. Here the point over and over again is that Whiteness is about youth, and that ties back to the ideal body, here being described as a "jock" twice. This is the body belonging to the

after school athlete playing football who has a gf or girlfriend and is straight. As such, the ideal man is young, in shape, masculine and White but not just any White, but the wealthy White kid that wears name brand clothes. In essence, many of the men want and desire the same sort of man in one way or another, but always through the same lens of the ideal White male.

The way the Asian male offers himself up to his ideal White top, stating that he will be "ass up" for him to come and go as he pleases, plays into the stereotype of the submissive Asian female who is at the mercy of White male desire (Han 2015). In this way, gay White men are constructed again as the ideal "male," similar to straight White men, and gay Asian men are the women who are at their White man's command, reinforcing heteronormative dichotomy of man and women (Robinson 2015). As such, gender and body type are given the erotic charge they need through the ideal of the White top who has it all and is the racial fantasy to be desired. On the opposite end of this racial hierarchy of desire were the men who were marginalized based on who they are.

### *5.5 Counter-framing Sexual Racism*

Due to the dominance of the racial hierarchy of desire, marginalized men were often ignored and left alone. Still they would counter the dominant frame that they were undesirable by describing themselves in ways that gave them value and provided them some erotic capital. By doing this, the men were able to resist the standards set and maintained by the IWMA in unique ways.

Framing and counter-framing are theoretical tools that have been used by dominant and subordinate groups in relation to each other. The White Racial Frame for example, is the frame through which most White Americans and often people of color as well look through that visualizes Whites as the virtuous and the ideal and Blacks as the opposite of this (Feagin 2013). Counter-frames by Black Americans and other Americans of color work through an anti-oppression and home culture perspective that resists white racist marginalization and rejoices in familial values and understandings (Feagin 2013). In the following section, the MSMs described being erased from the view but also making themselves known. For example:

> So I won't post a face picture for security reasons, but I'll open up later. I'm a big guy, and some like that, others don't, everyone to themselves. If I do however contact you, just say not interested, and I'll back off. Listen to music, go to concerts, meeting new people – 18 y.o., large, Latino

The 18-year-old large, bodied Latino above describes the process of avoidance that many of the users employ in order to evade men they don't find attractive. This process involves just flat out ignoring people that message them. Resulting from this behavior, the Latino male pleads with the other users by stating that if he does contact them, "just say not interested, and I'll back off," instead of ignoring him. Being marginalized on A4A means that people do not feel the need to even respond to your message to them if you aren't attractive enough to garner a response, effectively leaving them invisible.

Marginalized men who get ignored often can feel the effects of such behavior. As the profile below demonstrates:

> Just a lonely guy :/ - 33 y.o., large, Latino, verse/bottom

This large, Latino bottom did not need more than a few words to describe his feelings on his profile. In contrast to the other profiles from top men, men with ideal bodies and White men who highlighted their erotic capital and expressed their preferences in men, this large MSM simply states his feeling of loneliness that can be a result of being ignored and rejected. This is significant because he uses his A4A profile to communicate this to other users, suggesting that it is beyond just a fleeting emotion and something more persistent. This comment is not a surprise. The perpetuation of IWMA and the tagline "no fats, fems, or Blacks" results in the neglect of those who are not constructed as desirable and negative emotional responses from those users.

Many of the men also resisted sexual racism by constructing their bodies as desirable, despite the dominant frame that the *Ideal White Male Archetype (IWMA)* is what is wanted. These men, often large bodies, described that despite being "fat", they were also physically active, desirable and human. Take for example the profile below:

> Handsome Large African American male, clean and neat appearance, HIV Neg and tested every 6mo. Mostly bottom but can be versatile. I am looking for SINGLE mature men of any race, HIV neg, mentally and financially stable, Top and preferably Tall between the ages of 40 and 50 years old. I am not looking for

> trashy or ghetto people who can't put a correct sentence together. reading, writing, computers and technology, cars – 41 y.o., large, Black, bottom

This "handsome, large" Black male embraced his fatness. By beginning his profile comment by describing himself as handsome and large, he makes no attempt to hide his size but instead suggests it is desirable by putting the words handsome and large next to each other. On top of that, he says he has a "clean and neat appearance," reinforcing his attractiveness as a large bodied man. Fatness is not something to avoid in this example, but something to wear proudly as a descriptor of attractiveness. He also is open to men of all racial groups, rejecting sexual racism and the racial hierarchy of desire. While, unlike many of the other men, he doesn't emphasis different physical features to highlight his erotic capital, he does describe being HIV negative and sexually responsible as one way to entice potential mates. Thus, weight, looks and HIV status take precedent over body type, gender performance and race.

Despite his large body status, he does disparage men who are "trashy or ghetto," and men who "can't put a correct sentence together," suggesting that while physicality might not be his preference, socioeconomic status certainly is. The desire for a particular class status can be a reflection of the Black man's age at 41-year-old. This is also reflected in his desire for "mentally and financially stable" men between the ages of 40 and 50. While rejecting youth and the benefits associated with it, such as desirable bodies, this user instead wants older men who meet his class needs. A younger Black male also embraced his largeness while also setting boundaries. For example:

> I'm a 22-year-old African American college student majoring in social work who just so happens to love the company of an older man. I'm of a thicker build (but FAR from sloppy! I wear my weight VERY well!) What I'm seeking is a traditional beneficial relationship/arrangement. I want to explore life with the finest things. Currently, I live in Texas. But I love to travel! travel buddies? Haha! If you are interested and you understand what I am seeking, please feel free to shoot me a message! I love getting to know people and great conversation! I love outdoor activities! – 22 y.o., large, Black, bottom

This large bodied, Black bottom described in detail his value as a person despite being marginalized by sexual racism and the racial hierarchy of desire. He is more than just a "fat" male, he is a college student who wants to "explore life," travel, loves "outdoor activities" and getting to "know people." Unlike many of the other men, who situate their personal values within sexual contexts, this user is not just sex but much more. While fatness is marginalized online, this user rejects its sidelining. Instead he embraces his fatness and states that while he is a thicker build, he is "FAR from sloppy" and wears his weight "VERY well!".

Despite the embrace of his own fatness, the user does suggest that there are more desirable thick bodies compared to sloppy fat bodies that don't carry their weight well. This constructing of good "thick" bodies versus fat "sloppy" bodies, while seemingly embracing large bodies, none the less insinuates that there are limits to desirable largeness. This suggests that other hierarchies repeat themselves even among oppressed groups, resulting in the marginalized among the marginalized.

## *5.6 Conclusion*

Sexual racism organizes bodies into a hierarchy of desire. Through the racial lens of the IWMA, those bodies get constructed as desirable by virtue of their race, gender performance and body type. While in Chapter 4 it was explained how the creators of A4A develop this hierarchy through the interface of the webpage, the users of the website legitimize the hierarchy by means of the comments on their profiles. Thus, by describing their bodies, rejecting people by their race and ethnicity, and demanding only men who are similar in gender performance, these men bring to life the hierarchy of desire by means of sexual racism. Depending on their location within the hierarchy, the men are allotted a certain amount of erotic capital that results in sexual power. This power allows them to exclude people who are not desirable from their pool of partners, negotiate their wants and needs more effectively, and find value in their desirability.

In contrast, men who are not seen as desirable, such as fat men, men of color, and feminine men maybe ignored online and rejected, resulting in feelings of loneliness. Still, these marginalized men resist sexual racism by constructing their bodies as desirable, valuing themselves beyond sex, and constructing their fat as handsome. Nonetheless boundaries are still created along class and body build lines, resulting in the marginalized among the marginalized. In the following chapter it is explored how this hierarchy is rationalized among MSMs.

# CHAPTER 6:

# THE IDEOLOGY OF PREFERENCE

## *6.1 Introduction: How to talk about sexual racism without sounding like a sexual racist*

Similar to Systemic Racism Theory's White Racial Frame (Feagin 2010) and the Sexual Field's Erotic Capital (Green 2008), both of which supplement their macro level analysis with a micro level ideological explanation, so too does the ideology of preference help explain the maintenance of sexual racism. This language around preference helps preserve the idea that a user's choice in partners is a result of individual tastes and not because of structural influences on personal desire. Consequently because of the social structure, many users end up wanting the same "type" of partner regardless of individual wishes thus keeping sexual racism in place and shielding it through the ideology of preference. The ideology of preference is exhibited in three ways primarily; 1) users defend their sexual racism as personal *choice* in an attempt to detach their desire from the social structure and increase their autonomy in their decision making, 2) they adjust their preferences from negative words to *positive or neutral language* to counter claims of sexual racism and, 3) they use *adjacent language* to make their racial, gender, and body preferences known in subtle ways. Despite this use of the ideology of preference, few men did reject sexual racism by requesting men of color, being open to all men and rejecting the meaning behind preferences altogether. In the following chapter, it will be explored how users employ the ideology of choice, how it supports

sexual racism online and who benefits from this ideology and who rejects it.. By doing this, we will see the inequality between who has power in their choices and why.

### *6.2 The Power of Choice in our Preferences*

The use of preference in online dating and its relationship with sexual racism has been written about extensively (Callander et al. 2012; Riggs 2013; Robinson 2015). While some have argued about the rigidness of absolutes behind many of these preferences (Holland 2012), others have argued about how minority groups aid Whites in their discriminatory behavior by also using the language of preference as well (Han 2015). Robinson (2015) as previously mentioned, argued that preference fits into the neo-liberal framework about individualism, and thus represents a 'new' form of racism. I argue that this is not new but part of the colorblind framework as argued by Bonilla-Silva (2002). Preference was nothing more than the abstract liberal way of saying something racist without sounding racist. It was done by claiming everyone has the same opportunity to choose a partner.[21] The findings in this chapter contribute to the literature on preference as well. They show that the same linguistic methods in word use to convey individualized choice have remained consistent through time. In essence, many of the users feel their preference is a reflection of their own power to choose. For example, the White user below just used a basic description of preference as such:

[21] Smith, J.G. and Cristina Morales. Forthcoming. "Racial Constructions among Men Who have Sex with Men: The Utility of Latin Americanization and Colorblind Racism". *Issues in Race & Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal.*

I am into 69, cuddle, kiss, oral, fucking, getting fucked, rimming lick arm pits i am not into black men sorry but my choice -59 y.o. average, White, verse

In the above comment, the older White user makes it known that he is into a range of things, from cuddling and kissing to "oral, fucking" and "getting fucked." Like many users, he describes in detail the sexual desires he has regarding the activities he wants to do with potential sexual mates. Yet, with his description of what he wants is also language describing what he doesn't want. In this case, the user is "not into black men," for which he claims to be "sorry" but then ends his profile comment by stating it is his "choice." The power in being able to choose his partner is important to the user because it masks his true intentions behind his sexual racism. The user is anything but sorry for his sexual racism because his choice gives him power in the sexual realm to put up racial boundaries where he sees fit. Thus, the apology is an empty jester that is meant to appease anyone it might offend while upholding his stake in White Supremacy.

The "choice" here is also important because it does reveal the agency the men have in choosing to be sexually racist. This demonstrates that even if the elite White men of the world are crafting the sexual fields that uphold White Supremacy and the ideal man, everyday White people are choosing to participate in the marginalization as well. In this way, the user's own profile is presented as a mini sexual field all its own that aims to capture some men in its force field and push other men out. Of note is the fact that the user is older, average bodied and versatile, depleting some of the erotic capital he may have had to negotiate sex with other's he desires. Yet, he still makes a sexually racist choice. Arguably this could be because the user is White and understands that

despite how his age and body may limit his partner pool, his Whiteness still gives his choice some power and desirability. Another White user described his racial choices in partners as preference as well and apologized. Yet this user was much younger than the previous man. He stated:

> Looking for fwb, FB, NSA, or some chill friends...white/Latino and please be 18-30 ..just a preference sorry – 21 y.o. slim, White, bottom

As the above user states, he is a young, slim, White, bottom male looking for potential things including friends with benefits, fuck buddies, no strings attached sex or some chill friends. Yet despite the broad range of interests here from sex or friends, sexual racism remains formidable. For this user, whether it be sex or friendship, his partner needs to be within a specific age range and either White or Latino. Ironically, the user does not realize that Latinos are of multiple racial groups and can be Black as well. This suggests that his preference is based on Whiteness reified as a biological reality that is reflected in the skin color. For both the older White user and younger White user, the ideology of preference provides them the opportunity to camouflage their sexual racism as personal choice, empowering them to overcome whatever short comings they may have like being too old or too thin and to use their Whiteness to their benefit.

Another point to consider is why, when it comes to friendships, the younger White user prefers people of certain racial groups? Research suggests that racially integrated friendship networks (Clark-Ibanez and Felmlee 2004), integrated social locations (Yancey 2002), and desegregated social networks (McClintock 2010) are

associated with a greater incidence of interracial dating. The above user's rejection of racially integrated friendships seems to relate to his desire for White and Latino lovers at the exclusion of Black and Asian partners. Thus, preference here works to maintain a digitally segregated network online and the tag on of "just a preference" works to excuse the racist sentiment (Riggs 2013). The "sorry" is nothing more than a linguistic deflection meant to insinuate that if the end result was racist to others, it was not the intention of the user. Therefore, racism here is about intent and not about the end result, which was excluding non-Whites.

Men of color were not immune to also engaging the same logic as Whites and racially excluding people through the ideology of preference. The language of preference here works differently from Whites. Since sexual racism positions people of color differently in the hierarchy of desire, the result of their actions vary. For example:

> Discrete lookin for blks, no whites sorry just my preference. Must be discrete also disease free, slim to hwp only. Sports, joggin, movies travelin – 28 y.o. Ideal Body, Black male

The Black male with the ideal body here doesn't describe his sexual position but does describe himself as "lookin for blks" and "no whites," explaining that, like the White users previously, it is his preference as well. The Black user reasons from the ideology of preference to justify his rejection of Whites. The method is complex for two reasons. For one, by using the same reasoning as Whites, the user justifies their use of preference to stratify potential partners by race, aiding Whites in maintaining the racial boundaries

that impact Blacks more negatively than Whites. Whites count on people of color using this reasoning to justify their own sexual racism and to push the idea that racial preferences in partners are natural among all users (Han 2015).

The other reason is that since sexual racism positions Black men as the least desired on the sexual hierarchy, the rejection of Whites here supports some levels of autonomy for users to choose their partners. In essence, the Black user maybe supporting the ideology of preference, but he is also resisting the hierarchy put in place by White elites that says Whiteness is most desirable, if only in some ways. Where he rejects Whiteness, he still prefers "discreet" and "disease free" men who are "slim to height, weight proportionate." This means while the rejection of White men is clear, the desire for particular bodies and particular gender performances still falls very much in the realm of the ideal man. So, while there is so room for personal choice that does resist White Supremacy, sexual racism replicates itself in gender and body type.

### *6.3 From Negative Words to Positive or Neutral Language*

Ever since profiles began blatantly expressing sexual racism in the form of "No Fats, Fems and Blacks" and defending them through the ideology of preference, there has been backlash from the people who are the targets of these linguistic attacks. There has been a shift in the tone of the profiles that may represent an awareness to the backlash. Still, while there has been changes in the way things are said, the results remain the same.

Undergirding these preferences were slight emotional undertones, expressed usually negatively. Many of the users would use these negative undertones as fences or barriers to keep other undesirable males from approaching them on adam4adam.com. This language was usually in the form of negative language like “no” and “not into.” As the example below demonstrates:

> Very hard-working professional guy here seeks similar man to have a good time with. I love to travel, go camping, bike riding, movies, bars, clubs, friends, whatever. Not necessarily looking for sex... but won't discount the rare hook up. Ideally a similar guy interested in hanging out having a time, or even perhaps snuggle on the couch with a good movie. Please, nobody older than 40. Friends and/or LTR is preferential. NO BLACK DUDES; unless you are looking for friends. Just a dating preference. Thanks.- 27 y.o. average, Latino, top

This Latino top for instance, uses the negative language of “NO” to make his point about who can talk to him and who cannot. While the user describes himself as hardworking and professional and someone who is ideally looking for “friends and/or LTR,” he makes sure to say “NO BLACK DUDES” in capital letters. The large capital letters work as a sign that keeps Black men away, much like during the Jim Crow era when similar signs were used to keep Black people away from public restaurants. Still, the user makes sure to give Black men a consolation prize, by assuring them they that if they do want to reach out to him, they can if they are just “looking for friends” despite that user stating upfront that he was seeking a “similar man to have a good time with.”

By stating "NO Blacks," the Latino user employs his profile as a mechanism for racial segregation against Black men only. He then couches his sexual racism in the language of it being "just a dating preference," despite that fact that many Black men could be, as he asks, an "ideally similar guy" with the same interests.

Many profiles didn't just use the blanket "no" statement, and instead engaged other negative terms. For instance, some users used "not into" to give some, if not much, context to their statement that was more than a blanket "no" while none the less still being a negative against a group. To illustrate, the profile below stated:

> Looking for a Bottom for fun…would to be friends and pound you every week, I'm not into blacks, sorry is my preference, like only white Latin or whites.
> – 40 y.o. average, Latino, Top

The middle aged Latino top also used negative language to reject non-Whites. Yet, where previously "no" alone was meant to express rejection, the "not into" language gives a hint into why the answer is no. By stating that he is "not into" non-Whites, the top is communicating to dark skin people that they are not welcome to join in his "fun" and that they are not the type of people he would be into for consistent sex. Sex in this instance is about racial pleasure (Holland 2012) and for this user, Whiteness is the pleasure he is into being that this someone must be a "white Latin" or just simply White. The apology in this case works to dampen the blow of racial rejection while the use of preference supports the racial hierarchy boundary that privileges Whiteness at the expense of Blackness. Of note is that the Latino top is at least aware that Latinos

represent a variety of skin color differences, despite his desire to uphold White Supremacy by rejecting all other racialized Latinos and focusing just on White Latinos.

The shift to neutral language and arguably more positive language helps to maintain sexual racism online but it repackages it in a socially more acceptable way. So instead of saying a blatant "no," users will instead say "into" and or just state their racial desire without outright rejecting others. Therefore, people of color could potentially read these profiles knowing the user has a particular preference but not necessarily feel like they should not engage with them. To help explain, the profile below states:

> Interested in fun time with white guys 30-50 who work hard and play hard. No time for endless emails or messages - if you need to ask 50 questions, move on. Not offended if we meet and you decide it is not a match --- don't be offended if I decide the same. I will let you know if you don't match your pics, if your pics are not taken within the last year I am not for you. Face pic required. Not looking to take care of anyone or be your bank or place for you to rob - be honest and trustworthy. Working out, home projects, my dog and reading. – 42 y.o. ideal body, White top

The White top begins by detailing what he is into. In very neutral language, he states "interested in fun time with white guys 30-50." This does not have the negative implication of "no" that the previous profiles had in order to establish racial boundaries, but instead uses "interested in" as a less antagonistic way to explain his sexually racist preferences. The White top goes on to state that other readers of his profile should not be

offended if they are not a match for him because he won't be offended if he is not a match for them. Where he will be offended though is if the other users don't have a face picture, don't match their pictures, and if the pictures are not taken within the last year. Clearly, this middle aged, White top feels like his body-type, sexual position and Whiteness afford him the opportunity to be offended by behaviors while he suggests others should not be offended by his.

Others still used the language of preference in a more positive way, such as "prefers." This allowed the users to reason from the ideology of preference while not appearing as a sexual racist. By saying "prefer" instead of "no," one can on the surface argue that they are not rejecting groups in a negative way but using alternative language to say the same thing in a more positive way. For instance:

> I prefer white or light skinned Latins, but all welcome to chat and email. Please be clean and neg as I am. You be sane, masculine and not into games. -49 y.o. average, Latino top

This 49-year-old Latino top states that he prefers "white or light skinned Latins" but welcomes everyone to chat. He then goes on to say he is "clean and neg," suggesting that he is looking for more than just "chatting." Yet by stating in the positive that he "prefers" particular skin colors and then stating "all welcome," he cloaks his sexual racism behind his supposed openness to chatting with others while wanting sane, masculine and HIV negative Whites and light skin Latinos for sex. The language again is

a front that protects the user from accusations of being a sexual racist, even though he is clear about his preference and vague about his intentions online.

### *6.4 Adjacent Language*

What is lacking in these discussions is the way the language of preference has evolved in reaction to people of color reprimanding racist language behind "no Blacks" and "no Asians." For instance, sites like douchebagsofgrindr.com and sexualracismsux.com have allowed men of color to call out racist and sexist language on these profiles, to facilitate public shame. While it may seem that as a result there are less profiles that are blatantly anti-Black, fem and fat, the reality is that this has not resulted in a lack of such profiles, but profiles where the language has evolved. Much like the use of colorblind yet racist tactics by everyday Whites (Bonilla-Silva 2002), White gay men and their apologist have engaged "blind" devices that disseminate their "isms" in subtle ways. For instance, as the profile below demonstrates:

> Hi there... I'm new to this, but I would like to give it a try. I'm an outgoing friendly person. I workout often, very clean... Basically I know how to take care of myself n so should you. I am educated and I like to do random things lol... I like the beach and chill with a person with quality personality :)although I am a friendly person, I do have preference over guys that are in shape, clean cut, under 30, and be light skin. With that said, please do not hit on me if you are not within my limits. There are exceptions if I check u out. Thanks -24 y.o. ideal body, Asian foreplay

The Asian male above details in his profile what he is looking for in a partner, using the language of preference in a positive tone as well as adjacent language to describe what he wants without sounding blatantly racist. To begin, he describes himself as a kind person, emphasizing "friendly" twice in his comments. Here the friendly works in much the same way that "sorry" does, shielding the user from accusations of racism and sexism by means of cordiality. Here, the racist and sexist person is the opposite of friendly and plainly callous. Therefore, since he is friendly, he certainly can't be a sexual racist. The Asian male then states that he works out "often" and is "very clean," language meant to send the message that the user is in shape and healthy. Here, "workout often" is used as adjacent language to send the message "I am in shape and you should be too."

He then goes on to say that he has preferences for "in shape, clean cut, under 30," and "light skin" men. The Asian male reinforces the hierarchy sexual racism establishes by suggesting the desired male is young, in shape and "clean." Of note is his use of the language of "light skin" as adjacent language to and instead of "no Blacks." The usage of "light skin" is ambiguous here. The readers of his profile have no idea what he means by light skin. Does he mean light skin Asians, those socially constructed as Whiter like Japanese and Chinese men versus Filipino and Vietnamese? Or does he mean light skin Latinos, versus Afro-Latinos? Or does he mean light skin Blacks. Resulting from this vague language and possibility out of fear of rejection, dark men of all shades may resist approaching him, doing the work that "no Blacks" would have done. Similarly, another profile used adjacent language for the body. For example:

> Just looking for good people. I don't have any real hangups as I don't have any particular type of I guy that I like. I like a little younger and a little older. I work out and take care of myself and prefer guys that do also. Its rare I give second chances, so don't screw up the first time. Being a good person will get you far. Also, I do have a face pic, it's my private pic. I like guys that also have a face pic somewhere in their profile. Be nice, be friendly. – 35 y.o. ideal body, White versatile

As the 35-year-old White man states, he works out and takes care of himself and prefers guys who do the same. Instead of saying "no fats" blatantly across his profile, the user uses adjacent language to make his point. In this case, "working out" sends the message that those who look like they don't work out should not message him online. The placement of "work out" next to "takes care of himself" is critical because working out and care are meant to signify that the way to care about your body is only physically. Adversely, those who do not workout do not care about their bodies. In other words, large and fat men don't care about their bodies and are unwelcomed to contact him. The user taps into the stereotype of fatness as an indicator of carelessness (Klaczynski, Goold, and Mudry 2004). This is in direct challenge to his previous statement about not having "any particular guy" that he likes and his openness in regards to age and just wanting a caring person. Apparently, not being in shape removes you from the caring person category. The user himself has an ideal body type that is athletic, reinforcing the

hierarchy that sexual racism creates, with the ideal body being tied here also to his Whiteness.

By using the adjacent language, users of A4A could stratify along body types to find those that they most desired. They could also defend their preference by suggesting they wanted someone like themselves. Take for example this Black MSMs comment:

> You find me attractive, I find you attractive. I work out at least 3 times a week and I jog. I prefer in shape dudes closer to MY AGE. I'm not interested in anyone that doesn't do the same or have the body to match. Please stop messaging me with no body shot . Why the fuck would you send your number in your first message, gtfo my inbox. I'm just going to start cussing people out. – 28 y.o. ideal body, Black versatile

The 28-year-old Black male intends for an equal exchange. He wants someone who finds him attractive and that he finds attractive. That attraction is based on the ideal body, similar to his. The user also uses adjacent language to make his point. Instead of just saying “no fats,” he explains that he “works out at least 3 times a week and jog.” The adjacent language of workout is quantified here, with him stating that he works out at the very least three times a week. This communicates to other users that only people who rigorously workout need apply. He also explains that he also jogs, making sure to explain that cardio is important to him. This contrasts with the stereotype of the fat man who doesn’t run and as a result has health troubles. He also states that he prefers in shape dudes, using the positive language of preference, and in capital letters he spells

out, someone closer to his "AGE." In this context, being in shape is associated with being closer to his age, tying the two together in such a way where the user can reject "fats" and "oldies" together.

Other ways users expressed adjacent language was through describing the activities they did. In this way, the users could say "no fats" and "no fems" by means of physical activities they engage in. In this case, words like "sports" signified that masculine and in shape men were desired because masculine and in shape men engage in sports. Sometime the sports would even be spelled out, such as football or basketball. These words no only described the bodies that were desired but the gender performance that comes along with those bodies, killing two birds with one stone. As the profile below demonstrates:

> HWP guys only. And I DO NOT speak Spanish. Please do not ask me to unlock if you have not done so already. Wouldn't mind finding a work out partner. All sports, cars, working out, playin ball – 27y.o. ideal body, Latino top

This Latino top with the ideal body requests height, weight, proportionate guys only. If there is any wonder what that means, he makes it clear by saying he "wouldn't mind finding a work out partner." This user applies adjacent language to suggest that someone who is height, weight, proportionate is also someone who work outs. Here, work out isn't just meant to describe bodies, but masculine performance as well. In fact, the user utilizes other adjacent works to describe both in shape and masculine. For instance, the user mentions "sports, cars, working out" and "playin ball" as a way to emphasize

masculinity over femininity. Sports and cars represent the type of masculinity that is preferred, a traditional masculinity associated with heterosexual men, while working out gets mentioned twice, just to drive home the point that working out is the masculine, in shape thing to do that is desirable.

Other ways users engaged adjacent language was to describe bodies that were healthy and gender performances that were valued. Similar to the previous examples, some users definitely say things on their profiles that drive home the message of what is desirable, setting up boundaries that are not as blatant as the negative language of the past but that subtly allows sexual racism to run rampant. As the profile below describes:

> Down to earth professional guy with a great personality and sense of humor. Into a healthy lifestyle. Like sports, working out, the beach, biking, coffee shops. Looking for other slim, muscular in-shape guys under 40 for friendship and fun. Not looking for random hook-ups. Feel free to give me a shout. Don't ask to unlock if yours isn't. Working out, sports, football, baseball. - 37 y.o. ideal body, White top

Despite this user's statement that he is a "down to earth" guy with a "great personality and sense of humor" and to "feel free to give" him a shout, he uses the ideology of preference to sets up sexual boundaries that keep the less desirable men at bay. The user instead mentions being into "healthy lifestyle" that includes "sports, working" and "biking." This user, who sits at the top of the sexually racist hierarchy of desire, requests "other slim, muscular in-shape guys under 40" despite being three years from 40

himself. Again, age gets associated with less desirability, especially when it is contrasted with muscular and in-shape guys, as if the two are mutually exclusive. This man makes sure to mention working out twice and sports twice but then goes on to explain what kind of sports by stating "football" and "baseball," two sports again associated with heterosexual masculinity. Without ever saying "no fats, fems," the adjacent words to masculine and in-shape, get used instead, repeated and emphasized. The repetition of certain words drives home the message and make it so that those who don't fit the description know not to engage. Yet by using confusing language inviting people to message him, the user can hide behind his invitations if he is ever accused of not being kind.

### *6.5 Resisting Sexual Racism and its 'Preferences"*

While the exalting of the *Ideal White Male Archetype (IWMA)* results in many men being marginalized by race, gender or body type, several of the men resisted sexual racism and its hierarchy of desire. This was done by either requesting partners of color but staying open to all men, or by rejecting preferences all together. For example:

> looking for those guys who love to have a good time and great fuck sessions... Into fucking, sucking, kissing, cuddle, rough sex is also good and nipple play....I love Latino guys , blacks, Asians, etc. but all racial groups are welcome to play...message my ...I am ready to please you!!!Movies, clubs, dance, drinks, bars and restaurants. - 37 y.o., average, Latino, bottom

The 37-year-old, average bodied Latino in this example describes looking for a good time and great sex. Yet, unlike several of the other men, he subtly rejects the racial hierarchy of desire that suggests men are the most desirable by requesting men of color. He states that he loves “Latino guys, blacks, Asians” but assures readers that “all races are welcome.” This is of note because the rationale behind racial demands in partners is that it is personal preference. Unlike the White and ideal bodied men that make such demands in racial absolutes, this user demonstrates that preferences do not require rejecting all others. Instead he makes it clear that while men of color are his first preferences, he is open to everyone, in rejection of the common practices on A4A. Another way to resist sexual racism was through rejecting of preferences all together. As the profile below demonstrates:

> Besides the physical attraction, intelligence and the ability to hold a conversation are what attract me the most. And my favorite activity, kissing. If you have "preferences", please move along. – 35 y.o., ideal body, Asian

Here, the Asian male rejects the idea of “preferences” all together. He places preferences in quotes to demonstrate that he thinks there is more to them than just the surface and that preference are meant to communicate subliminal messages to the users. In his case, “preference” may be a subtle way to disguise one’s sexual racism against Asian men. By stating upfront that those with preferences can “please move along,” the user makes it clear that he wants nothing to do with sexual racism masquerading as preferences.

## *6.6 Conclusion*

The ideology of preference enables users of adam4adam.com (A4A) to make racist, sexist and fatphobic requests while all along appearing as not racist, sexist or fatphobic. In fact, the ideology of preference develops alongside sexual racism as the mechanism that maintains its power through three different ways. First, it masquerades behind personal choice, giving users autonomy in their desire, even if users are not the ones who determine what is desirable and not. As discussed in Chapter 4, the creators of A4A chose what images are used, and perpetuate the idea of the perfect raced, gendered and bodied man, while often the users mimic these ideas. Yet, if users choose to participate in the sexual racism, it makes their preferences seem natural and like they are their own. In fact, other users of color will use the same ideology of preference and this helps fuel the argument that it reflects individuals and not the social structure, despite everyone requesting similar things. Second, the language of the ideology of preference has changed from negative to neutral and more positive. This way the men can still be sexually racist with their preferences but appear otherwise. Third and last, the users employ adjacent language that says "no fats, fems and Blacks" through describing working out, sports, playing football and running. In resistance to the mechanisms of the ideology of preference, some men rejected sexual racism and the meaning behind preferences. Taken together, the ideology of preference maintains the hierarchy of desire

that sexual racism establishes and by adjusting its language, it makes it hard to break away.

# CHAPTER 7:

# SEXUAL RACISM AND ITS IMPACT ON SEXUAL HEALTH NEGOTIATIONS

## *7.1 Introduction: When the Small Things Matter*

The study of sexual racism and its impact on the lives of men who have sex with men (MSM) is of critical importance. In 2016, Republican Senator Stephen Nash of Wisconsin wrote a letter to UW-Madison threatening to cut the schools funding over Sociology Instructor Jason Nolen assigning a 2011 article called "Not Just a Preference" to his Race and Ethnicity class[22]. The article touched on sexual racism in the gay community within the popular Grindr app. The letter to the Board of Regents complained that the article in question contained uncouth, lewd and racist vernacular, and demanded to know what educational value could be gained from reading it. The University responded by stating that they support Jason Nolen, that he is a distinguished lecture, and that the conversations around sexuality are pivotal to the study of race and ethnicity. While one could argue that the Senator's position on the matter was infringing on intellectual freedom, some good did come from the controversy. That good was the attention brought to the topic of sexual racism on a national level. Nonetheless, while those studying sexual racism understand its impact on society, others still view it as nothing more than racial preferences in sex and dating, oftentimes missing the connection to other aspects of society.

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[22] http://gawker.com/despite-senators-objections-there-is-educational-value-1783608076

As mentioned in the introductory chapter of my project, racial preferences in a partner are typically not taken seriously. Yet, racial preferences in a partner in the form of sexual racism may be impacting HIV/AIDs rates in the U.S., especially among Black MSMs. In fact, multiple studies have found a significant relationship between racism, sexual stereotyping, body satisfaction, and HIV/AIDS risk among MSMs (C. S. Han 2008; Han et al. 2014; Raymond and McFarland 2009; Wilson et al. 2009). The impact from sexual racism in erotic desire ranges from exclusion of men of color from gay spaces which results in these men experiencing depression and anxiety (Choi et al. 2013), stress (Han et al. 2014), and increases in risky sex (Klein 2010; Theodore et al. 2004). These findings demonstrate the rationale for investigating the topic as a researcher and teaching the topic as an instructor, supporting Jason Nolen.

In the following chapter I study the ways that the users of Adam4adam.com (A4A) negotiate sexual risk behavior online. That is, I explore how A4A allows its users to interact with its interface so that they can express their desire for risky sex or safe sex. I begin by examining how users communicate sexual health and risks within their profiles. I then explore the way sexual racism impacts sexual risk behaviors. I examine this by testing the hypothesis that fat men, Black men, and fem men (bottom men) will more likely forgo condoms for sex to increase their pool of potential sexual partners and offset their marginalization due to sexual racism. The hope of doing this is that it will enlighten others who find the topic of sexual racism lacking of importance. I discuss the results below.

### *7.2 Using A4A to Communicate Sexual Health*

Sexual health behavior can be communicated to other users in a variety of ways. A4A provides the optional question for sex practices that includes selecting safe sex only for those who will only use condoms during intercourse and anything goes for those that are willing to forgo condoms. Yet, while the more obvious route is selecting one of the two options for condom use, the users had other ways of communicating to others what they were willing to do. In total, the MSM had three strategies to explaining their sexual health and risk behavior and those include; stating within their profiles the date of their last HIV/AIDS test, filling out the entire profile and strategically leaving off an answer for condom use practices, and stating that they are HIV negative but selecting anything goes for condom use and expressing a desire for risky sex. Taken together, these results provide the context for sexual health negotiations online that are missing from the broader public's understanding regarding HIV risk and men who have sex with men.

### *7.3 The Last Test*

One of the ways the users of A4A communicated their sexual health to others was via giving their date for their last HIV test. This was intended to show that the user was responsible enough to get tested and that his proof is the exact date of his last test. While this was no promise of accuracy, many of the MSMs seemed to use it in their profiles. For example:

> I am just an average laid back, very calm guy. I can make almost everyone laugh. I am always fun! Believe that! lol. I'm ride or die :)Friends is cool and whatever

comes from that. A relationship would be the best option, but not everyone is looking for one haha...Ask anything you would like...Neg as of (09/02/2014) Woooo! Just got tested! Clean as a whistle- 22 y.o., average, Latino

This 22-year-old average bodied Latino expresses that he is laid back, cool and has a great sense of humor. While he may be looking for a relationship, he understands that not everyone else is and thus is up for fun. He makes sure to finish his statement by explain that he is "neg" or HIV negative. He then states that he was tested "(09/02/2014)." This placement of HIV negative next to the date of his test suggests that sex with him is safe because he is responsible enough to provide evidence of his last test date. He then states that he is "clean as a whistle." Cleanliness in this context suggest healthiness in so much that someone who is clean is recently tested and HIV negative while someone who is not clean would be positive. In fact, ideas concerning those who appear "clean" and their HIV status have been documented in prior studies as a sort of litmus test for one's willingness to engage in risky sex with those individuals (Fields et al. 2012; Mustanski et al. 2014). By stating that he is clean and providing his test date, the Latino MSM passes that test.

Depending on where the date for the last HIV test was situated could also communicate other messages. By placing it next to the words "clean as a whistle" or something similar, the user is communicating that he is currently HIV negative and healthy. Another example of this is the Asian MSM below. He states:

> I’m a fairly pragmatic guy, who appreciates life's little wonders. I'm not very good at small talk, but love good conversations. i am naturally drawn to folks who take care of themselves neg as of 1/07/15. hiking, reading, movies, coffee, dining and are of good character. – 36 y.o.; ideal body, Asian

This Asian MSM states that he is a “fairly pragmatic guy” looking for “good conversations.” He then states that he is “naturally drawn to folks who take care of themselves” and then provides his last HIV test right after this comment. This is important because the placement of the two statements communicates to readers that he wants people men who are taking care of themselves by getting tested regularly. Again, by listing the last test date, the MSM users of A4A communicates to others their status, their cleanliness, and the fact that they care for themselves enough to get tested regularly.

The last test date can also be used as a form of erotic capital. In this sense, being HIV negative among MSMs is vital to sexual health. While a person may be fat or a person of color, his HIV status can help compensate for whatever it is that is decreasing his sexual appeal. An example of this can be found in the profile below:

> 48 yo Discrete, Bi-separated, Masculine, Top, Mexican Bear here. 5'5" 180# 8" cut & thick, stocky, very hairy, fair skin/brown hair. DDF, HIV negative as of 1/29/15. in the N/NW area and prefer to travel. I'd prefer to see a picture of you at least if we're chatting. – 48 y.o., average, Latino top

This Latino top is at a deficit of erotic capital because his age, race, and weight reside at the opposite end of the *Ideal White Male Archetype*. He states upfront that he is 48-years-old, putting him in the older age range than younger men, whose bodies match the *IWMA* more often. He also describes himself as a Mexican Bear, with bears usually representing a subgroup of older, hairier, and larger men. Luckily for this user, he can offset some of the marginalization he might face as a larger man by stating that he is masculine and light skin.

The use of party drugs like methamphetamines and ecstasy during sex has been substantially reported within research on MSMs and risky behavior (Carballo-Diéguez and Bauermeister 2004; Klein 2010; Ng et al. 2013; Theodore et al. 2004). The link between drug consumption and the increase in sexually transmitted diseases among MSMS has been established and documented (Chan et al. 2016; Ng et al. 2013). Clearly, the Latino top understands that being devoid of STDs, drugs and HIV increases his pool of potential partners who might have avoided him otherwise because of his weight and age. Thus, he states that he is "DDF," or drug and disease free, "HIV negative" and lists the date of his last test as "1/19/15." In this way, he may not represent the IWMA but he has enough capital in his masculinity, light skin and sexual health behavior to offset this marginalization.

### *7.4 Selecting HIV Negative but then Requesting Risky Sex*

While stating one's HIV status and sexual practices was an option on A4A, many of the men did both because it communicated sexual health to interested members. Still,

this suggests that the men trust each other enough to take the comments at face value. What is complicated about this is that some of the men stated that they were HIV negative but then oddly requested risky sexual practices. An example of this can be found in the following profile:

> 35yo Italian bb verse bottom, easy going, real, fun. Love to please! Let's have some fun. Use me. Pretty flexible and able to host often, usually in a hotel somewhere ... LOVE to suck cock if you need some quick head, hit me up! Awesome bottom with a great ass for you to use, excellent with large cocks! Great top with young thin/twink types. Love to eat a hot ass. – 35 y.o., average, White bottom

This 35-year-old White bottom selected that he was HIV negative and yet also selected "anything goes" in terms of condom user for sexual practices. To add to this, he describes himself as a "bb verse bottom" or bareback and versatile bottom. The act of barebacking or condom-less sex, is associated with higher risk for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS (Carballo-Diéguez and Bauermeister 2004). He then states that he has a "great ass" for others "to use," and that he is "excellent with large cocks." Taken together, the White bottom seems to contradict himself by selecting HIV negative for his status but then wanting to engage in sexually risky behavior such as "bb" or bareback sex.

Despite the White bottoms selection of HIV negative for his status, he seems to be in a position of increase risk of infection and transmission. For instance, being a

bottom during anal intercourse increases chances of exposure to HIV/AIDS (C. S. Han 2008). Larger penises can cause tears and fissures in the rectum during anal sex, leaving the mucus membranes more readily exposed to HIV infection. His desire to be "used" by "large cocks" during bareback sex is a recipe for disaster. While he selected bottom for his sex role, he then went on to describe himself as versatile in his profile, going as far as describing the "young, thin/twink" bottoms he would be a "great top" for. As a bottom he is more susceptible to HIV, and as a top more likely to spread HIV via bareback sex. Taken together, if partners trust his negative status enough to engage in bareback sex with him and he unknowingly became HIV positive through bottoming, he can then spread HIV to his partners by topping.

Similarly, another White bottom selected HIV negative for his status but also put anything goes for condom use. As with the previous bottom, the selection of HIV negative can communicate some level of sexual health but then in his profile he contradicts this by desiring risky behavior. For example:

> Horny submissive tight bottom looking to service bb cock. Here for a top to use and dump their loads in. Suck on a nice hard cock and being fucked down with a nice hard cock – 43 y.o., ideal body, White, bottom

This 43-year-old White bottom gets to the point quickly. He states that he is a "horny submissive tight bottom" who is "looking to service bb cock" or bareback penis once again. He then goes on to explicitly state that he wants them to "dump their loads in" his rectum, a reference to internal ejaculation. This MSMs explicit language here is

important because not only is he willing to engage in risky bareback sex, he is then requesting that the top male ejaculate internally, sealing the largest amount of risk within his body. This again seems to contrast with the assertion that he is HIV negative. While he may certainly be negative, his sexual behavior puts others in increased risk.

Both White bottoms state that they are HIV negative but engage in risky behavior. Placing them in the context of sexual racism and the racial hierarchy of desire, they represent large risks to men of color. For instance, both men's Whiteness places them at the top of the racial hierarchy of desire, setting the other men up to compete for their attention. If the two men believe they are HIV negative but become HIV positive through their risky behavior, they risk infecting men of color in particular. This is significant considering the way Black men are constructed as aggressive tops. If a Black top trust one of these men's statuses, he risks potential infection through exposure of his urethra via anal intercourse. Asian men who are constructed as bottoms are at jeopardy for the same way if the versatile/bottom decides to top during sex. In essence, the way that both Black and Asian men are racially and sexually constructed by means of sexual racism puts them in perilous positons, especially with White men who engage in hazardous sexual behavior.

### *7.5 Filling out Entire Profile but then Strategically Leaving Off Condom Use*

Another way that the users of Adam4adam.com communicated their sexual health was via filling out every question in their profile but then leaving out the question about condom use and sexual practices. That is, when every variable was accounted for,

the only one not answered would be whether they used condoms during sex. The goal seemed to be to suggest that condom use was negotiable. For example:

> Into rough aggressive play here, looking for the right muscle boy to play with and train. Let SIR know if you're ready to handle my orders. If you think its time to expand your limits, then we should do this!! – 42 y.o., ideal body, White top

This White top described being into "rough aggressive play," the type of sex that is associated with dominance and submission. He even describes wanting a "muscle boy" to have sex with and "train," solidifying his dominance through the capitalize "SIR." Here the contrast of the lower case "boy" with the uppercase "SIR" suggests a power play position between the "aggressive" top and his bottom. The sexual power here is relinquished to the top, who then gets to make sexual decisions regarding sexual practices and behaviors. Even if the bottom has a limit regarding safe sex, for instance, the top states that he must be ready to "handle" his orders and "expand" his limits. The White top with the ideal body is at the top of the racial hierarchy of desire, placing him in the power position and giving him the erotic capital to make decisions during sex. The leaving off condom use from his profile doesn't seem accidental in this context but a part of a larger sexual script regarding sexual control and domination, where the bottom gives in to the tops requests.

Another top also filled out his entire profile but left out his answer on condom use. Like the White top above, this top seemed to be willing to do more and encouraged a level of dominance over his bottom. For example:

> I am dominant and active 90% of the time but I don't want you to expect me to be pushy and stereotypically dominant (recent 50 shades of bullshit). Want to switch? Might be your lucky day love 😉. I am not necessarily looking for a boyfriend or a playmate, I am open to anything as long as we discuss it. I won't always be touchy feely, I will be distant sometimes and other times I will want to give you all of me. Everyone is a BOY to me; I might not always say it but you are ;) Kink ideas, yoga, football, formula 1, art, music, suits, underwear, naughty boys, global politics – 23 y.o., ideal body, Black top

This 23-year-old Black top described being "dominant and active 90% of the time" although he conversely rejected being "stereotypically dominant" vis-à-vis *50 Shades of Grey*. To clarify the confusion, he follows up this statement by saying he might be willing to "switch" or be submissive depending on if it's the other guy's "lucky day." So while he is dominant, he is down to switch and be submissive 10% of the time. This Black top's dominance relates back to the previous White top's, with both describing their desired bottoms as "boys." In fact, this top capitalizes "BOY," insinuating that he is in the power position and has the sexual decision making in these sexual scenarios.

This Black top, despite his resistance to performing the stereotypical dominant role, plays right into it. His youth, ideal body, and sex role as a top, while giving him the erotic capital to overcome the sexual racism that would marginalize him due to his race, also plays into the sexually racist stereotype Whites constructed of Black men as dominant tops. Still, he can use his erotic capital to engage in the sort of risky sex he

wants too. Even though he doesn't select anything goes for condom use, he states that he is "open to anything" in his profile, even "kink ideas," communicating a willingness to forgo condoms as long as its "discussed." Here, the top leaving off his condom use on his profile was a calculated move to communicate a willingness to go condom-less. This was done through strategic word use within his profile by means of his sexual power as a stereotypical Black top.

### *7.6 The Log Odds of Having Anything Goes on their Profile*

Still, what is the relationship between sexual racism and condom use? My goal as a researcher is to investigate this relationship and address the question. To do that, I return to one the sources of alienation in the gay community, the popular moniker "no fats, no fems, no Blacks." As I demonstrated in previous chapters, sexual desire is intricately linked to the objectifying and fetishizing of a body embedded with racialized gender performances, aimed at tantalizing the White sexual imagination. The *IWMA* is given the most value and placed atop the racial hierarchy of desire. Yet, *IWMA*s are less likely to want to have sex outside of the ideal type unless for the fleeting moments with those who fulfill the racist sexual stereotype. With less *IWMA* men wanting fat, fem, or men of color (especially Black and Asian men), and these men competing among each other for the *IWMA*s, they must be willing to do more to increase their chances of getting an *IWMA*, including engaging in sexually risky behavior that could result in HIV/AIDS. Based on this theory, I developed three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The log odds of having safe sex will be higher for Whites.

Hypothesis 2: The log odds of having condom-less sex will be higher for bottom/fem men.

Hypothesis 3: The log odds of having condom-less sex will be higher for fat/large bodied men.

To research this relationship, I run a logistic regression on the descriptors of the profiles to see their relationship with condom use. That is, I look at whether the race and body type of the profiles is associated with condom use online and if so, how and why. Past research (Grov et al. 2010; Johns et al. 2012; Lick and Johnson 2015; Moskowitz and Hart 2011; Reilly 2016; Tan et al. 2013) suggests that effeminacy is often associated with being the anally receptive partner (bottom) during sexual encounters. Adam4adam.com unfortunately does not provide a variable for gender performance alone. Therefore, I substitute sexual positioning with gender performance. I then examine the likelihood of condom use if one is a top (insertive partner) or bottom during anal intercourse. The online profiles didn't offer useful control variables such as education and socio-economic status with the exception of age. I use age as a control since it relates to erotic capital in that youth elicits more erotic capital than maturity (Green 2011), suggesting that older men may be more willing to forgo condoms than youth in an attempt to counter the effects of ageing. I conclude the analysis with a discussion of the effects.

Studies (Carballo-Diéguez and Bauermeister 2004; Davis et al. 2013; Fields et al. 2012; Grov et al. 2015, 2010; Zeglin 2015) have long examine the role of race in relation to condom use. While there is racial inequality in the HIV infection rates with Blacks on

the higher receiving end than Whites, paradoxically Black men are no more less likely to wear condoms than Whites (Raymond and McFarland 2009). In fact, my findings support this phenomenon, or what I call the *Black Condom Use Paradox.* Table 2 includes the logistic regression analysis used to measure any relationship with condom use. The first model is where I examine the relationship between race and condom use and control for age. The second model is where I examine the relationship between sexual position and condom use and control for age. Finally, in the third model I examine the relationship between body type and condom use and control for age.

**Table 2. Relationship between Race, Sex Position and Body Type on Condom Use**

| Variable | | Model 1: Race | Model 2: Sex Position | Model 3: Body Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Race** | Black | 1.738** | | |
| | | 0.655 | | |
| | Latino | 0.431 | | |
| | | 0.46 | | |
| | Asian/PI | 1.695* | | |
| | | 0.669 | | |
| **Sex Position** | Bottoms | | -1.246** | |
| | | | -0.46 | |
| | Versatile | | -0.318 | |
| | | | -0.535 | |
| **Body Type** | Slim | | | -0.427 |
| | | | | 0.552 |
| | Average | | | 0.051 |
| | | | | 0.409 |
| | Large | | | 1.101 |
| | | | | 1.077 |
| **Control** | Age | 0.032 | -0.053*** | 0.052** |
| | | 0.017 | - 0.016 | 0.016 |
| | Constant | 2.525** | 4.633*** | 3.948*** |
| | | -0.824 | -0.77 | -0.709 |
| | Observations | 300 | 300 | 300 |

="*p<0.05 **p<0.01 *** p<0.001"

Hypothesis 1: The log odds of having safe sex will be higher for Whites.

The findings from the study in Table 2 did not support this hypothesis. The Z and P scores for the values can be found in Appendix E. All things being equal, the predicted log odds of having safe sex is higher for men of color than for Whites with the coefficient significant at z = 2.65, P = 0.008 for Black men and at z = 2.53, P = 0.011 for Asian men. There was not a level of significance for Latino MSM's.

Hypothesis 2: The log odds of having condom-less sex will be higher for bottom/fem men.

The findings from the study did support this hypothesis, suggesting that men who identified as bottoms during anal intercourse had a greater log odds of having condom-less sex than men in the top position. Age was also significant in the model as well but in the opposite direction at z = -3.35, P = 0.001. This suggests that the log odds were higher for younger men to wear condoms than older with the coefficient significant at z = -2.76, P = 0.007. Being versatile, that is being able to be both receptive and insertive during sex, was not significant in the model.

Hypothesis 3: The log odds of having "anything goes" on a profile in place of condom use will be higher for fat/large bodied men.

The findings from the study did not support this hypothesis, with no coefficients being significant except for the constant and the control variable age. This suggests that there might not be a relationship between body type and the log odds of having condom-less sex. Or this could also suggest an error in analysis based on the small sample of men who identified as large[23].

### *7.7 The Black Condom Use Paradox*

The findings in this study were in line with the *Black Condom Use Paradox,* where one might think Black men facing marginality would be more likely to forgo condoms but in fact, are more likely to wear them. That is, the findings suggest that the likelihood of having safe sex only for condom use on a profile was higher for younger

[23] The original STATA regression outputs for all three models can be found in Appendix E

Black and Asian men who have sex with men (MSM) than Whites. This paradoxical relationship seems to be at odds with the findings of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which again posit that "half of gay and bisexual Black men and a quarter of gay and bisexual Hispanic men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetimes." How can Black men be both more likely to wear condoms and be more likely to be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetimes? The answer seems to lie in previous studies and in the qualitative findings of this project.

Han (2008; 2015) theorized that Asians may be more at risk for sexual risk behavior based the sexually racist stereotype that they are the bottoms during sexual intercourse. Since the *IWMA* positions White men atop the racial hierarchy, and there are so few White men who find Asian men attractive, they compete among each other for the attention of White men. This gives White men the sexual power in condom use decision making during sex with Asian men, putting them at higher risk for infection (Han 2008). Similarly, Latinos and Black men maybe more likely to be selected for condom less sex based on racist sexual stereotypes of sexual aggression and risk behaviors (Klein 2010).

One of the most prominent theories about HIV/AIDS risk in Black communities is that of sexual networking theory (Raymond and McFarland 2009). The theory suggests that the sexual networks of Black MSMS are tremendously constricted by a legacy of racism. Therefore, if one person gets HIV/AIDS in these networks, it spreads like wildfire to a greater group of people, despite the more common use of condoms (Raymond and McFarland 2009). Similarly, several studies suggest that the internet

increases the chances of risky behavior by providing a space for those specifically looking for risky sex to meet (Klein 2010).

The findings from the qualitative analysis of my study suggests that the men of Adam4adam.com fit somewhere in between these two theories. In fact, they suggest that HIV/AIDS may be spreading among Black men for two reasons, 1) White men using the ideology of preference to exclude men of color from less risky sexual scenarios and/or 2) White men specifically requesting men of color for riskier sex. Together, these findings suggest sexual racism plays a role in excluding Black men due to their race and simultaneously desiring Black men because of their race. The results are explored below.

### *7.8 Excluding Men of Color from Less Risky Sexual Scenarios*

One of the ways men of color especially and Black men in particular become more susceptible to sexual risk behavior is via exclusion from sexual networks where risk is minimized, such as all White sexual communities. This exclusion by White men of men of color contributes to the limited sexual network of Black men that more readily exposes them to HIV/AIDS. While previous research was more trepid in their pronunciation of White racism as the cause of this problem, I argue more forthright that sexual racism contributes to this problem. With the ideology of preference in hand, Whites rationalize their exclusion of Black men from their sexual spaces, even though it is those very spaces where sexual risk is minimized. Take for example the profile below:

> I served in the Navy for 10 yrs, now I am a senior at UH and I will graduate in May of 2015. I am looking for guys that are 24-42 that are white and/or Latin. I

> am not sexual attracted to blacks or Asians sorry. Please have a face pix before chatting with me. I do play safe for guys that do play safe. – 34 y.o., average White bottom

In the above example, the 34-year-old White bottom is looking for men between the ages of 24-42 that are "white and/or Latin," again assuming Latinos can't be Black. He then states that he is "not sexually attracted to Blacks or Asians sorry." The White bottom explains that Black and Asian men are not sexually attractive to him, reinforcing the hierarchy of desire established by sexual racism. As previously mentioned, "when desirability is linked with race, and when certain racial groups are ascribed a greater erotic interest than others, then to be a member of an 'unsexy ' ethnic group is to be equated with an inferior form of existence" (Jackson 200: 184). Thus, Black and Asian men are assigned less social worth as a result of his sexual racism and effectively excluded from his sexual network.

Still, the White bottom selected HIV negative in his profile but anything goes in terms of condom use. While previous White men who did the same thing typically engaged in risky behavior, he states that he is willing to "play safe for guys that do play safe." The White bottom makes it clear that safe sex is not off the table and explicitly describes a willingness to use condoms. This makes having sex with him safer than the other men who say they are negative but engage in risky behavior but it excludes Black men and Asian men from the safe sex.

Another example of excluding men of color from safer sexual networks can come from men who are HIV positive but undetectable. The status of being undetectable

means that while a person has contracted the disease, their viral load is low to the point of non-detection, thus being called undetectable (Rodger et al. 2016). A two-year study examining the transmission of positive viral loads found that sexual partners who identify as HIV positive but undetectable have a zero percent chance of transmitting the disease to negative partners, making them safer to have sex with than people who claim they are negative[24]. Thus having unprotected sex with someone who undetectable is safer than having unprotected sex with someone who says they are negative. For example:

> 44y/o and FIGHTING IT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!!!Life has a way of throwing ya curves...Make sure you have good Tires or ya gonna go right off the Cliff!....Not into Blk Dudes..White or Latino Only. If ya open your mouth and your pearls fall out...DONT BOTHER. Live Outside Of Beaumont Travel to Houston Often...Always Looking for Buds To Hang With While Im There…– 44 y.o., Average White versatile

The 44-year-old White male selected for his HIV status, HIV undetectable. Nevertheless, he states that he is "not into Blk (Black) Dudes" and prefers "White or Latino Only," using the ideology of preference but in a negative way. He even states that if the men open their mouths and "pearls fall out…DON'T BOTHER." In this context, the White male seems to be referencing the stereotypical "grill" associated with Black

[24] https://www.queerty.com/study-undetectable-guys-do-not-transmit-hiv-to-negative-sex-partners-20140305

hip hop stars. The “grill” is a type of jewelry worn over the teeth in hip hop culture (Ratahi and Regional 2006). So not only does he exclude Black men from his sexual network despite it being sexually safer than others due to his knowingly undetectable status, he excludes in a blatantly racist way by using racial stereotypes and negative language to reinforce a racial boundary. Again, sexual racism contributes to the exclusion of men of color from safer sexual networks.

### *7.9 Requesting Men of Color for Riskier Sex*

While sexual racism excludes men of color from safer sexual networks, it also simultaneously constructs men of color as sexually risqué men to be desired as well. Past research affirms this argument. For men who specifically pursued bareback sex online, men of color’s profiles were the most sought after (Klein 2010). An example of this was found within Adam4adam.com as well. As the versatile White man states:

> Have face & body pix. I have multiple interests. I am vers & openminded, I am easy going & freakazoid, you the same. Interested in guys between 27-55 YO. Not interested in a love connection. I like most types of guys. Please practice good hygiene. If you are a game player, dont waste my time. Games are for kids. Prefer BLK or LTN, open to others. Understand there has to be an attraction. If you are not interested, Just say "Thanks, not interested". Treat others the same way you wish to be treated. Tired of the RUDE attitudes! No reason for it! – 46 y.o., average, White verse

This White verse male selected anything goes for condom use and nothing for HIV status. He then goes on to describe himself as "verse & openminded," reflecting his "anything goes" selection within his adam4adam profile. He then states that he is "not interested in a love connection," only wanting sex and rejecting games that he sees as only for "kids." This 46-year-old White male is at risky for HIV infection specifically because he has anything goes in place of condom use. By not putting his HIV status, he seems to verify the risk. Still, he mentions that he prefers "BLK (Black) or LTN (Latino)" men. His skin color privileges him in the racial hierarchy of desire, making him more desirable as a partner, despite his age. His request for men of color then puts them at risk, being that they don't know his status and he is open to condom-less sex. The combination of the two put men of color in harm's way.

Finally, White men looking to engage in extremely reckless behavior can request men of color as partners and expose them to sexual risk. This again demonstrates the role sexual racism has in the increase of HIV/AIDS. Take for example the profile below:

> Very fun/wild masculine but totally submissive white pussyboy bottom...love to let a guy have his way with me, use/enjoy me for his pleasure, mild bondage, restraints/blindfolds, nipples are my weakness, hot musty male scents, can get as wild/nasty as you want, even forced fem/hum. Smooth bubble-butt and tight/clean hole, blk/latino hot and groups, anon scene, role-play... – 39 y.o., ideal body, White bottom

In the above example, the 39-year-old White bottom reflects the IWMA with his race, masculinity and ideal body, making him more desirable than others in the racial hierarchy of desire. He also states that he is HIV negative for his status but selected nothing for condom use. He then goes on to describe himself as a "white pussyboy bottom" who loves to "let a guy have his way" with him. This can include "bondage" and "restraints/blindfolds," suggesting that the top can get as "wild/nasty" as he wants to the point of "forced fem/hum" or forced feminizing and humiliation. The White bottom then requests "blk and latino" men, "groups," and even "anon scenes" or anonymous sex.

While the White bottom claims to be HIV negative, his sexual request are risky and increase the chances of HIV/AIDS infections. By not selecting anything for condom use but then stating that men can have their way with him, he is communicating through his profile that anything goes in terms of condom use and sex. Such sex acts like anonymous sex (Langarita Adiego 2014) and group sex (Hollander 2015) are associated with higher chances of infection. By requesting men of color, the White bottom increases the chances of exposing men of color to HIV/AIDS.

The role of gender performance is also associated with sexual risk in this case. The White bottom calls himself a "white pussyboy bottom" and offers himself up for sexual ravishing. In contrast to masculinity, this bottoms femininity must be forced out of him and is seen as a form of humiliation. Yet, while it may seem like he is giving the sexual power to the tops, in actuality this White bottom remains in power. As an IWMA, the White male sits atop the hierarchy of desire. His request for dominance fits into the

stereotype White men created for Black and Latino men, fulfilling a sexual fantasy for the bottom. So, despite the lower status of femininity in the hierarchy, the tops Whiteness still gives him the sexual power in the situation to request men of color that epitomize the Black sexual savage. By excluding Whites from his request, this bottom increases the risk for men of color while removing it from White men.

### *7.10 Conclusion*

The MSMs that use adam4adam.com for sex engage in several tactics to negotiate sex through their online profiles. These tactics include stating within their profiles that they have been tested for HIV and STD's and giving the date for the last test, selecting HIV negative through the adam4adam.com profile setup and then describing their sexually risky desires in their profiles, and filling out all the variables but strategically leaving off an answer for condom use on their profiles so as to communicate that condom use is negotiable without actually saying so. This last tactic allows them to avoid public scrutiny for selecting anything goes but they can describe sexually risky sex on their profiles instead.

Based on the theory of sexual racism, fat men, fem/bottom men, and Black/Asian men would have to be more willing to forgo condom use in order to increase their pool of potential partners and compensate for their devaluing in the hierarchy. Yet when I tested each model, the results were mixed. The log odds of bottoms having anything goes was higher than for tops, affirming the theory but body type had no significant relationship, likely due to the small number of fat/large men in the sample. As for race,

the log odds of Black and Asian men having anything goes on their profiles was less than White men, contrary to the theory and reaffirming the *Black Condom Use Paradox*.

Still, Black men are more at risk for HIV/AIDS. This seemed to be due to sexual racism restricting their sexual networks by means of the ideology of privilege. That is, White men removing Black men from safer sexual networks as a form of preference or White men specifically requesting men of color for riskier sex. Taken together, either by excluding Black men or including them, they remained at further sexual risk.

# CHAPTER 8:

# CONCLUSION:

## *8.1 Introduction: The Serious Consequences of Sexual Racism*

The Advocate ‘s 2015 series of stories, *Six-in-Ten-Men* (#6in10men), highlighted the HIV infection rate impacting the gay community in congruence with the findings of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The series specifically engaged the way sexual racism impacts HIV infections for people of color by arguing that racism in the gay community limits Black sexual networks. Often stories like these, regarding sexual racism and its impact on people of color, are dismissed outright. This project takes seriously the role of racism in partner preferences and the impact it has on the lives of the marginalized via the popular slogan in gay communities, “no fats, no fems, no Blacks/Asians.” It is there, through the examination of the bodied, gendered and racialized stereotypes of different racial groups, that it becomes clearer how sexual racism impacts the life of those least desired. This presents the imperative in studying sexual racism.

## *8.2 Finding a Place in the Literature*

For this study, I delved into the race and sexuality literature, to give myself perspective on racism and desire as well as to provide myself the foundation for developing sexual racism theory. Previous research on race and racism suffered from concepts that lacked explanatory power. For instance, studies on racism used concepts

like prejudice and discrimination (Mile & Brown 2003) to describe individual actions while disregarding the historical processes of White on Black domination and the institutionalization of such dominion (Feagin & Elias 2013). Similarly, early proponents of sexual racism also used concepts like individual prejudice (Callander et al. 2012), to describe a phenomenon that is rooted in racial structures and racial organizing. None the less, these limited theories and incomplete concepts have persisted.

Sexuality work has been rooted in a history of liberation that has at times resisted critiques around the perpetuation of racism in the field. As groups fought for sexual freedom, often the way racism reproduced in the sexual field was overlooked in favor for political progress. Still some scholars of sexuality work examined sexual power (Foucault 1978), sexuality reproduced through social structures (Laumann et. al 2004), and sexual fields (Martin & George 2006). Yet, many of these earlier works suffered from using the White tools and White logic of their predecessors and failing to consider the permanence of systemic racism in society.

Fortunately, intersectionality scholarship bridged the gap between past race research and sexuality work. Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) began with an analysis of race and sex (as gender) to explore the impact of racism and sexism on the lives of Black women. Collins (2000) further developed the ideas into a matrix of domination that explored more intersections such as that of race, gender, and class. In a similar vein, sexual racism theory is the intersection of two robust theories of race and sexuality, Feagin's (2006) systemic racism theory and Green's (2008) sexual fields theory.

### *8.3 Revisiting Sexual Racism Theory*

By synthesizing the two theories, I argue that elite Whites create the sexual fields that then reproduce systemic racism, resulting in sexual racism. They then use a male archetype as a symbol for their sexual field to bring others into its orbit. The *Ideal White Male Archetype (IWMA),* that symbol, is the socially constructed model of a man that is upheld as the most desirable via sexual racism. The IWMA is young, with a muscular build, masculine gender performance and White. All other men are measured against the archetype, receiving more erotic capital when they approach the archetype and losing capital when they diverge from it.

Sexual racism theory has four parameters to it. The first is that it is White created and White maintained. Whites have developed the IWMA and use it as a symbol of what is desirable. That then trickles down into the sexual field and impacts individual actor's desires. While everyone has erotic capital (Green 2008), White males have established what that capital is and who has how much based on the IWMA. All others view desire through this lens, thus, even Black men who prefer Black men can reject Black men who are "fem" and "fat", upholding the IWMA in other forms, if not by race. An example of this was in Chapter 4, where the creators and owner of Adam4adam.com used an IWMA on its homepage, structured the rest of their website so racial and sexual stereotypes were subtlety reinforced through selection, and used porn that once again suggested the gendered and sexual role of racial and ethnic groups. These things were later found

within individual profiles of users of A4A, as they described themselves and the ones they desire.

The second parameter is the racial hierarchy of desire created by sexual racism. This hierarchy, again by means of the IWMA, maintains White Supremacy at the expense of people of color, giving White men the most erotic capital and all others varying degrees of capital along the hierarchy. Men often accentuate certain features or minimize others to increase their pool of potential partners. In some cases, this means highlighting your masculinity if you are too chubby, or your muscular body if you are old. Still, this upholds and never challenges the system created by and for the White men to benefit from. Examples of this racial hierarchy of desire were dispersed through Chapter 5, as the profiles of users requested masculine, muscular men who were White or Latino.

Third, there is an accompanying ideology with sexual racism theory. It is the ideology of preference. This ideology suggests racial, gender and bodied desires in a partner are a result of individual choice and not the social structure. It also has a way of shifting from negative "no" language to neutral "into" and positive "prefer" language to not seem racist on the surface. It even uses "adjacent" language or similar language connect to other words to get its message across. For example, instead of saying "no fats", they can say, "into jocks who work out." This maintains the illusion of it being individual preference and not sexual racism as evidenced in Chapter 6.

Fourth and the final parameter is the impact that sexual racism has on the very livelihood of the MSM, as was explored in Chapter 7. While the men online use multiple

methods to negotiate sex including stating their last HIV test date, selecting HIV negative for their status but engaging in risky sexual behavior, and filling out their entire profile but leaving off an answer for condom, the men who don't fit into the IWMA are limited in their sexual power to negotiate. This lead me to develop three hypotheses, that the log odds of men of color, fat men, and bottom men having "anything goes" on their profiles instead of safe sex only would be higher, precisely because of the marginalization they face online due to sexual racism.

Yet the results of my analysis were mixed. As Black and Asian men aged, they were more likely to have safe sex only on their profiles than White men, bottoms were less likely to have safe sex only on their profiles and body-type yielded no significance save for the control variable and the constant. What seemed likely to explain why Black men were more likely to wear condoms than Whites but have more HIV/ADIS cases rested on White men requesting men of color for risky sex, and or excluding men of color for safer sex. The marginalized among the marginalized, that is the fat, fem, and men of color among men who have sex with men (MSM), are rejected based on the racialized sexual stereotypes assigned to them or desired for the racialized construction of their bodies and the gendered presentation they use based on both body and racial stereotypes. Since White men are the most desired and everyone competes for them, this leaves Black men and others with less leveraging power during sexual negotiations around sexual health and exposing them to higher risks. Thus, sexual racism leaves some men more at risk for HIV/AIDS.

### *8.4 Study Contributions*

The current study contributes to the field theoretically, methodologically, and empirically. Theoretically, this study intersects Feagin's (2006) Systemic Racism Theory with Green's (2011) Sexual Fields approach, developing a theory of sexual racism. Sexual Racism theory has four parameters to it that together name Whites as the creators of it, and all MSMs as the maintainers of it via the *Ideal White Male Archetype*. It is because of this archetype that "no fats, fems, and Blacks" is so popular a tagline online. Thanks in part to the ideology of preference, sexual racism perpetuates itself continuously, evolving to the scenario so that the men can express sexual racism without being called racist.

Methodologically, this is a mixed methods analysis of sexual racism online. While previous studies have leaned towards qualitative methods (C. S. Han 2008; Paul et al. 2010; Plummer 2008; Wilson et al. 2009), there has been grown in quantitative analyses as well (Callander et al. 2015; Robinson and Moskowitz 2013; Sánchez and Vilain 2012). This study uses both methods through qualitative content analysis (Sandelowski and Sandelowski 2000), triangulation (Davis 2014), and binomial regression analysis (Tremain 2009). This mixed method approach allowed for a more robust analysis of the data. None the less, measures were taken to validate the study, such as stating my positionality as a researcher and accounting for potential bias in my analysis.

Empirically, my findings were consistent with previous studies on sexual racism and HIV/AIDS. This study contributes to the literature by investigating sexual racism in

the fourth largest city in the US, Houston, TX as opposed to Seattle (Plummer 2008), New York (Fields et al. 2012), Los Angeles (Ro et al. 2013), and San Francisco (Raymond and McFarland 2009), hence providing a rare but much needed perspective from the American Southwest. It also is one of the few studies, to my knowledge, to examine sexual racism from a top down approach, investigating the workings of the creators of Adam4adam.com and the owner and not just the users. Previous studies of A4A (Chan et al. 2016; Miller 2015; Robinson 2015) have remained silent on the role the owner and creators have in perpetuating sexual racism within their website. My study also provides a valuable framework for which to research sexual racism, the IWMA and the ideology of preference. Finally, my study contributes to the research on the Black Condom Use Paradox and provides some context for why Black men might have higher HIV/AIDS rates than other racial groups despite being more likely to wear condoms.

### *8.5 Study Limitations*

There are several limitations to the current study. One of the largest is focused on the statistical analysis. Although a random sample of the adam4adam.com population, the available profiles stopped at 80 pages for Blacks, Whites and Latinos. This could be because of a limit from the website in regards to the amount of profiles users can have access too. Either way, this limit means that what is reported on within the dissertation is the users of A4A that I had access to and not the entirety of A4A.

Similarly, the sample I collected, although substantial, was not large enough for all three variables; race, sexual position and body type, to be analyzed together in one large model. This means that while I could analyze the three variables and their relationship to condom use separate, I could not do them together. This could have very well impacted certain models, resulting in R squares that are smaller than the usual 20%, as was the case in all three models, as well as in a lack of significance, as was the case for the body type model. This could be due to not having enough power in the model due to sample size.

Another limitation of the current study is the lack of interviews in correspondence with the profiles. My current work takes note from my previous research on sexual racism (Smith 2014), using those past interviews to provide backdrop for my current study. Still, interviews with Houston users of A4A would allow for a closer inspection of the negotiation process between users of A4A regarding last minute decisions and in person changes concerning condom use. Nonetheless, the current study does provide methods and ways users are negotiating sexual practices through their profiles.

The lack of interviews meant I could not contextualize some of the comments on profiles, such as in regards to leaving off a response for condom use. These curious cases seem to suggest that the willingness to answer every question *but* the condom use question may in fact be a willingness to engage in condom-less sex, but also an acknowledgement that it may appear socially undesirable to state anything goes for condom use on their public profiles. It could also suggest that condom-less sex may be

desirable depending on situations, such as after having sex after so many times with the same person, or after taking STI and HIV exams, etc. While there is no telling, this could be the case in many of these scenarios. Similarly, the large number of profiles that put safe sex only by no means is an absolute that this is the case always. Based on the same social acceptability template, many may in fact put safe sex only to suggest healthiness and an absence of HIV and STI's, but may also be willing to engage in condom-less sex if the person is attractive enough (Smith 2014, Green 2008). Either way, the lack of interviews means a definitive answer regarding the profiles is absent.

### *8.6 Future Directions*

My hope is that the concepts and theoretical ideas presented in this study provide valuable resources to future researchers so that they can continue to test them and build upon them. The concept of the *Ideal White Male Archetype* should be explored offline as well and in different scenarios, such as heterosexual spaces, to see if and how it is perpetuated. Beyond examining the online world, future studies should consider the marginalized among the marginalized. That is, specifically the counter framing of men who are fat, Black, and fem together in contrast to the IWMA. The information provide by such a group could prove valuable not only to the research community, but also to those in health policy, as such groups could be at most risk for sexual risk behavior due to the level of marginalization they face online.

While this study focuses on one website, the study should be duplicated on others to see if what is found here in regards to sexual racism, is found elsewhere as well. For

instance, how might sexual racism look on a heterosexual dating site? A lesbian dating site? A possible comparison of a straight website and lesbian website with the findings of this study will prove fruitful. In fact, such a study can give a thorough analysis of online world as it pertains to sex and relationships for all people regardless of sexual orientation.

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# APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

**DATE:** October 26, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Joe Feagin
TAMU - College Liberal Arts - Sociology

**FROM:** Dr. James Fluckey
Chair, TAMU IRB

**SUBJECT:** Expedited Approval

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Study Number:** | IRB2014-0729D |
| **Title:** | Racial Stratification Online and its Impact on Online Identity management |
| **Date of Determination:** | |
| **Approval Date:** | 12/01/2014 |
| **Continuing Review Due:** | 09/15/2016 |
| **Expiration Date:** | 10/15/2016 |
| **Documents Reviewed and Approved:** | Only IRB-stamped approved versions of study materials (e.g., consent forms, recruitment materials, and questionnaires) can be distributed to human participants. Please log into iRIS to download the stamped, approved version of all study materials. If you are unable to locate the stamped version in iRIS, please contact the iRIS Support Team at 979.845.4969 or the IRB liaison assigned to your area. |

**Waiver of Consent:** Waiver/alteration approved 46.116(c) or (d)

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**Comments:**

- Research is to be conducted according to the study application approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
- Any future correspondence should include the IRB study number and the study title.

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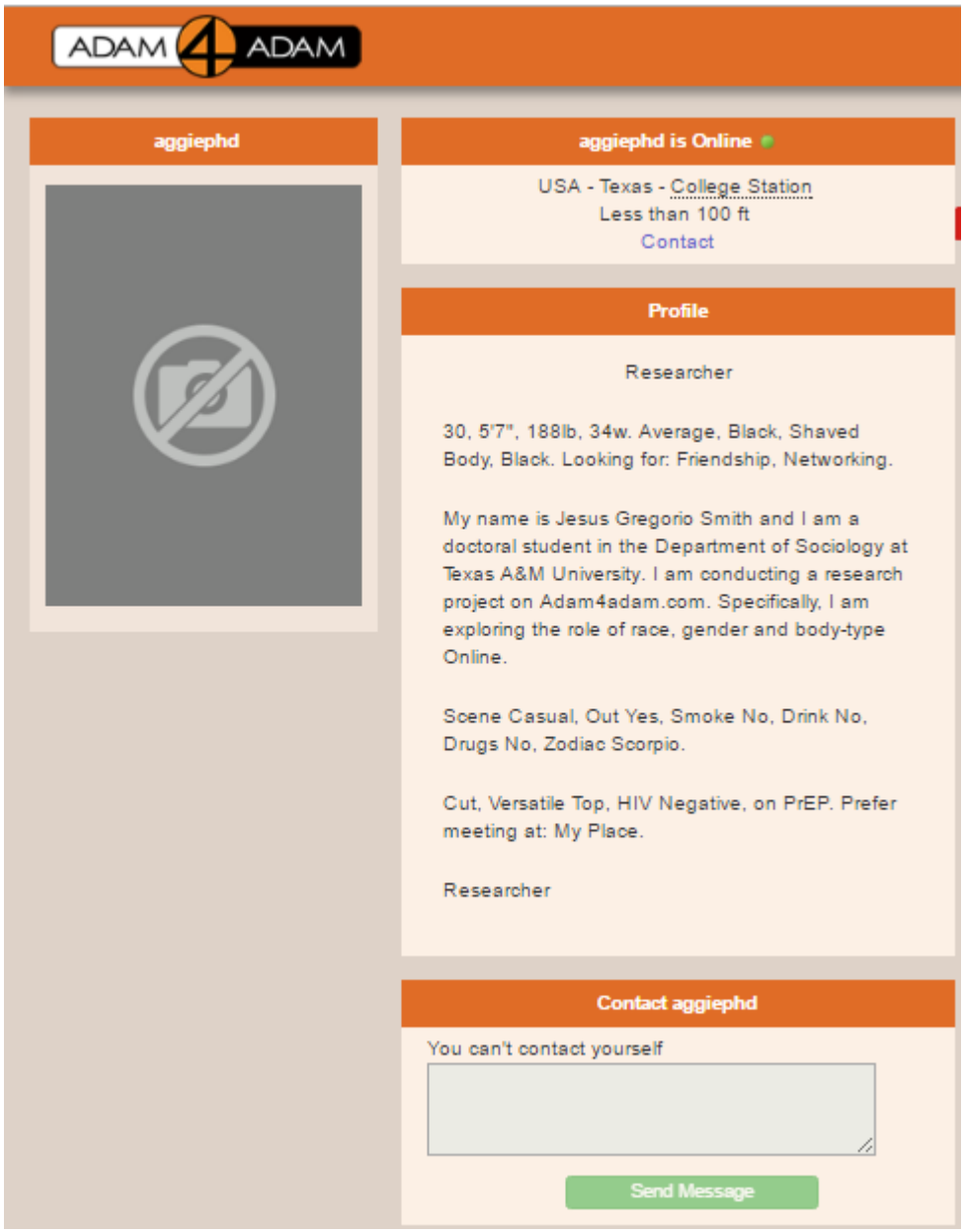
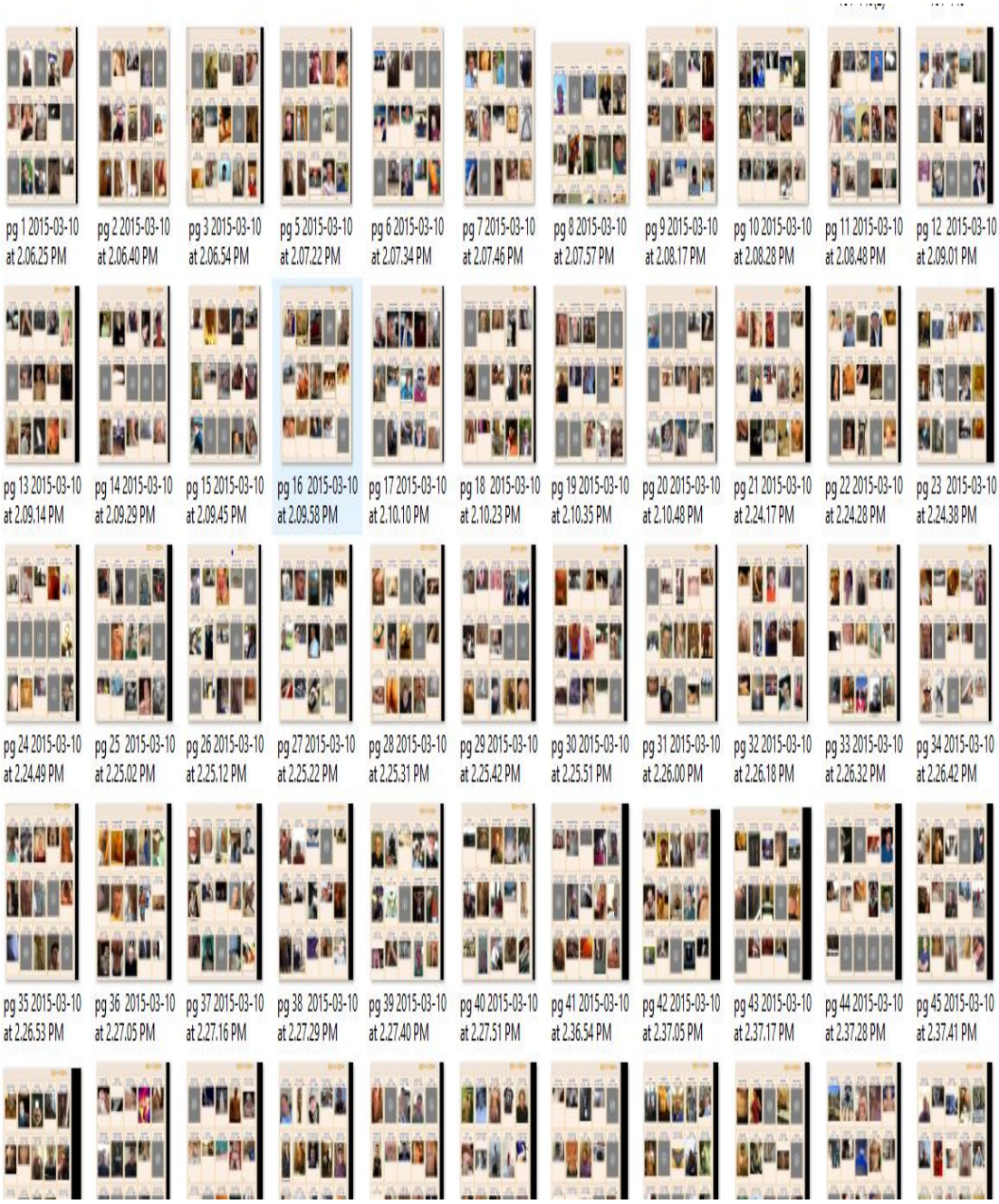
Investigators assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The study must be renewed by the expiration date in order to continue with the research. A Continuing Review application along with required documents must be submitted by the continuing review deadline. Failure to do so may result in processing delays, study expiration, and/or loss of funding.

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186
Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
http://rcb.tamu.edu

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE PROFILE

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pg 9 2015-03-10 at 2.08.17 PM
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pg 11 2015-03-10 at 2.08.48 PM
pg 12 2015-03-10 at 2.09.01 PM
pg 13 2015-03-10 at 2.09.14 PM
pg 14 2015-03-10 at 2.09.29 PM
pg 15 2015-03-10 at 2.09.45 PM
pg 16 2015-03-10 at 2.09.58 PM
pg 17 2015-03-10 at 2.10.10 PM
pg 18 2015-03-10 at 2.10.23 PM
pg 19 2015-03-10 at 2.10.35 PM
pg 20 2015-03-10 at 2.10.48 PM
pg 21 2015-03-10 at 2.24.17 PM
pg 22 2015-03-10 at 2.24.28 PM
pg 23 2015-03-10 at 2.24.38 PM
pg 24 2015-03-10 at 2.24.49 PM
pg 25 2015-03-10 at 2.25.02 PM
pg 26 2015-03-10 at 2.25.12 PM
pg 27 2015-03-10 at 2.25.22 PM
pg 28 2015-03-10 at 2.25.31 PM
pg 29 2015-03-10 at 2.25.42 PM
pg 30 2015-03-10 at 2.25.51 PM
pg 31 2015-03-10 at 2.26.00 PM
pg 32 2015-03-10 at 2.26.18 PM
pg 33 2015-03-10 at 2.26.32 PM
pg 34 2015-03-10 at 2.26.42 PM
pg 35 2015-03-10 at 2.26.53 PM
pg 36 2015-03-10 at 2.27.05 PM
pg 37 2015-03-10 at 2.27.16 PM
pg 38 2015-03-10 at 2.27.29 PM
pg 39 2015-03-10 at 2.27.40 PM
pg 40 2015-03-10 at 2.27.51 PM
pg 41 2015-03-10 at 2.36.54 PM
pg 42 2015-03-10 at 2.37.05 PM
pg 43 2015-03-10 at 2.37.17 PM
pg 44 2015-03-10 at 2.37.28 PM
pg 45 2015-03-10 at 2.37.41 PM

ADAM4ADAM

< Prev Next >

[redacted] is Online

USA - C[redacted] Other in:

10 miles

Contact

Add Him to MY FRIENDS

Send This Profile to a Friend

BLOCK Him

Don't show my LAST VISIT

## Profile

**Down to earth guy here**

**21, 6'1", 160lb, 30w, Athletic, Brown Hair, Smooth, White,** Looking for **Friendship, 1-on-1 Sex, Relationship, Cam2Cam.**

Hey guys, so I like masculine str8 acting guy, guys would can hold me keep me safe lol btw i am ONLY attracted to white guys only!!!!!! Just my preference, Ideally looking for a good guy but finding that here is pretty hard, so I guess I'll take whatever comes my way.

**Drink Socially, Drugs No,**

**Versatile, 7.5" Cut, Safe Sex Only, HIV Negative,** Prefer meeting at: **My Place.**

## Contact [redacted]

Instant Message Off

Send Smile

Write [redacted] a message:

Send Message

?

APPENDIX C: CODE BOOK

**Codebook for Data Entry**

For each question, I code the data as described here.

**ALL NOTES ADDED TO SURVEYS ARE IN A DIFFERENT COLOR from the Respondent's answers.**

*In order to write what each number means, go to review, select new comment, and write what each number means in the new comment. Ex (1=black, 2=white, etc)

Highlight column, go to home, select the find and select button on top right corner, click it, type in variable and what you assign it, (ex. Select black and assign it a 1, press enter and all the black variables in that column will turn to 1s).

Make sure all variable names are lower case and one word because STATA cannot read it otherwise. Also, make sure height is 6.1 instead of 6'1 because STATA cannot read it.

Please use snipping tool and save each profile after recording its data so that we can go back to make sure all data was entered correctly and so that we can make sure none are duplicates and that I can go back and analyze the porn on the sides of the data.

**Variables**

| bodytype | Race | Lookfor |
|---|---|---|
| Slim=1 | Black= 1 | friendship=1 |
| Average=2 | White=2 | relationship=2 |
| Swimmer's=3 | Latino=3 | 1on1 sex=3 |
| Athletic=4 | Asian=4 | 3some/group sex= 4 |
| Muscular=5 | Pacific Islander=5 | misc fetishes=5 |
| Bodybuilder=6 | | cam2cam=6 |
| Large=7 | | |

| Scene | out | smoke | drink | drugs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Casual=1 | yes=1 | yes=1 | no=1 | no=1 |
| Conservative=2 | no=2 | no=2 | occasionally=2 | occasionally=2 |
| Alternative=3 | | socially=3 | often=3 | often=3 |
| Drag=4 | | | socially=4 | socially=4 |
| Leather=5 | | | | |
| Military=6 | | | | |
| Jock=7 | | | | |
| Trendy=8 | | | | |
| Punk=9 | | | | |

| Sexrol | Diccut | sexprac | hivst | meetpl |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| bottom=1 | cut=1 | safe sex only=1 | don't know=1 | my place=1 |
| top=2 | uncut=2 | anything goes=2 | negative=2 | your place=2 |
| versatile=3 | | | positive=3 | public place=3 |
| oral=4 | | | undetectable=4 | |
| verse/top=5 | | | neg on PrEP=5 | |
| verse/bttm=6 | | | | |
| foreplay=7 | | | | |

Part 2: Qualitative analysis

For the qualitative content, each racial group was broken down into sexual position and body type. After that, each section was then examined for content regarding race, gender performance and sexual health.

**Table for Coding**

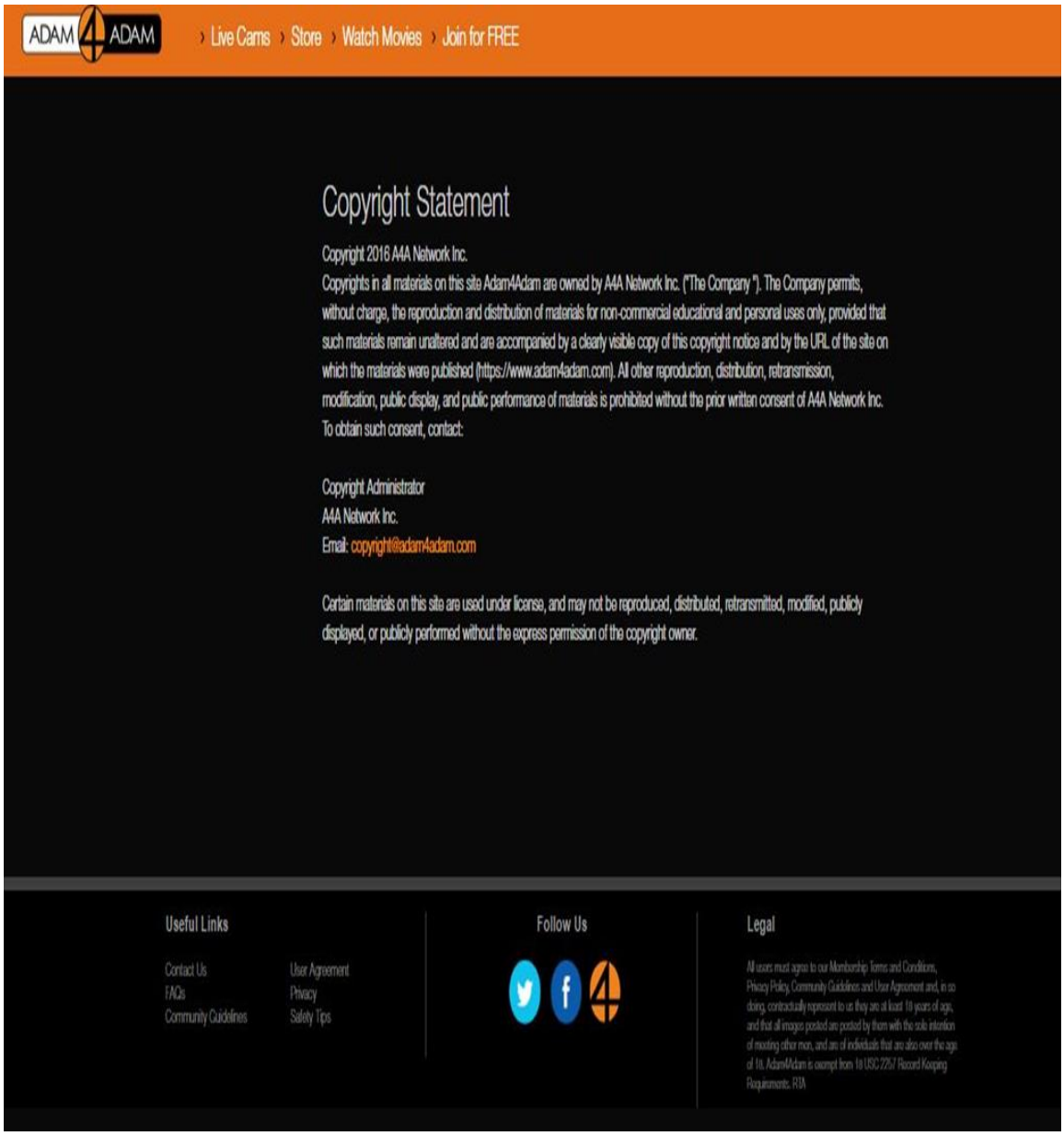
**Thematic Codes**

| Description | Definition | Sub-codes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Within Group | How different (racial/sex role/body type) groups talked about (a, b, c, or d) within their own groups | (a) Race (b) Gender (c) Health (d) Body type |
| 2. Between Group | How different (racial/sex role/body type) groups talked about (a, b, c, or d) between groups | (a) Race (b) Gender (c) Health (d) Body type |
| 3. Overall Groups | How different (racial/sex role/body type) groups talked about (a, b, c, or d) overall | (a) Race (b) Gender (c) Health (d) Body type |

**Table for Qualitative Analysis**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Race Top Slim:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Top Average:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Top Ideal:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Top Large:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type |
| **Race Bottom Slim:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Bottom Average:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Bottom Ideal:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Bottom Large:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type |
| **Race Verse Slim:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Verse Average:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Verse Ideal:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type | **Race Verse Large:**<br>1.Race<br>2.Gender Performance<br>3. Sexual Health<br>4. Body Type |

APPENDIX D: ADAM4ADAM COPYRIGHT



# APPENDIX E: STATA REGRESSION OUTPUTS

**logit condom black latino asianpi age if touse==1**

```
Iteration 0:  log likelihood =  -110.0775
Iteration 1:  log likelihood = -99.889183
Iteration 2:  log likelihood = -98.322933
Iteration 3:  log likelihood = -98.317348
Iteration 4:  log likelihood = -98.317348

Logistic regression                               Number of obs   =        300
                                                  LR chi2(4)      =      23.52
                                                  Prob > chi2     =     0.0001
Log likelihood = -98.317348                       Pseudo R2       =     0.1068

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
      condom |      Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
       black |    1.737852   .6547928     2.65   0.008      .454482    3.021223
      latino |    .4314682   .4603193     0.94   0.349     -.4707409    1.333677
     asianpi |    1.694957   .6690363     2.53   0.011      .3836701    3.006244
         age |   -.0317634   .0174996    -1.82   0.070     -.0660621    .0025352
       _cons |    2.524749   .8237316     3.07   0.002      .9102649    4.139233
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

**logit condom slim large average age if touse==1**

```
Iteration 0:  log likelihood =  -110.0775
Iteration 1:  log likelihood = -104.62284
Iteration 2:  log likelihood = -104.13031
Iteration 3:  log likelihood = -104.12827
Iteration 4:  log likelihood = -104.12826

Logistic regression                               Number of obs   =        300
                                                  LR chi2(4)      =      11.90
                                                  Prob > chi2     =     0.0181
Log likelihood = -104.12826                       Pseudo R2       =     0.0540
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
      condom |      Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
        slim |   -.4269437   .5517211    -0.77   0.439    -1.508297    .6544098
       large |    1.100607    1.07708     1.02   0.307    -1.010432    3.211645
     average |    .0512207   .4093655     0.13   0.900     -.751121    .8535624
         age |   -.0516032   .0157837    -3.27   0.001    -.0825387   -.0206678
       _cons |    3.94779    .7094853     5.56   0.000     2.557224    5.338356
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

**logit condom bottoms versatile age if touse==1**

```
Iteration 0:   log likelihood =  -110.0775
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -101.61004
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -100.76894
Iteration 3:   log likelihood =  -100.7661
Iteration 4:   log likelihood =  -100.7661

Logistic regression                             Number of obs   =        300
                                                LR chi2(3)      =      18.62
                                                Prob > chi2     =     0.0003
Log likelihood =  -100.7661                     Pseudo R2       =     0.0846

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
      condom |      Coef.   Std. Err.           z      P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
     bottoms |   -1.24554   .4603192    -2.71   0.007    -2.147749   -.3433309
   versatile |  -.3180194   .5345718    -0.59   0.552    -1.365761    .7297221
         age |  -.0527277   .0157184    -3.35   0.001    -.0835352   -.0219202
       _cons |   4.632749   .7703131     6.01   0.000     3.122963    6.142535
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```