



Media and
Communications

Media@LSE Working Paper Series

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An Exploration of Gay Racism on the World's Most Popular
Platform for Gay and Bisexual Men

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Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

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ABSTRACT

Grindr, a geolocation-based online networking application geared towards gay and bisexual men is the most popular of its kind. While some believe that platforms like Grindr are open spaces posing a challenge to a racialized organization of desire, many studies have highlighted the way members of Grindr's community (users) perpetuate "gay racism". In particular, whiteness is valued as the most desirable attribute with respect to erotic capital and the gay marketplace of desire. Applying semiotic analysis to six selected Grindr profiles, this dissertation will explore the ways in which Grindr's users draw upon, reinforce, and/or reject white identity, with respect to articulations of erotic capital via self-representation. In other words, the literature suggests that gay racism is persistent on platforms like Grindr, but what does this enactment look like from a visual and discursive perspective?

This essay argues that while a dominant code that privileges whiteness, manifests as gay racism, and ultimately serves white supremacy exists, Grindr's users employ a number of strategies in their navigation of the platform and the gay racism that it features. Findings from this study contribute to future research questions around gay racism, race, representation, and power.

1. INTRODUCTION

Introduced in 2009, Grindr is a location-based real-time dating (LBRTD) application (app) that advertises itself as “the world’s largest social networking app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people” (Grindr, LLC, 2018). Boasting over three million daily active users (DAU) in every country in the world, Grindr claims to have the highest level of engagement out of any dating app, capturing 54 minutes from each user each day (Grindr, LLC, 2018). In addition, a recent study has cited that online dating is the most popular way for same-sex couples to meet (Emerging Technology from the arXiv, 2017) While the company’s originally stated goal was to help men find other men for chatting, dates, meeting up, and sexual interaction, the company has broadened its appeal and transitioned from a “gay dating app” into a “lifestyle platform” (Faris, 2018; Parks-Ramage, 2016).

As a young black queer person, Grindr was one of the first social spaces where I explored my sexuality and identity and as I navigated the site in a personal capacity, I found that despite being a supposedly open and liberating online space, many of the similar racialized structures found in society were intact and perpetuated. Indeed, there has been a considerable amount of media scrutiny placed upon Grindr with respect to its role in perpetuating gay racism. Outlets like Vice News and popular social media posts have addressed this problematic aspect of Grindr, highlighting the fact that the platform allows paying users to filter by attributes, like race (Shadel, 2018). In fact, one California man has even filed a class-action lawsuit alleging that the platform facilitates gay racism (Truong, 2018). Despite ample media coverage, critical academic scrutiny has failed to follow suit. There is an abundant amount of literature on the concept of gay racism and its varied enactments, but the field lacks insight into the visual aspect of this racism and how those who use Grindr operate within a sexual marketplace with an inherently racialized structure. This essay is an attempt to address the issue of gay racism, the privileging of whiteness, and how those on Grindr self-construct their profiles in order to successfully operate on the platform. As Grindr attempts to occupy greater space within the

lives of gay and bisexual men, we must critically engage with how Grindr and those who use it work to increase or decrease instances of exclusion and oppression.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Racism in America: Origins & History

To begin to understand racism in America from a historical and theoretical perspective, this essay will draw from the theories of historian Ibrahim X. Kendi and sociologist Benjamin P. Bowser. The theories provided are interesting in so far as they provide greater context for the pervasive nature of racism in America. Through a historical perspective and analysis, Kendi posits the notion that racism is only possible through the production and maintenance of racist ideas (Kendi, 2016). Kendi defines a racist idea as “any concept that regards one racial group as inferior or superior to another racial group in any way” (Kendi, 2016: 3). While Kendi’s text provides an account of anti-black racism in America, he argues that many of the original anti-black racist ideas have also been weaponized against other racial and ethnic minorities within the United States (Kendi, 2016). Kendi illustrates the history of racism from its genesis in fifteenth-century Europe, to colonial settlers and the racist ideas they carried from Britain, and finally to America in the twenty-first century¹ (Kendi, 2016). From Kendi’s perspective racist ideas and the racism they give rise to are not the result of ignorance, intolerance, and hate (Kendi, 2016). Rather, Kendi points to a causal relationship as one of racial discrimination begetting racist ideas, which then manifest as ignorance, intolerance, and hatred (Kendi, 2016). Perhaps one of the most salient points made by Kendi addresses the idea that manifestations

¹¹ Obviously, this essay does not seek to provide a fulsome account of the history of racist ideas in America. Rather, this section’s goal is to depict a societal and political environment where racist ideas have persisted since America’s founding.

of racial discrimination are typically the result of cultural, political, or economic self-interests (Kendi, 2016).

While Kendi examines racism through the lenses of historical events and movements, Benjamin Bowser considers racism from a theoretical perspective and concludes that it was conceived as a concept to describe prejudice due to “animus between groups based on visible physical differences” (Bowser, 2017: 73). According to Bowser, three concomitant levels of racism exist to form an overall theory of racism² and these include the cultural, the individual, and the institutional (Bowser, 2017). Bowser argues that cultural racism operates as a foundation for institutional racism, while institutions maintain cultural scripts and allow for the operation of cultural racism across time (Bowser, 2017). Finally, institutional racism reinforces individual beliefs that ultimately maintain a racialized hierarchy (Bowser, 2017).

Taken together, Kendi and Bowser suggest a theory of racism in America that is a result of historical determinants and ongoing oppression. This brief overview and history of racist ideas in America is useful for understanding the omnipresent, yet insidious nature of racism in an American context and will prove valuable as this essay continues to explain and identify gay racism.

1.2 Definitions of Racism

While a historical and theoretical account of racism in America helps to provide context for this essay, it is also useful to explore how other theorists conceptualize racism. Queer theorist and poet Audre Lorde defines racism as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance” (Lorde, 1984: 115). Crucial to this conception of racism is the enactment of dominance and oppression, which this essay seeks to explore within the context of Grindr and the gay community. Along this understanding of racism and its

² For more on the theory of racism, see (Bowser, 2017).

accompanying oppression, bell hooks³ directly ties racism to the system that it most benefits and that system is one of white supremacy (hooks, 2015). This understanding of racism as a system that serves white supremacy is further echoed within extant literature (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Feagin, 2006). It is also important to recognize that racism can be enacted on both the individual and institutional level.

Like Bowser, Allport identifies individual racism as a result of discrimination due to the negative perception of members of a minority race (Allport, 1958). Additionally, a voluminous amount of literature exists to address institutional racism as racism with structural boundaries and procedures that are either intentionally or unintentionally imposed in order to disproportionately advantage dominant groups, while disadvantaging minority groups (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Friedman, 1975; Sivanandan, 1976; Feagin & Feagin, 1978; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Here, it is important to note that what distinguishes institutional racism from its individual enactment, is that racism can exist absent the purposefully deliberate enactment of racist ideas by individuals (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). This essay employs the aforementioned conceptions and definitions of racism, but a large body of writing does exist, that presents views that challenge definitions of racism previously provided⁴. Returning to the discussion of racism, dominance, and power (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Feagin, 2006; hooks, 2015; Lorde, 1984), the next section will address the primary beneficiaries of racism.

1.3 Racism: Power & Dominance

At this point, this essay has discussed the concept of racism and largely identified those who are most oppressed from its individual and institutional enactment. Just as important in

³ bell hooks is the pseudonym for theorist Gloria Jean Watkins and is always written in lowercase.

⁴ Space concerns prohibit a more thorough overview. For more, see (Barbarin & Gilbert, 1981; Pfeifer & Schneider, 1974; Reich, 1978; Wilbanks, 1987)

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addressing those oppressed is identifying the oppressors. Here, it is useful to employ critical whiteness studies in order to “dislodge it from its centrality and authority” (Dyer R. , 1997: 10). However, whiteness is a difficult concept to define and identify. Theorists like Gwendolyn Audrey Foster argue that whiteness exists as a cultural construct, as opposed to a determined biological position (Foster, 2012). While Richard Dyer posits that “as long as whiteness is felt to be the human condition, then it alone defines normality and fully inhabits it” (Dyer R. , 1997: 9). In a similar vein, Sara Ahmed asserts that “If to be human is to be white, then to be not white is to inhabit the negative: it is to be ‘not’ (Ahmed, 2006: 161)”.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, whiteness is an identity with an “absent centre”; an identity based on the maintenance of power and projection of the ‘Other’ (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992). Indeed, Franz Fanon also applies a psychoanalytic framework to explore the trauma of racism, noting that the dominant discourses of racism serve to leave black people with a sustained inferiority complex (Fanon, 1967). Ahmed argues that whiteness is “a social and bodily orientation given that some bodies will be more at home in a world that is orientated towards whiteness” (Ahmed, 2006: 160). Ahmed continues, explaining that whiteness is performed as a habit and cannot simply be reduced to one’s skin color (Ahmed, 2006). This positioning of whiteness as a performed identity is evocative of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, wherein identities are constructed via the repetition of specific acts and behaviors (Butler, 1990). Here, the commonality across white identity and those who occupy it is privilege and power. Not all white people hold and perpetuate racist ideas, but nonetheless, whiteness reproduces a power asymmetry that oppresses and that is because whiteness is what is considered to be “normal”, and that normality affords many privileges (Dyer R. , 1997). This asymmetrical power dynamic is what we mean when we invoke the notion of white privilege.

1.4 White Privilege

In essence, white privilege can be described as a set of unmerited advantages bestowed upon those categorized⁵ as white; these privileges and advantages afford white people with a disproportionate share of social, economic, and cultural capital (Katznelson, 2005; Lipsitz, 1998; McIntosh, 1997; Rains, 1998; Shapiro, 2004; Unzeta & Lowery, 2008). The main takeaway is that people are categorized as white and reinforce this identity because of the power and privileges that whiteness provides (Dyer R. , 1997).

1.5 The Racialized 'Other'

If racism benefits the system of white supremacy and those beneficiaries are people who are considered to be white, then we can conclude that everyone outside of the nexus of white identity is at a disadvantage. What's more, this power asymmetry has lasting effects on the power, production, and exchange of meanings that help us to make sense of the world, or what Stuart Hall refers to as "culture" (Hall, 1997a). Stuart Hall notes that "othering" is a means of drawing a distinction and difference in order to create meaning (Hall, 1997b). Borrowing from (Derrida, 1972), Hall notes that these binary oppositions are not neutral, but are imbued with power depending upon each opposition's ability to exert dominance (Hall, 1997b). Hall notes that a purely binary oppositional view runs the risk of being reductive, as it fails to fully capture the relational power dynamics between the oppositions (Hall, 1997b) In other words, the existence of the 'Other' is required for the construction of one's own meaning and subsequent identity, an argument echoed in the examination of whiteness from a psychoanalytic perspective (Fanon, 1967; Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992). In an exploration of advertisements from the nineteenth-century, Hall notes how the racialized 'Other' is commodified and stereotyped to suit the dominant narrative of those who are normalized as human (white people) (Hall, 1997b). Here the primary binary opposition is one comparing the

⁵ For more, see (Dyer R., 1997).

civilized (white) with the barbaric and savage (black) (Hall, 1997b). Aligned with the maintenance of racism explored earlier, this opposition attempts to create an extreme divide between white and black and this power dynamic has persisted.

An aspect that maintains this asymmetrical power dynamic is stereotyping. Hall notes that stereotyping is a representational practice that “reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature” (Hall, 1997b: 257). Stereotyping serves to reinforce the established distinctions of power, representation, and difference that already exist within the dominant binary oppositions discussed previously, as it’s those with the power to represent the ‘Other’ who exert considerable symbolic power (Hall, 1997b). More importantly these stereotypes, along with their symbolic power hold the ability to set the dominant discourse by which knowledge is produced, consumed, and disseminated. Fetishism is also an important aspect of the dominant discourse that deserves exploration. According to Hall, fetishism involves a strategy wherein both desire and fascination with the ‘Other’ are indulged and simultaneously denied (Hall, 1997b). Racialized fetishism can involve the displacement of a seemingly taboo and sexual desire for one that it substitutes (Hall, 1997b). While Hall’s focus discusses stereotyping and fetishism with respect to those ‘Others’ racialized as black, the same oppression occurs for other minority groups (Said, 1977). This essay will explore representations of the ‘Other’, with respect to binary oppositions, stereotypes, and fetishism.

1.6 Gay Racism

The term gay racism first appeared in a collection of poetry, essays, short stories, and photographs meant to explore the fraught relationship between race and sexuality in the United States (DeMarco, 1983). Since its original debut, the concept of gay racism has been expanded by a number of theorists and for the purposes of this essay, gay racism can be defined as “the enactment of racist practices among and between gay men, which can perhaps be most usefully conceived as situated racism” (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2018: 1). Like

traditional forms of racism, gay racism can be enacted in both overt and covert ways, but it should be noted that gay racism tends to appear in more insidious forms and it is for this reason that Grindr has been placed under a critical lens. For example, in the context of dating and sexual relations between gay men, overt racism is often disguised and excused as a simple sexual or dating “preference” (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2015).

Existing research on gay racism and its effect on individuals has identified how much of the racism encountered has been subtle and is often difficult to identify (Ayres, 1999; Caluya, 2006; Chuang, 1999; Han, 2007; Law, 2012; McBride, 2005;). Related literature has examined the operation of gay racism in online spaces that serve as sites of romantic and sexual socialization (Daroya, 2013; Fung, 1991; Han, 2006, 2007, 2008; McBride, 2005). Overwhelmingly, these examinations of gay racism in a sexual context note a power dynamic that reinforces the dominance of whiteness as the standard by which all gay men are measured. However, in order to avoid the reductive nature of binary oppositions acknowledged by Hall, this essay considers an intersectional framework, which provides a greater degree of assessment of the varying forms of oppression and exclusion those who experience gay racism face (Crenshaw, 1991).

1.7 Gay Racism: Online Spaces & Grindr

Despite being the most popular LBRTD⁶ app for gay men and men who have sex with men, Grindr has received little critical academic scrutiny. Some authors hold an optimistic view of computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Dubrovskys & Kiesler, 1991; Kiesler & Sproull, 1992) and its potentially emancipatory ability to reconfigure human relationships (Race, 2015; Vernon, 2010). However, other literature on gay racism in a sexual context has identified how gay racism in online spaces like Grindr is common, perhaps due to the unrestrained effects that online spaces offer in terms of relative anonymity (Callander et al., 2012; Suler, 2004).

⁶ LBRTD – Location-Based-Real-Time-Dating

Some have suggested that online spaces facilitated by CMC are crucial for identity development and well-being amongst LGBTQ⁷ youth (Bond & Figueroa-Caballero, 2016). Others suggest that CMC has the potential to increase the well-being of LGBTQ persons, as they are able to interact with others absent the strictures of space and time (Bond et al., 2009; Craig & McNroy, 2014). However, if a racialized hierarchy that serves to oppress and exclude mars this online interaction, it requires critical examination.

1.8 Effects of Gay Racism & Responses

Existing literature on the enactment of gay racism in spaces intended for finding romantic or sexual partners has examined how some men had actively reframed their experiences in order to mitigate the negative impacts of racism; specifically, when some of the men encountered gay racism they responded by adjusting their own practices or thoughts, as opposed to challenging racism directly (Callander et al., 2015). Altering one's own practices as a response to gay racism has been documented in other settings as well, including social spaces like gay bars and clubs (Boykin, 1996; Choi, Han, Paul, & Ayala, 2011; DeMarco, 1983).

In a study of gay men of color navigating the erotic worlds of Manhattan's white gay dominated spaces, Green identified examples of black gay men who were willing to engage in riskier sexual practices despite known health risks when sexual partners occupied the ideal type (Green, 2008). Some view these alterations by gay men of color that experience racism as accommodations of racism within the gay community and these findings indicate that different strategies exist for challenging racism, depending upon the setting and the level of blatant racism faced. (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2018).

Many studies have documented the effects of gay racism; citing increased anger, anxiety, sadness, stress, depression, and difficulties with intimacy (Callander et al., 2015; Chae &

⁷ LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

Hirokazu, 2008; Han et al., 2014; Zambonie & Crawford, 2007). Furthermore, a historical account of gay racism found that the deliberate exclusion of gay persons based on race and class contributed to a public health environment and response to the 1980s HIV/AIDS epidemic, wherein only white gays were visible and therefore received the bulk of support (Gould, 2012). Consider the fact that America's black gay community suffers from some of the worst rates of HIV infection in the world, where the Center For Disease Control projects that one in two (50%) of all black gay and bisexual men will contract the virus in their lifetime (Villarosa, 2017).

1.9 The Sexual Marketplace of Desire & Erotic Capital

To best examine the occurrence of gay racism in a sexual context it is useful to apply a market analogy to examine the power of whiteness and the erotic capital that it affords within online spaces like Grindr. Tim McCaskell argues, "The gay community is a sexual marketplace" because "people aren't so likely to get frozen with one partner" (McCaskell, 1998: 46). Relatedly, a study on personal advertisements by gays and lesbians in newspapers argues for the interpretation of these ads as "commodified and marketised discourses" (Thorne & Coupland, 1998: 34). What's more, these commodified discourses are constructed in a manner so as to increase perceived value within the marketplace (Thorne & Coupland, 1998). Put simply, "the self is commodified in personal ads to become desirable and consumed as a sexual object based on one's understanding of his/her value in the marketplace of desire" (Daroya, 2018: 70). Applying this concept to Grindr, we are better able to understand that the various profiles on Grindr actually exist as advertisements, wherein individuals have commodified themselves and constructed their profiles so as to increase their erotic capital and attract sexual partners. If this is the case and Grindr exists as an online sexual marketplace of desire where its users all possess varying amounts erotic value (McBride, 2005), who is most valued and conversely undervalued and excluded?

1.10 Erotic Capital

By recognizing Grindr as an online marketplace of desire for gay men and men who have sex with men, we can examine how the concept of erotic capital operates within the marketplace. Sociological applications of the term “capital” usually address the acquisition of resources within a given social sphere (Becker, 1975; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). Originally coined by sociologist Catherine Hakim⁸, this essay defines erotic capital as “the quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses, which elicit an erotic response in another” (Green, 2008: 29).

1.11 Erotic Capital & Sexual Fields Framework

After establishing that Grindr is a sexual marketplace of desire where profiles exist as advertisements, applying Green’s *sexual fields* framework is useful for examining structures that perpetuate the operation of erotic capital within Grindr. Building upon the work of (Martin & George, 2006), Green combines Goffman’s theory of situational negotiation and the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) with a Bourdieusian notion of routine practice (*habitus*) (Bourdieu, 1980, 1997) and constructs what he terms the *sexual fields* framework in order to advance an understanding of collective sexual life (Green, 2008). Green argues that a sexual field is composed of three primary features: structures of desire, tiers of desirability, and distribution of erotic capital (Green, 2008).

Green notes that erotic habitus is socially constructed according to historical determinants and represents a force capable of creating social arrangements (Green, 2008). Green claims that sexual desire occurs within the social world according to historically determined erotic

⁸ For more, see (Hakim, 2011)

habitus⁹, where certain social aspects are given erotic meaning (Green, 2008). Ultimately, structures of desire are established by imbricating erotic habitus and they adhere to a hegemonic form of erotic capital specific to a given sexual field (Green, 2008). Within this structure there are tiers of desirability and a distribution of erotic capital, both of which can be actively augmented according to the negotiation of how the self is presented, what Goffman refers to as “personal fronts¹⁰” (Goffman, 1959; Green, 2008). Green’s work advances the understanding of erotic capital in that it provides for an examination of the exercise of said capital and subsequent power (or lack thereof) with respect to particular erotic worlds and in the case of this essay, Grindr.

According to Green, erotic worlds consist of both the space of sexual socialization (site) and its accompanying social structure (field) (Green, 2008). Sites consist of any space where sexual interaction takes place, both physical and virtual. Desires and resources dictate sexual fields and as the previous literature has outlined, these desires and accompanying resources are largely racialized. Green notes that as erotic worlds become more specialized, their erotic prizes become more standardized and this allows the prediction of patterns of interaction between those participating in the erotic world, ultimately further institutionalizing certain erotic capital as the standard currency (Green, 2008). In summation, applying Green’s framework, Grindr exists as a sexual site in which the sexual field is structured according to erotic habitus. The standardized form of currency on Grindr derives from compounding erotic habitus and as a result, those acting on the sexual site of Grindr alter their personal fronts in

⁹ Erotic habitus, expanded from Bourdieu’s *habitus*, refers to “eroticized typologies revolving around classifications of race, class, and sex” (Green, 2008: 30)

¹⁰ “As part of personal front we may include: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like” (Goffman, 1959: 34)

order to increase their erotic capital according to the hegemonic structure of Grindr, also known as its field.

1.12 Perceiving & Valuing Erotic Capital

Perceiving the erotic capital of those within a sexual marketplace primarily rests upon the visual. In examining Grindr as a sexual marketplace, this essay will borrow from John Berger's *ways of seeing* (Berger, 1972). According to Berger, the way we perceive an image is influenced by our preconceived knowledge and beliefs (Berger, 1972). In discussing works of art, Berger notes "value is affirmed and gauged by the price it fetches on the market" (Berger, 1972: 21). This concept can be applied to the images that accompany profiles on Grindr, wherein the profiles operate as self-constructed advertisements and their value is determined according to Grindr's field. In other words, Grindr's users navigate profiles and desirability due to the perceived value of those within the image. This idea receives further merit when considering a study that explores how images are central to online interaction between gay men (Brown, Maycock, & Burns, 2005). Indeed, these Grindr profiles are constructed with great care given to how they may be perceived. In examining the surveyor and the surveyed, Berger writes "Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another" (Berger, 1972: 46). Relating this concept to Grindr, this essay will explore how users construct their profiles with consideration to being surveyed and valued by other users.

Whiteness: The Ideal Type & Erotic Capital

Within online spaces and Grindr, whiteness is considered to be the most valuable and sought after form of erotic capital (Daroya, 2018). This sentiment is echoed by in the works of (Callander et al., 2012; Green, 2008; McBride, 2005; Nguyen, 2014; Raj, 2011; Riggs, 2013). However, it is important to note that this idea of whiteness evokes a particular ideal. McBride elaborates on this ideal in that "A white man [...] who is 'very good-looking,' with a 'large penis' a 'hot body,' and a masculine affect [...] represents the ideal type, the sexy and desirable man that we should all want in the personals world" (McBride, 2005: 117). Indeed, John

DiCarlo explains that within the Western gay world, the gym-defined gay body is a response to internalized social expectations of homosexuality's conflation with effeminacy and weakness, coupled with a response to dominant media images from the 1980s HIV/AIDS crisis in which the gay male was depicted as emaciated, afflicted, and dying (DiCarlo, 2001). In response to these negative discourses, the gay gym body is one that recaptures agency. The gay gym body "is a clean-cut, middle class body, symbolizing the final embourgeoisement of the gay community and its related aspirations" (DiCarlo, 2001: 16). Examining bodybuilding and popular culture, Dyer notes that a built body connotes white masculinity and wealth as "only a hard, visibly bounded body can resist being submerged into the horror of femininity and non-whiteness" (Dyer R. , 1997: 153). This relates back to Ahmed's argument that whiteness is exalted as a bodily and social ideal (Ahmed, 2004).

1.13 What About the 'Other'? Approximating Whiteness & Fetishisation

Returning to the idea that identity is performative (Butler, 1990) and the argument that whiteness is a social construct (Foster, 2012), there are examples of men navigating the gay marketplace of desire, who lack the "gift of racial whiteness" (McBride, 2005: 120). Indeed, within online spaces, one's ability to acquire erotic capital intersects with sexuality, race, class, and wealth (Eng, 2001). Ahmed contends that some gay men have the ability to "approximate whiteness" in order to navigate social spaces that have been traditionally exclusive to white gays (Ahmed, 2006). Building upon (Skeggs, 2003), Ahmed notes that this approximation is achieved by mimicking the habitus of a white middle-class, typically through discourses around class, consumption, and status (Ahmed, 2006).

Another strategy employed by those who lack racial whiteness is self-fetishisation. Some have referred to this self-fetishisation in order to increase one's value as "doing race (Best, 2003; Jackson, 2001). This self-fetishisation plays upon power, domination, and fantasy narratives that have persisted (Green, 2008). For example, consider the slave/master power dynamic that has permeated modern conceptions of black masculinity (Mercer, 1994). McBride notes that

“the black men who embrace their ascribed position, and fashion and style themselves according to the logic of the marketplace, thereby maximizing their effectiveness in attracting white men, do so in strong affinity with the hegemony of whiteness” (McBride, 2005: 124). McBride identifies examples of this self-fetishisation when gay black men interviewed noted playing into stereotypical aspects of their identity, such as sexual aggression, a large penis, and a “thug” or “street” demeanor (McBride, 2005).

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Through introducing the aforementioned concepts and providing additional context, this essay seeks to ground the relevant literature with respect to gay racism and Grindr. The literature explored has provided a foundational understanding of racism from a theoretical and historical perspective, building up to the concept of gay racism and its enactment within a sexual context. This essay argues that Grindr exists as a sexual marketplace of desire (Daroya, 2018) and the profiles constructed on Grindr actually exist as advertisements in which users augment personal fronts (Goffman, 1959) in hopes of increasing their erotic capital and subsequently increasing their perceived value (Berger, 1972) within the marketplace. Within Grindr’s erotic marketplace of desire, whiteness exists as the most valuable erotic capital (Callander et al., 2012; Daroya, 2018; Green, 2008; McBride, 2005; Nguyen, 2014; Raj, 2011; Riggs, 2013). Furthermore, not only is Grindr operating as a sexual marketplace, but it is also an erotic world with a site as well as a field that dictates desire within Green’s *sexual fields* framework (Green, 2008). The field that underpins Grindr is one that is highly racialized where whiteness is seen as the most desirable attribute. As Grindr has become a more specialized erotic world, the erotic capital that exists on the site has become more standardized, in this case whiteness. By examining Grindr profiles as self-constructed commodified advertisements within a sexual marketplace of desire, we can better identify how Grindr’s users operate within an erotic world with a dominant structure that simultaneously serves to privilege some and exclude others.

As noted, the field of Grindr affords white men with the most salient erotic capital and is result of dominant discourses around race. However, as the literature has noted whiteness intersects with other aspects of identity and there are strategies that those within a sexual marketplace of desire can employ in order to augment their erotic capital. These include: approximating whiteness and self-fetishisation or “playing race”. Despite these strategies, the field that maintains the operation of erotic capital on Grindr is one that reflects asymmetrical power relationships within society and dominant discourses that benefit those considered to be white above all else and in turn maintains gay racism. While the operation of a standardized currency on Grindr benefits dominant groups, it also serves to exclude and disadvantage those outside of the dominant position by means of stereotyping and ‘Othering’ (Hall, 1997b). Like the privileging of whiteness as the most valuable erotic capital, these stereotypes work to reinforce and maintain gay racism, which is ultimately beholden to white supremacy (Ahmed, 2004; Dyer, 1997; hooks, 2015). In particular, this essay will explore the following research question:

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

“In what ways do Grindr’s users draw upon, reinforce, and/or reject white identity, with respect to articulations of erotic capital via self-representation?”

1.14 Research Objective

Much work has been done to explore the concept of erotic capital and the value of white identity within the sexual marketplace of desire. Furthermore, the literature points to the particular issue of “gay racism” and the implications of racialized desire within the gay community, wherein white bodies are privileged over all ‘Others’. By exploring the research question posed above, this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of how users engage in the performance of the white ideal on Grindr. Previous related research has analyzed online gay personal ads (McBride, 2005), finding that “whiteness is the most valuable

attribute". This dissertation contributes to the field of study by examining how users of Grindr invoke or reject whiteness through self-representation. As argued, Grindr operates as a sexual marketplace and profiles acts as advertisements for users. This marketplace of Grindr is dominated by a social structure that determines what is considered to be erotically desirable as a result of dominant discourses around race where whiteness is reified above all else. Put simply, the literature suggests that whiteness is the most valued attribute and Grindr exists as a sexual marketplace of desire, but how do Grindr's users engage with this construct through their images and profiles on the platform?

5. METHODOLOGY

1.15 Visual Discourse Analysis: Semiotics

According to Gillian Rose, discourse is defined as "groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking" (Rose, 2007: 142). What's more, Rose argues that, "discourses are articulated through all sorts of visual and verbal images and texts..." (Rose, 2007: 142). In order to investigate the proposed research question, this essay will utilize a visual discourse analysis through Barthesian semiotics and supplemented by Hall's encoding/decoding model of communication. Taken together, this particular form of semiotics facilitates an engagement with the visual components of the selected Grindr profiles, as well as the overarching dominant discourse(s).

A visual approach to this analysis is crucial and Rose notes, "the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies" (Rose, 2007: 2). In the examination of images, some even consider visual perception to be the most fundamental of all senses (Fyfe & Law, 1988). Authors like Martin Jay note an increasing importance of visual resources to everyday interaction in Western society, a term he refers to as ocularcentrism

(Jenks, 1995). What's more, within postmodernity our interactions are becoming increasingly dominated with visual experiences that have been entirely constructed and therefore removed from reality leaving us within what some have referred to as a simulated reality, known as simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1988). While there is ample debate regarding the history of visual cultural and nature of simulacrum¹¹, of particular importance to this visual analysis is a critical engagement with ingrained power dynamics as they relate to social relations visuality¹². In the case of this essay, this study aims to critically examine how dominant visualities and discourses operate on the world's largest social media site for gay men. Furthermore, a critical visual analysis allows us to examine the cultural production of images and how these visual representations both underpin and reproduce instances of inclusion and exclusion (Rose, 2007). Images are neither innocent nor neutral and reflect greater dynamics of power and knowledge within society, a critical visual analysis provides for a useful framework to identify, engage, and potentially counter dominant visualities and ways of seeing the world (Rose, 2007). To peel back various layers of meaning that can be hidden in images, this essay applies a semiotic analysis.

1.16 Semiotics

Rose notes that semiology or semiotics is a method primarily concerned with how images create meaning and it provides a set of analytical resources useful for the deconstruction and investigation of how an image interacts with the production of meaning (Rose, Visual Methodologies, 2007). Bal and Bryson note how modern society and culture is composed of signs and these signs all hold meanings outside of themselves, semiotics allows for the study and interpretation of these signs that exist within society more broadly (Bal & Bryson, 1991). In particular, this study benefits from the works of Saussure and Barthes in the field of

¹¹ For more information, see (Hamburger, 1997; Brennan & Jay, 1996; Shohat & Stam, 1998)

¹² Refers to the varied construction of vision, for more see (Foster H. , 1988)

semiotics in order to identify both the denoted¹³ and connoted¹⁴ meanings beneath the surface of images (Barthes, 1973; Saussure, 1983). Specifically, this study will deconstruct the profiles on Grindr to contribute towards a systematic understanding of the language used within this particular virtual gay space, identifying various signs, their significations, and ultimately their connotations. In addition, to accomplish a semiotic analysis of the selected Grindr profiles, this study builds upon the work of Gillian Dyer, who provides a valuable exploration of signs and human representation (Dyer G. , 1982). Given the specific context of Grindr as a gay site, this study borrows from Hal Fischer's work on gay semiotics to lend support to a frame for coding images (Fischer, 2015). Lastly, whereas a purely Barthian approach to the semiotic analysis of the selected Grindr profiles is useful analytically, this study will make use of Hall's model of encoding/decoding in order to identify how audiences within specific codes may interpret or decode messages in ways that don't always align with the encoded message (Hall, 1980).

1.17 Encoding/Decoding

First applied as a model to better understand mass communication, Hall's encoding/decoding provides a theoretical understanding of how messages are produced, consumed, and interpreted (Hall, 1980). Many semioticians argue that all messages carry a level of higher meaning and that this meaning is created during the production of the message, a process termed "encoding" (Hawkes, 1977). Conversely, the process of interpreting the encoding of a message is referred to as "decoding" (Hawkes, 1977). Advancing the work of semioticians like Saussure, Jakobson, Hawkes, Shannon, and Weaver, Hall's model places a greater degree of agency with a message's decoder. Hall argues that one's social positioning is crucial to the decoding of a message and as a result decodings are not always attached to encodings (Hall, 1980). Along these lines, Hall provides three positions for those decoding encoded messages.

¹³ Denotation refers to what is literally picture by the sign, see (Rose, 2007: 87)

¹⁴ Connotation refers to the higher-level (culturally constructed) meaning of the sign, see (Rose, 2007: 87)

These positions include: a dominant¹⁵, negotiated¹⁶, and oppositional¹⁷ reading of the encoding (Hall, 1980). As previously explored, whiteness is the most salient erotic capital on Grindr and we can infer that Grindr's encoded message is one that reaffirms this, as its field (structure of desire) is one fixed through historically determined hierarchies of race and power. This essay will explore how Grindr's users self-construct their profiles to increase erotic capital, all the while doing so in relation to Grindr's encoded message.

1.18 Limits of Semiotics

There are some limits that come with using semiotics as a method for visual analysis; in particular semiotics requires that those who choose to employ it become intimately familiar with the genre of images being analyzed (Rose, 2007). Furthermore, semiotics is riddled with overlapping and duplicative concepts, which can hinder its operation and a cohesive application (Ball & Smith, 1992; Leiss et al., 1986; Wells, 1992). Another issue of semiotics is what some say is its failure to consider potentially complex meanings within signs, also known as polysemy. (Rose, 2007). To mitigate textual determinism (Myers, 1983; Wells, 1992), this study complements the analytical framework of Saussure and Barthes by applying Hall's encoding/decoding model of communication. By applying Hall's model, this study benefits by examining the Grindr profiles from the perspective that a dominant code exists, but audiences (in this case Grindr's users) have a greater degree of agency for interpreting these images. As noted, there are some issues with semiotics as a methodology, which bear consideration. However, in the case of this study, semiotics is best positioned for identifying the hidden

¹⁵ A dominant reading refers to when a reader takes up the dominant and hegemonic encoded message. (Hall, 1980)

¹⁶ A negotiated reading refers to when a reader take up a position that is contradictory wherein they understand the dominant encoded message, but may alter their interpretation based on social positioning. (Hall, Encoding/decoding, 1980)

¹⁷ An oppositional reading refers to readers who oppose the dominant and hegemonic reading in favor of their own interpretation. (Hall, Encoding/decoding, 1980)

meaning behind the construction of Grindr profiles, with a particular respect to images, representation, and power.

Sampling

To accomplish this study, I applied purposive sampling to collect a total of 120 Grindr profiles across the following US cities: Washington, DC, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Austin (Palys, 2008). These cities were chosen because of their relatively large population of gay men¹⁸, as well as their geographic distribution across the US. Approximately 20 profiles were analyzed from each city and the results provided within this essay draw from six distinct profiles located in Washington, DC, New York, and Boston. Tonkiss and Rose note that visual discourse analysis favors quality over quantity and in that vein the final six profiles analyzed and presented here have been selected according to their richness, complexity, and detail (Rose, 2007; Tonkiss, 1998).

To attain the profiles sampled, I created a Grindr profile and included a clear face picture. In the 'About Me' section, I included a link to a separate website (Figure 3) created for the purposes of providing potential participants with more information about the study, as well as an option to opt-out of inclusion. Using the 'Explore'¹⁹ feature, I was able to analyze profiles across various American cities, despite being physically located within London. I began by opening the Grindr app and immediately selecting the 'Explore' feature. Once geolocated to a specific city, I applied a filter²⁰ to only show profiles with accompanying profile photos due to the inherently visual nature of this study and this was the only filter applied. I swiped through each profile scanning text in the 'Display Name' and 'About Me' section in order to identify instances where the user evoked racialized language. When I came across a profile that

¹⁸ For more, see (Gates, 2006; Joa, 2018).

¹⁹ 'Explore' is a beta feature available only with Grindr XTRA (paid subscription).

²⁰ Only users with a paid Grindr XTRA account can filter.

included racialized language, I took a screenshot of the profile photo, as well as the accompanying profile text. This method was repeated for each of the cities previously mentioned. Once all data was collected and analyzed, it was permanently deleted and removed from all devices.

1.19 Design of Research Tools

To deconstruct the selected Grindr profiles, I used semiotic analysis to identify denotative signs/significations, as well as their connotations. I also applied Gillian Dyer's framework for identifying non-verbal communication and human signs, as well as accompanying props and settings (Dyer G. , 1982: 97-104). Given the specific context of Grindr as a gay site, this study borrows from Hal Fischer's work on gay semiotics to lend support to a frame for coding images (Fischer, 2015). Lastly, whereas a purely Barthian approach to the semiotic analysis of the selected Grindr profiles is useful analytically, this study applied Hall's model of encoding/decoding in order to critically engage with how Grindr's users interpret or decode messages in ways that don't always align with the encoded message (Hall, 1980). To synthesize information garnered through the application of the aforementioned framework, I developed two unique tables to capture the data; one table was used to include information from the semiotic analysis (Figure 1) and the other (Figure 2) was used to capture data in relation to the encoding/decoding model.

1.20 Ethics and Reflexivity

As a researcher, a racial minority, and a member of the LGBTQ community, I fully understand and appreciate the important considerations of researching the LGBTQ community and vulnerable populations more broadly (Meezan & Martin, 2009). To that end, I developed a research plan that received approval from the London School of Economics. The approved plan addressed primary concerns of research participants that relate to the inclusion of potentially sensitive information, the ability to opt-out, and the anonymity of participants. My plan meticulously addressed all of those concerns and went so far as to provide participants

with a supplemental informational website, as well as the ability to contact the researcher (Figure 3).

Unfortunately, when it came to operationalizing the plan, technological constraints provided some hindrances. For example, when using the 'Explore' feature, I could view other profiles, but they couldn't view my profile and thus couldn't "opt-out". To address this issue, I took considerable steps to protect the identity of those whose profiles were included. For example, profiles that included an image of a user's face were anonymized using digital pixelization so as to maintain likeness relevant to the analysis, but limit recognition. In addition, it is important to note that Grindr and the communicative exchange that occurs on the platform have a level of ambiguity when it comes to their existence in either a purely public or private space.

Anyone with a compatible mobile device can download and access Grindr. Furthermore, it is rare for users to actually use their real names or names that would appear on any PII²¹; rather the 'Display Name' section takes the form of a variety of pseudonyms. And in fact, there is no existing mechanism for searching through Grindr's vast user base, which means that it is impossible to conduct a search on Grindr in order to identify a specific user according to their display name. What's more, there are a number of online resources²² that reproduce profiles from Grindr with no consideration for the anonymity of the user. Given the lack of academic scrutiny placed on Grindr, these online resources have proven valuable for identifying larger structural issues that have plagued Western gay culture; including, gay racism, anti-Semitism, and toxic masculinity. In short, dominant discourses permeate the erotic world of Grindr; these discourses are maintained primarily through photos and their accompanying meaning.

²¹ PII – Personally Identifiable Information

²² For examples of these online resources, see (Douchebags of Grindr, 2018; Grindr Remembers, 2014; & Black_Grindr, 2018)

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An insufficient ethical or research framework should not limit the ability of researchers to unearth and critically engage with these discourses.

In terms of reflexivity, semiotics as a visual methodology has been charged with lacking reflexivity. Rose notes that semiotics does not “demand” reflexivity, but “permits” it (Rose, 2007: 106). Working with this knowledge and acknowledging my positionality as a queer black researcher, I recognize that my experiences of racism and experiences using Grindr in a personal capacity simultaneously better positions me as someone with intimate knowledge of the field of study, in addition to potentially biasing outcomes. To mitigate these potential biases, this study builds upon a rich framework and history of gay racism and how it operates within Grindr’s sexual marketplace.

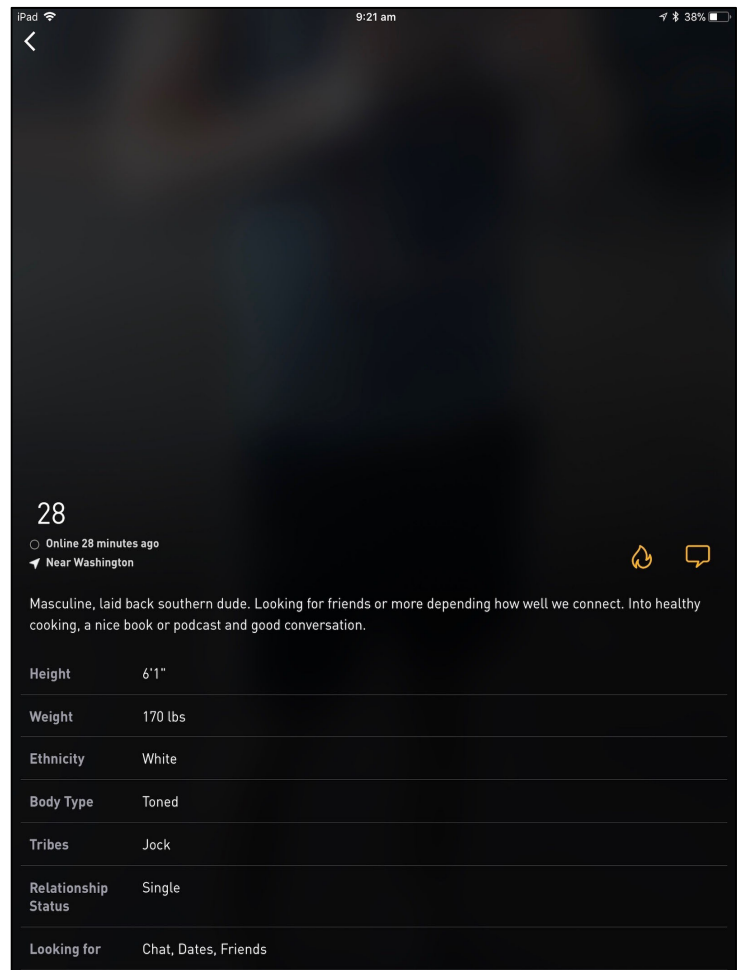
6. ANALYSIS

1.21 Individual Analysis

The following includes an individual analysis of each of the six selected profiles, where whiteness is the dominant code and masculinity serves as a metacode (Hall, 1980).

1.21.1 Individual Analysis: Profile 1

Profile 1



Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
White Skin	Racial Whiteness	Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase
Muscled Physique	Masculinity, Sexual Appeal	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type, Virility	Increase
Gender: Male	Cisgender Man	Masculinity	Increase
Age: 28	Youth	Sexual Appetite, Virility	Increase
Manner			
Standing in front of a mirror	Active	Confidence, Self-Assurance, Narcissism, Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase
Americana-style 'Nashville' T-Shirt	American nationality, Southern	"All-American" type, Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase
Athletic Shorts/Shoes	Active, Athletic	Masculinity, Ideal type, Jock	Increase
Activity			
Mid-range shot	Semi-intimate engagement	Masculinity	Increase
Props			
Weights	Gym/fitness setting, masculinity,	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase
Settings			
Gym/Fitness Center	Working Out, Physical Fitness, Masculinity, Health,	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase

Table 1b

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital."
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	"Masculine, laid back southern dude. Looking for friends or more depending how well we connect. Into healthy cooking, a nice book or podcast and good conversation."
	Negotiated Reading	
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	

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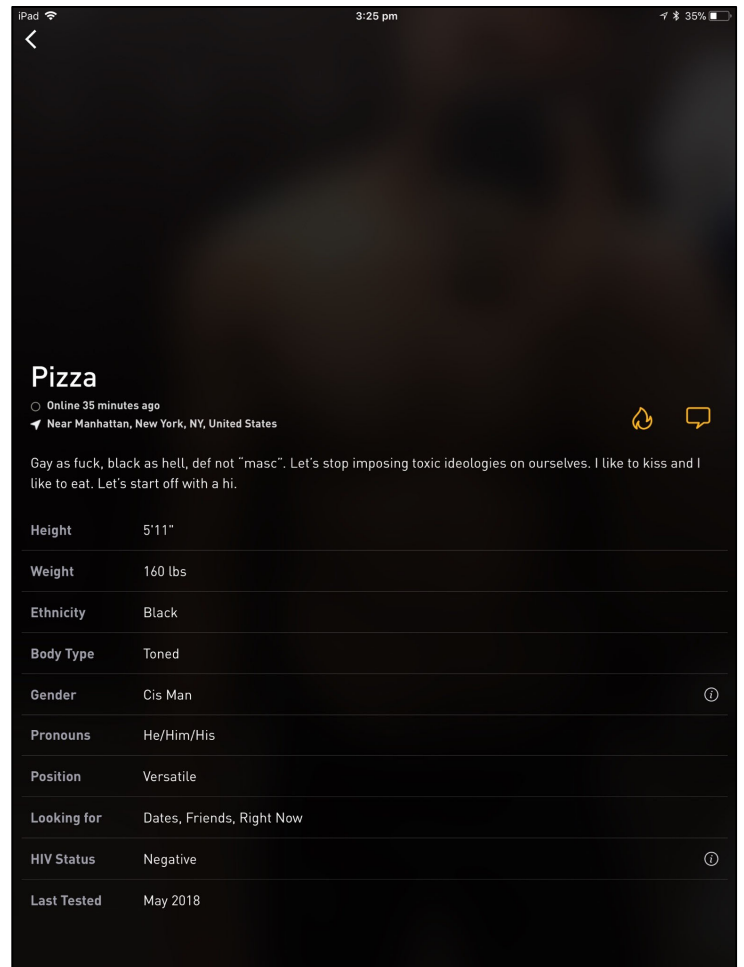
In deconstructing this Grindr profile and treating it as a self-commodified advertisement, a number of things are discovered through semiotic analysis. The user in this Grindr profile is clearly racialized as white. Notice the man's muscled physique further underscored by the photo's setting within a fitness center or gym space, both of these signs stand for masculinity and physical fitness (Fischer, 2015; DiCarlo, 2001), which in turn connotes wealth, perseverance, whiteness, and the ideal type desired within the Western gay world (Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). What's more, manner further situates this man within whiteness, in particular the athletic attire (DiCarlo, 2001; Dyer R., 1997). Americana-style attire serves to further connect the man to white identity, as both the concept of a stylized American flag and Nashville, Tennessee t-shirt symbolize an idea of American nationality, which in turn connotes whiteness. These connotations have the effect of increasing the man's individual amount of erotic capital within Grindr's sexual marketplace. This Grindr profile's accompanying text and anchor (Barthes, 1977) suggests that this user constructed their profile by adhering to the dominant reading. In other words, it can be argued that the man who crafted this profile constructed and presented a personal front (Goffman, 1959) with the full knowledge and acceptance that whiteness is the most valued erotic capital. This point is further enforced when we consider what is missing from the self-commodified image. Notice that the man does not include his face, cropping the image at the shoulders. One reading could indicate that given such a strong profile with many overlapping elements of whiteness, this man's erotic capital is so strong that he doesn't need to include an image of his face within the advertisement in order to attract potential partners.

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1.22 Individual Analysis: Profile 2

Profile 2



Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
Black Skin	Racialized 'Other'	Blackness, Not Ideal Type	Decrease
Muscled Physique	Masculinity, Sexual Appeal	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type, Virility	Increase
Gender: Male	Cisgender Man	Masculinity	Increase
Earring	Overt Body Modification, Female	"Alternative", Femininity	Decrease
Age: Appears under 30	Youth	Sexual Appetite, Virility	Increase
Curly Body Hair	Not Smooth, Racialized 'Other'	Animalistic, Otherness	Decrease
Manner			
Flexing in front of mirror	Active	Confidence Self-Assurance, Narcissism, Masculinity, Ideal type	Increase
Athletic Leggings/Compression Pants	Active, Athletic	Masculinity, Ideal type, Jock	Increase
Props			
iPhone	Connected, Mobile, Engaged	Capitalism, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase
Settings			
Locker room	Gym, Fitness Center	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase

Table 2b

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital"
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	
	Negotiated Reading	
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	Gay as fuck, black as hell, def not "masc". Let's stop imposing toxic ideologies on ourselves. I like to kiss and I like to eat. Let's start off with a hi.

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The user in this profile is racialized as black, leading to decreased erotic capital according to the field of Grindr (Green, 2008). Furthermore, there are additional signs that signify the man's 'Otherness' like curly chest hair and subsequent lack of a smooth torso. Dyer notes that "body hair is animalistic; hairlessness connotes striving above nature" (Dyer R. , 1997: 155). This user's earring could signify femininity, but another reading could further associate the man with black identity, particularly when one considers stereotyped media representations of black men, street culture, and ostentatious jewelry (hooks, 2015; McBride, 2005). Despite lacking the "gift of racial whiteness" (McBride, 2005: 120) to increase his erotic capital within Grindr, there are other elements at play that approximate the man with whiteness and further increase his erotic capital (Ahmed, 2006). Recall that whiteness goes beyond skin color (Foster, 2012) and we can infer that these symbols of wealth, coupled with the leisure time to visit a gym connote dominant systems and situate the user within a white middle-class habitus (Ahmed, 2006; Dyer R., 1997). A muscled physique is an additional sign that signifies a dedication to a gay gym body that has overcome previously dominant media narratives of gay men as weak and/or emaciated (DiCarlo, 2001) to triumph and situate itself within a masculinity that is inherently white (Dyer R. , 1997). Despite these signs and significations that connote whiteness, reading this profile as a commodified advertisement does not seem to indicate that the choices made by the user in constructing this profile were done in a deliberate attempt to approximate whiteness. In fact, this position is further enforced when considering the accompanying 'About Me' section wherein the man emphatically denounces the dominant encoding in favor of an oppositional reading that challenges the encoding of race and masculinity (Hall, 1980). Perhaps this particular 'About Me' section is the result of the pervasive nature of Grindr's field wherein the erotic habitus establishes a racialized discourse and dominant code, which in turn impacts all Grindr users (Green, 2008).

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1.23 Individual Analysis: Profile 3

Profile 3

The image shows a screenshot of a dating app profile for a man named J 28. The profile is displayed on a dark background. On the left, there is a large photo of the man, who is smiling and wearing a dark t-shirt and a necklace. His eyes are blurred. Below the photo, the name 'J 28' is visible, along with 'Online 19 minutes ago' and 'Near NYC'. On the right, there is a bio section with the text: 'Live by myself in Brooklyn. I like bros, frat guys, and am a fraternity brother myself. I am straightforward and will not waste time. Ideally looking for something more...but fun w/ a hot guy is great too.' Below the bio is a list of attributes: Height (5'8"), Weight (165 lbs), Ethnicity (White), Body Type (Toned), Position (Vers Bottom), Relationship Status (Single), and Looking for (Chat, Dates, Friends, Right Now). The top of the screen shows the time as 3:12 pm and the battery level at 38%.

Height	5'8"
Weight	165 lbs
Ethnicity	White
Body Type	Toned
Position	Vers Bottom
Relationship Status	Single
Looking for	Chat, Dates, Friends, Right Now

Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
White Skin	Racial Whiteness	Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase
Slim Physique	Youth, Health, Physical Self-Care	Wealth, Whiteness	Increase
White Teeth	Good Oral Hygiene	Wealth, American, Ideal Type, Whiteness	Increase
Arm Tattoo	Overt body modification	"Alternative"	Decrease
Gender: Male	Cisgender Man	Masculinity	Increase
Facial Hair	Male	Masculinity	Increase
Close-cropped hair	Male	Masculinity	Increase
Age: 28	Youth	Sexual Appetite, Virility	Increase
Manner			
Smiling	Positive Demeanor	Inviting, Friendly, Approachable, Femininity	Decrease
T-Shirt	Comfortable, Casual	Masculinity, Ideal type, Jock	Increase
Activity			
Close-range shot	Intimate Engagement	Inviting, Friendly, Approachable, Femininity	Decrease
Props			
Chopsticks	Southeast Asian Cuisine	Bourgeoisie, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase
Settings			
Paper Lanterns, White People	Mid to Upscale Restaurant	Bourgeoisie, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase

Table 3b

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital."
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	Live by myself in Brooklyn. I like bros, frat guys, and am a fraternity brother myself. I am straightforward and will not waste time. Ideally looking for something more...but fun w/ a hot guy is great too.
	Negotiated Reading	
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	

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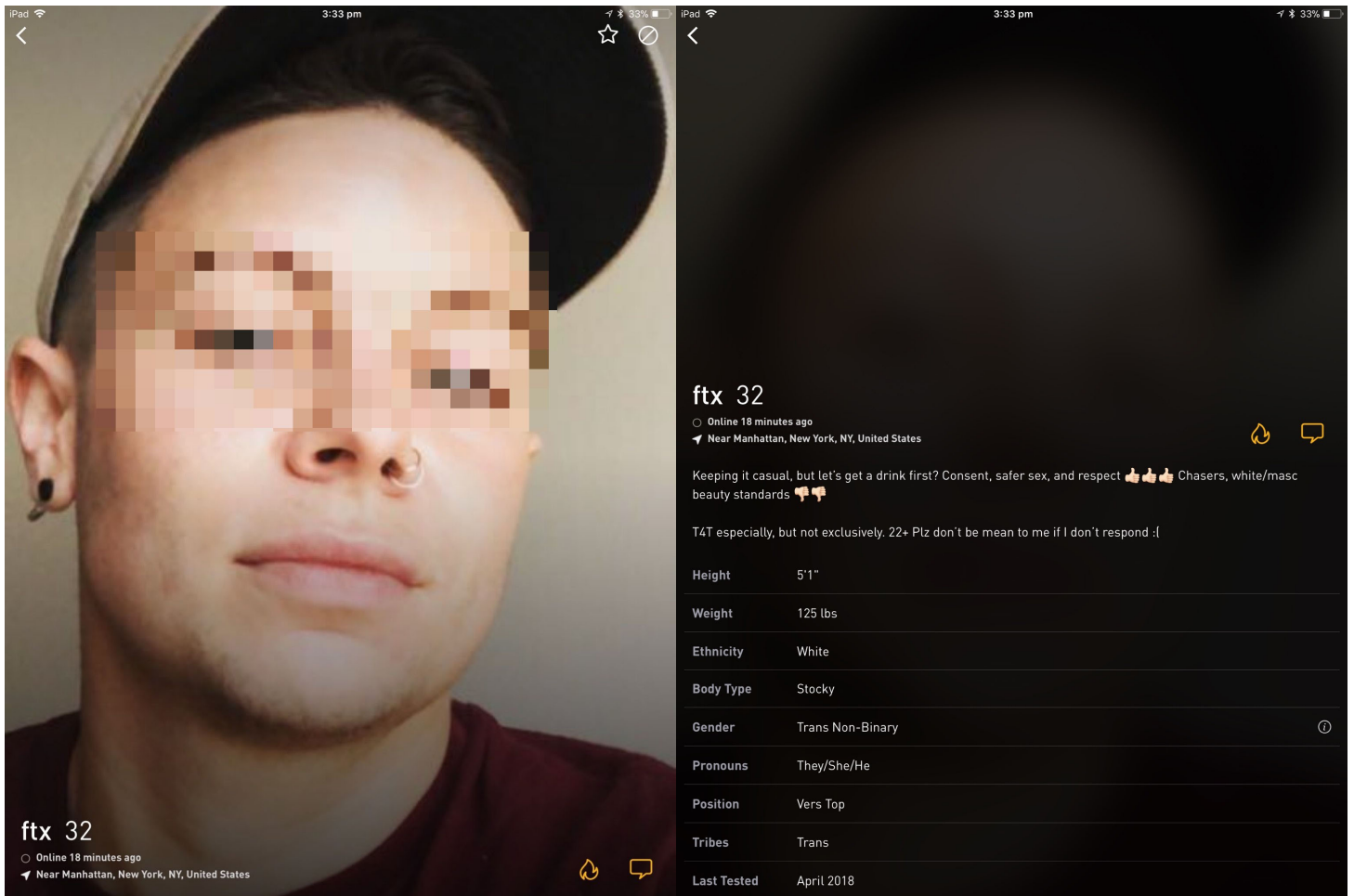
This profile provides another example of a dominant reading of the encoded message (Hall, 1980). For example, racial whiteness, facial hair, white teeth, and the close-cropped haircut are all signs and significations that connote wealth, whiteness, and in turn the ideal type, subsequently increasing the user's erotic capital within Grindr. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this profile can be found when analyzing the profile's anchoring text from the 'About Me' section. In constructing the profile, the user indicates a sexual desire for "bros" and "frat guys" and then completes the sentence by situating himself as a fraternity brother. In essence, the words "bros" and "frat guys" are signs that signify a specific type and rather than have to interpret what this type could be, the creator of the profile provides potential partners with a direct example when he states that he himself is the type he desires. The signs and their signifieds in this profile serve to connote an ideal type embodied by the visual presentation of this particular Grindr user. This user has presented a personal front meant to best perform within this specific erotic site (Goffman, 1959). From this perspective, we can conclude that this Grindr user has interpreted the encoded message using a dominant hegemonic reading (Hall, 1980). This user seems to be fully aware of the salience of whiteness within Grindr's marketplace to the extent that they embody and benefit from the privileged position of whiteness and serve to facilitate the maintenance of, and increased standardization of whiteness as the prized currency on Grindr.

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1.24 Individual Analysis: Profile 4

Profile 4



White for White

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Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
White Skin	Racial Whiteness	Whiteness, Ideal type	Increase
Gender: Trans	Transgender Non-Binary	"Alternative", Not Ideal Type, Sexualized 'Other'	Decrease
Facial Hair	Male	Masculinity	Increase
Gauged Earring	Overt Body Modification	"Alternative"	Decrease
Double Nose Piercings	Overt Body Modification	"Alternative", Queer	Decrease
Age: 32	Diminishing Youth	Declining Sexual Appetite	Decrease
Stocky Body Type	Sloth, Lack of Physical Fitness	Passivity, Poverty	Decrease
Manner			
Baseball Cap	Active, Athletic	Masculinity, Ideal type, Jock	Increase

Table 4b

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital."
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	
	Negotiated Reading	
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	Keeping it casual, but let's get a drink first? Consent, safer sex, and respect [3 thumbs up emojis = positive] Chasers, white/masc beauty standards [2 thumbs down emojis = negative]. T4T especially, but not exclusively. 22+ Plz don't be mean to me if I don't respond :(

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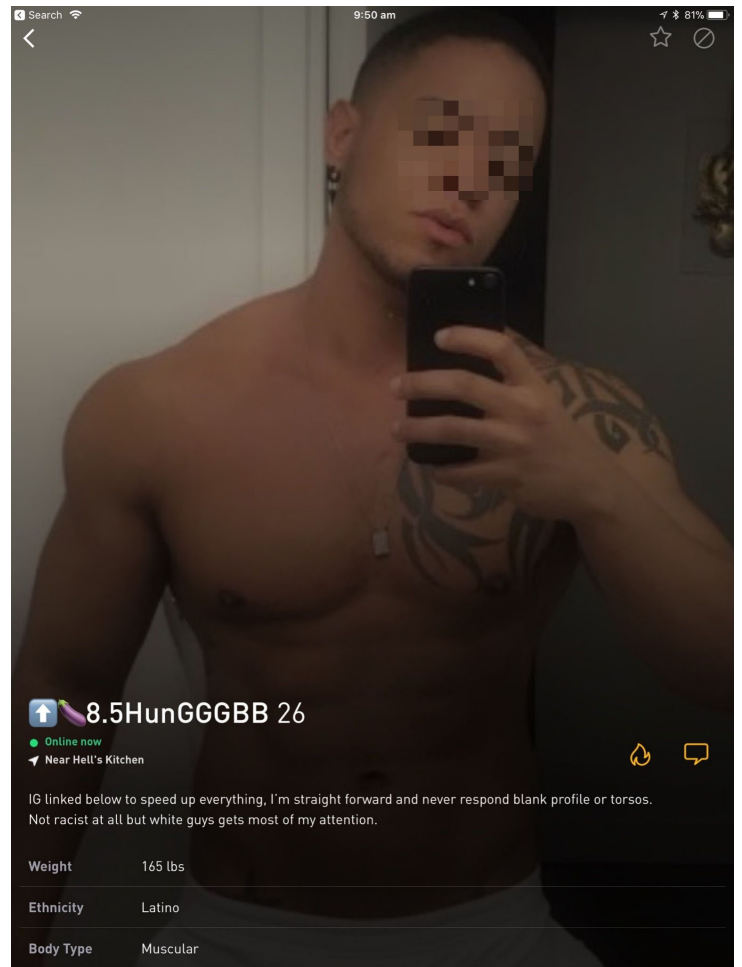
Signs like racial whiteness, facial hair, and a baseball cap stand for the ideal type, masculinity, and the jock type. Together these significations connote the white ideal type imbued with erotic capital (Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). However, additional signs like transgender sexual identity could be read as an antithesis of the ideal type through representations of a sexualized 'Other' displaced from dominant discourses of masculinity within Grindr's field (Green, 2008). Considering the accompanying 'About Me' section in relation to the photo that composes this user's profile, we can see how this user has decoded Grindr's encoded message with an oppositional (counter-hegemonic) reading (Hall, 1980). This user clearly engages with the encoding of Grindr and indicates their opposition to dominant white and masculine standards. Additionally, constructing their profile and personal front (Goffman, 1959) there appears to be consideration to how they may be perceived and valued within Grindr's marketplace (Berger, 1972).

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1.25 Individual Analysis: Profile 5

Profile 5



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Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
Muscled Physique	Masculinity, Sexual Appeal	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type, Virility	Increase
Non-white Skin	Racialized 'Other'	'Otherness', Not Ideal Type	Decrease
Gender: Male	Cisgender Man	Masculinity	Increase
Close-cropped hair	Male	Masculinity	Increase
Tribal Arm Tattoo	Overt body modification, Racialized 'Other'	"Alternative", 'Otherness'	Decrease
Facial Hair	Male	Masculinity	Increase
Manner			
Eye contact with image on phone	Detached	Uninviting, Unapproachable, Unattainable	Increase
Athletic Shorts	Active, Athletic	Masculinity, Ideal type, Jock	Increase
Activity			
Mid-range shot	Semi-intimate engagement	Masculinity	Increase
Props			
iPhone	Connected, Mobile, Engaged	Capitalism, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase

Table 5b

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital"
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	
	Negotiated Reading	IG linked below to speed up everything. I'm straight forward and never respond blank profile or torsos. Not racist at all but white guys gets most of my attention.
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	

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This profile provides interesting insight into how various elements intersect to form erotic capital (Crenshaw, 1991; Eng, 2001; McBride, 2005). Denotative signifiers like the user's muscled physique, the close-cropped hair, gender, facial hair, clothing, and props all symbolize aspects of masculinity, athleticism, and wealth which in turn connote whiteness and the ideal type reified within Grindr's marketplace (Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). Conversely, the user does not have white skin to situate them with racial whiteness and signs like the user's arm tattoo further distance the user from whiteness and the ideal type as these signifiers stand in contrast to hegemonic norms of whiteness. Paying particular attention to the user's accompanying profile text that helps to anchor (Barthes, 1977) the profile as an advertisement and we can see an interesting decoding position (Hall, 1980). Within their 'About Me' section the user openly indicates their preference for 'white guys'. At first glance, this decoding position seems to situate the user within the dominant (hegemonic) reading, but it is also important to consider this user's social position in relation to Grindr's dominant code. Based on the construction of the profile, with deference given to significations that connote whiteness and the ideal type combined with a stated desire for 'white guys', we can conclude that this user shares and accepts that dominant code (Hall, 1980). However, the user also makes a point of stating that they are in fact not racist, but simply indicating their sexual preference, a notion previously discussed within the literature (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2012). This user states their desire for white men and therefore adheres to the notion that whiteness is the most salient erotic capital within Grindr, but at the same time they seemingly recognize that this racialized desire could be viewed as problematic. In this respect, the user has constructed their personal front (Goffman, 1959) with consideration given to how they may be perceived by others (Berger, 1972) within Grindr's erotic world. For this reason, this user's profile can be interpreted as a negotiated reading of Grindr's encoded message (Hall, 1980).

As Hall notes, the negotiated reading position involves contradictions because the individual's own personal conditions and experiences intersect with the encoded message (Hall, 1980).

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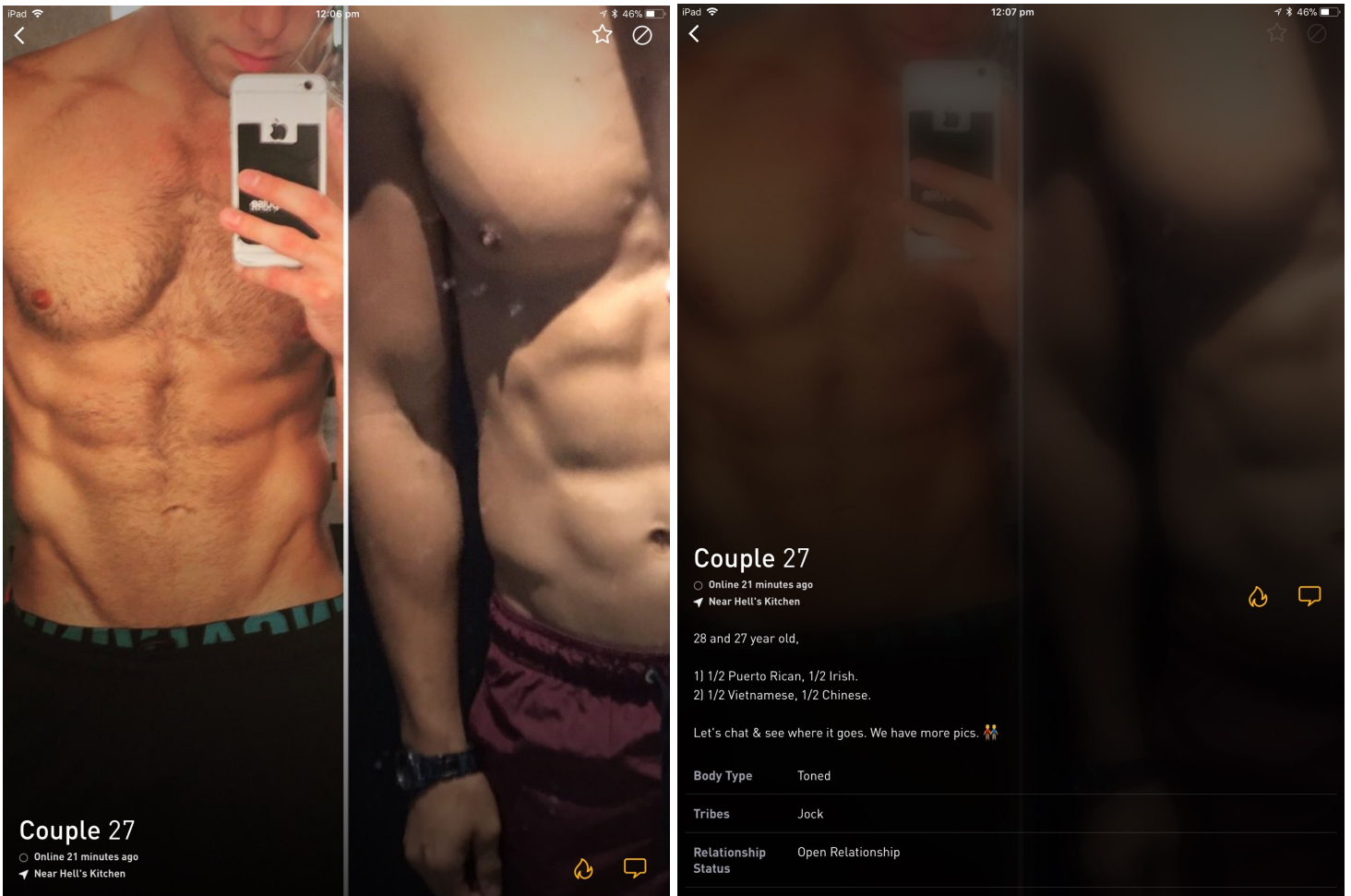
Recall Green's exploration of men of color navigating middle-class white gay spaces and the strategies they employ such as 'doing race' and self-fetishisation of their physical aspects or demeanor (Best, 2003; Green, 2008; Jackson, 2001). In this example, the user's 'Display Name' reads "[arrow pointed up emoji = top sexual preference, eggplant emoji = penis, HunGGGBB". In reading the emojis as signs we can see that they symbolize a stated sexual activity and penis, which in turn connote a preferred sexual role and self-professed large penis (hung). This can be interpreted as self-fetishisation wherein the user is attempting to increase their erotic capital by focusing on stereotyped (Hall, 1997b) aspects of their body. This user appears to play into the stereotype that men of color have large penises (Green, 2008; Hall, 1997b; McBride, 2005). This user indicates a preferred sexual practice of sex within their 'Display Name'. (BB) within this user's 'Display Name' is typically used on Grindr as an abbreviation for bareback or unprotected sex. This could be interpreted as the negotiation of a personal front (Goffman, 1959) meant to mitigate any loss of erotic capital as a racialized other, whilst accentuating stereotyped attributes (Hall, 1997b) and further underscoring a willingness to engage in unsafe sexual practices (Green, 2008).

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1.26 Individual Analysis: Profile 6

Profile 6



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Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
2 Muscled Physiques	Masculinity, Sexual Appeal	Perseverance, Wealth, Whiteness, Ideal type, Virility	Increase
1 Tanned & Manicured Torso	Sexual Appeal, Hygiene, Racialized 'Other' or Tanned	Exotified Whiteness, Wealth	Increase
1 Smooth Torso	Sexual Appeal, Hairless	Striving Above Nature, Whiteness	Increase
Gender: 2 Males	Cisgender Men	Masculinity	Increase
2 Non-White	Racialized 'Other'	Otherness', Not Ideal Type	Decrease
Manner			
Calvin Klein briefs	Metropolitan, Trendy	Capitalism, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase
2 Athletic Shorts	Active, Athletic	Masculinity, Ideal type, Jock	Increase
Activity			
2 close-range shots (torsos)	Semi-intimate engagement	Masculinity	Increase
Props			
iPhone	Connected, Mobile, Engaged	Capitalism, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase
Wrist watch	Organization	Capitalism, Wealth, Whiteness	Increase

Table 6b

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital."
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	
	Negotiated Reading	28 and 27 years old, 1) 1/2 Puerto Rican, 1/2 Irish. 2) 1/2 Vietnamese, 1/2 Chinese. Let's chat & see where it goes. We have more pics. [2 men holding hands emoji = gay couple]
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	

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There are many signs that signify masculinity, wealth, and athleticism and in turn connote whiteness and the ideal type; these signs include muscled physiques, smooth torsos, gender, and Calvin Klein briefs (DiCarlo, 2001; Dyer R., 1997; Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). Non-white skin distances both users in this profile from racial whiteness, but whiteness is approximated (Ahmed, 2006) via the deployment of signs that symbolize wealth and masculinity and therefore connote whiteness and the ideal type (Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). When combining the accompanying 'About Me' section with the photos we can see another example of a decoding position with a negotiated reading (Hall, 1980). Presenting a personal front (Goffman, 1959) designed to maximize desirability within Grindr's marketplace, these users seem to be aware of how attributes like their muscled physique and smooth torsos (Dyer R., 1997) serve to increase their erotic capital. In particular, the images provided seem to myopically focus on these specific attributes. In the 'About Me' section, the users acknowledge the fact that they may not be perceived as the ideal type and directly state the breakdown of ethnic origins, with one situating themselves with an aspect of racial whiteness "½ Puerto Rican, ½ Irish".

Additionally, notice the cropping of the two images. The user who possesses a degree of racial whiteness has included a small image of their face, whilst the photo of the user racialized as Asian has been cropped so that only a muscled and smooth headless torso is visible. This cropping choice could be interpreted as these users fully acknowledging their joint level of erotic capital and how it may be perceived by others surveying profiles on Grindr (Berger, 1972). In this respect, they have constructed their profile to as a self-commodified advertisement meant to best perform within Grindr's field (Daroya, 2018, Thorne & Coupland, 1998). The cropping choice of the images to focus exclusively on nude torsos (Brown, Maycock, & Burns, 2005) could be read as an example of stereotyping and self-fetishisation in that the photos overtly focus on sexualized aspects of the body displacing desire from individuals to overall physiques, further underscored by what appears to be the deliberate absence of the user most racialized as the 'Other' (Hall, 1997b). These users seem to adhere to Grindr's

encoded message of whiteness as the most salient erotic capital and navigate the erotic world through the approximation of whiteness and the ideal type, as well as the deployment of self-fetishisation (Hall, 1980).

1.27 Group Analysis

By individually analyzing each of the six selected profiles, we identified how individual users draw upon whiteness through the construction of their profiles, with particular respect to how the presentation of photos rich in signs and significations intersect to connote some elements of whiteness and the ideal type. Through this individual visual discourse analysis of the selected resources, we have been able to address the research question of “In what ways do Grindr’s users draw upon, reinforce, and/or reject white identity, with respect to articulations of erotic capital via self-representation?” This essay has argued that Grindr does in fact exist as an erotic marketplace of desire and its field is a result of erotic habitus that provides whiteness with an unequal advantage as the most salient erotic capital. As a result, individual users present personal fronts (Goffman, 1959) with a consideration to how they may be surveyed and valued (Berger, 1972) according to the logics of the market and with respect to the dominant form of erotic capital. This individual analysis is useful for assessing individual cases of the negotiation of self-presentation, dominant discourses, and erotic capital and when looking across the six profiles, some patterns can be found.

For example, consider the prevalence of signs intended to symbolize masculinity and therefore connote whiteness and the ideal type. Across all six profiles aspects of masculinity were found and one could argue that masculinity exists as a metacode (Hall, 1980) subservient to the dominant code of whiteness as the most salient erotic capital. This argument receives further merit when we consider the intersection of masculinity and whiteness as it relates to who is considered to be the ideal type within Grindr’s field and has been previously discussed within preceding examinations of gay racism (Ahmed, 2004; DiCarlo, 2001; Daroya, 2018; Dyer, 1997;

Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). The following section provides an overview of all six selected profiles with respect to Hall's model of encoding/decoding.

1.28 Dominant (Hegemonic) Readings

As noted, Profile 1 and Profile 3 both occupy positions of dominant (hegemonic) readings based on the deconstruction of their profiles, included signs/significations and their connotations, as well as the accompanying profile text. One interpretation of this situation within a dominant reading could be that as two gay men, who benefit from racialized whiteness, they are automatically imbued with the most salient erotic capital and any additional attributes that either decrease or increase that capital are not considered. In other words, whiteness has been achieved for these men and they stand in positions that allow them to benefit from the dominant discourse on Grindr and therefore have no reason to question the encoded message. Hall would note that this could be a result from the fact that both Profile 1 and Profile 3 fully share and accept the dominant reading (Hall, 1980). From an erotic habitus (Green, 2008) perspective they may not have ever encountered any negative experiences or difficulty attracting potential partners because of their social positioning as white men within a site that affords their position with the most erotic capital (Callander et al., 2012; Green, 2008; McBride, 2005; Nguyen, 2014; Raj, 2011; Riggs, 2013). What's more both users in Profile 1 and 3 not only accept the dominant reading, but they serve to perpetuate it through the expressed desire for the same type (Dyer R., 1997). While they may not even be aware of how they perpetuate the dominant reading (Hall, 1980), their commitment to this encoded message further standardizes whiteness as the most salient capital (Green, 2008) on Grindr and subsequently contributes to discursive formations (Hall, 1980) that manifests as gay racism (Callander et al., 2018) and serve systems of white supremacy (Ahmed, 2004; Dyer R., 1997; hooks, 2015).

1.29 Negotiated Readings

From the individual analyses, we learned that both Profile 5 and Profile 6 employ various strategies in the construction of their personal fronts (Goffman, 1959) that appear to signal masculinity and wealth with the connotation of whiteness and the ideal type (Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). Combining these signs with the respective 'About Me' sections from both profile and we are left to infer that these profiles are situated within a negotiated reading of Grindr's hegemonic encoded (Hall, 1980). Consider that in Profiles 5 and 6, there is heavy use of signs/significations that overtly focus on sexualized aspects of the profiles, seemingly in an attempt to compensate for the lack of racial whiteness (Ahmed, 2006; DiCarlo, 2001; Dyer, 1997). What's more, both Profiles 5 and 6 contain elements of self-fetishisation in that the racialized 'Other' from Profile 5 exists purely in a sexualized manner, while the user in Profile 6 has self-fetishized embracing the stereotyped of the well-endowed racialized 'other' (Hall, 1997b; McBride, 2005). As Hall notes, the negotiated position is one of contradictions and these contradictions seem to play out within these profiles (Hall, 1980). There is acknowledgment of the salient power of whiteness from the perspective that Profile 5 makes a point of addressing the 'Otherness'. Almost as if to say "We know we're not white, but we're masculine, fit, and still sexually desirable". While the user in Profile 6 directly addresses the idea that stating a preference for "white guys" could be construed as racist and so they mitigate this issue by attempting to shield their racialized desire as purely sexual preference (Callander et al., 2015). What's more, in constructing this profile with the stated goal of attracting white men, the user in Profile 6 is potentially playing into known stereotypes and binary oppositions of bodies racialized as 'Other', as well as fantasized narratives of domination (Hall, 1980; McBride, 2005; Mercer, 1994).

1.30 Oppositional Readings

Finally, examining Profile 2 and Profile 4, we are provided with examples of what Hall would consider positions that situate both users within an oppositional position in relation the

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dominant discourse on Grindr (Hall, 1980). The user in Profile 2 presents a personal front (Goffman, 1959) wherein his racialized blackness and subsequent 'Otherness' is on full display. While additional signs stand for aspects of masculinity and wealth that could approximate (Ahmed, 2006) some notion of whiteness and the ideal type, we can look to the user's accompanying anchorage (Barthes, 1977) for further reinforcement of interpretation as an oppositional reading. For example, the user in Profile 2 emphatically embraces their positioning as a black man absent the privileges of whiteness, "Gay as fuck, black as hell". Furthermore, there appears to be a disavowal of the metacode (Hall, 1980) of masculinity within Grindr's field with statements like "def not 'masc'". This user in Profile 2 presents a personal front (Goffman, 1959) with consideration to how they may be perceived and valued (Berger, 1972) within Grindr's marketplace, yet they construct their profile in defiance of Grindr's dominant code. Similarly, Profile 4 takes the position of an oppositional reading in that while they possess racial whiteness, but they do not make a point of sexualizing elements of their profile that would further associate them with the whiteness and the ideal type (DiCarlo, 2001; Daroya, 2018; Dyer, 1997; Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). Profile 4 is bereft of the some of the previously identified attributes used to accentuate whiteness and erotic capital. Perhaps this is due in part to the user in Profile 4 actively expressing a desire that runs counter to Grindr's standardized currency of whiteness (Green, 2008; McBride, 2005). For example, the user in Profile 4 includes a stated desire for a person similar to them ("T4T" = Trans for Trans), while simultaneously disavowing white and masculine standards of desirability. Profiles 2 and 4 illustrate how some users may employ strategies to navigate Grindr's field despite being at disadvantage when compared to those with higher levels of erotic capital. In other words, both users in Profiles 2 and 4 comprehend the encoded message (Hall, 1980) of whiteness as the most salient erotic capital, they just choose to reject the dominant reading and instead present personal fronts (Goffman, 1959) that may be intended for other users who similarly lack whiteness and its perceived value.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this essay began by providing a thorough overview of gay racism and provided evidence for the idea that gay racism permeates social relations in the Western gay world and ultimately advantages those who are white, reproducing systems of white power and oppression. By examining the world's largest social media site for gay men and men who have sex with men, this essay employed a visual discourse analysis and through semiotic analysis, six selected Grindr profiles were analyzed. Working with the argument that Grindr is an erotic world with its own unique site and field, this essay treated Grindr profiles as self-commodified advertisements wherein users constructed personal fronts with the goal of attracting sexual partners in a marketplace where whiteness is valued above all else. In examining these profiles this essay has succinctly provided a rich and complex understanding of the deployment of various signs and significations that connote whiteness and the ideal type within Grindr.

Furthermore, this essay has shown how Grindr's user employ a variety of strategies and ultimately their profiles illustrate varied responses to the dominant discourses within an erotic marketplace of desire. Previous work within the field has argued that whiteness exists as the most salient erotic capital (Callander et al., 2012; Daroya, 2018; Green, 2008; McBride, 2005; Nguyen, 2014; Raj, 2011; Riggs, 2013). This essay contributes to our understanding of the operation of whiteness, erotic capital, and the enactment of gay racism by providing visual examples that could serve as a foundation for future work on gay racism and its manifestation in social spaces. Focusing on Grindr as a sexual site, this essay has contributed to our current understanding of gay racism as something that can be difficult to identify, particularly when it's articulated as a sexual preference (Callander et al., 2015). Through the deconstruction of these profiles, this essay has argued that the selected users are operating with the understanding that whiteness is the most valued erotic capital and has argued that this privileging of whiteness reinforces gay racism. However, while the encoded message seems to have been understood by all user profiles analyzed, differing readings were identified from a decoding perspective, accomplished through strategies like the reinforcement of whiteness,

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self-fetishisation, and complete opposition (Hall, 1980). This work is important for an overall understanding of gay racism in that it takes a popular social site and examines sexual desires that are intertwined with dominant discourses around race, power, and representation.

Returning to the theoretical conception of racism, examining the selected Grindr profiles provides for a number of insights into how cultural, individual, and institutional racism intersect on Grindr (Bowser, 2017). As Kendi notes, racism is rarely the result of hatred, intolerance, and bigotry; rather, it reflects an attempt to increase one's own cultural, political, or economic self-interest (Kendi, 2016). In the case of Grindr, the manifestations of gay racism appear to be a reaction to a sexual field that privileges whiteness as the most salient erotic capital and in turn Grindr's users construct profiles meant to increase their self-interests as it relates to perceived erotic capital and their ability to attract potential partners.

Future research could explore the degree to which Grindr is inherently racist. For example, is the embedded technology that enables filtering (for those privileged enough pay subscription fees) by race among other attributes an example of a technology that facilitates a racialized hierarchy, simultaneously making the enactment more efficient through algorithmic filtering? These questions all bear important consideration, especially when we consider the importance of CMC to LGBTQ communities at large (Bond et al., 2009; Craig & McInroy, 2014). In an erotic world that adheres to a racialized hierarchy of desire, via the presentation of self and exercise of erotic capital, what place is there for the 'Other' who remains dispossessed from this dominant code and discourse? As Grindr's CEO has acknowledged, the company seeks to move beyond its genesis as a "gay dating app" and become a "lifestyle platform" (Collins, 2015). As the company evolves and moves towards this stated goal, it is important for researchers to consider for whom this lifestyle is intended; judging by this essay's assessment of Grindr as a sexual field, the evidence suggests that this lifestyle remains exclusive to those who are white.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to any and every queer person of color who has ever questioned their worth.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1

Denotative Signifier	Denotative Signified	Connotation	Affect on Erotic Capital
Appearance			
Manner			
Activity			
Props			
Settings			

Figure 2

		Encoding: "Whiteness is the most salient erotic capital."
Decoding Position	Dominant (Hegemonic) Reading	
	Negotiated Reading	
	Oppositional (Counter-Hegemonic) Reading	

Figure 3

grindrstudy2018

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Disclosure Statement

Thank you for visiting our site.

The Grindr account with display name “Grindr Study” was created for the sole purpose of conducting demographic research within the Grindr community. By engaging with this account in any manner, including (‘taps’, chat, etc.) you consent to the use of data from your profile, including (images, text, etc.) Please note, we will not collect any personal identifiable information (PII), nor will we collect any information related to sexual health. Furthermore, all display names will be altered in any published findings or research reports so as to maintain user anonymity. Your data will be collected and temporarily stored and may be shared with faculty and staff within The London School of Economic and Political Science.


Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the purpose of this study?

This study will examine how users of Grindr (gay, bisexual, curious, and men who have sex with men) draw upon normative ideals through their own self-representation.

What data may be collected and analyzed?

- Profile display image
- Display name (anonymized)
- About Me



- Height
- Weight
- Body Type
- Position
- Ethnicity
- Relationship Status
- My Tribes
- I'm Looking For

NOTE:

This study will NOT collect or publish any data related to sexual health or HIV status.

In addition, this study will NOT collect or publish any data related to social media links, including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

For more information on the ownership of user content on Grindr, please refer to Grindr's TOS agreement <https://www.grindr.com/terms-of-service>

How will data be collected?

Data will be collected from profiles by taking screenshots of relevant profile display images and text.

Data will be securely stored on an encrypted device, accessible only to the principal researcher.

Upon completion of data analysis all collected data will be securely destroyed.

Why if I don't want my data included in the study?

To opt-out of this study and ensure that your profile data is not collected and analyzed, you must directly notify the researchers by emailing grindrstudy2018@gmail.com.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact the researchers directly at grindrstudy2018@gmail.com

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Mediation and Resistance

Globalisation and Comparative Studies

Media and Identity

Innovation, Governance and Policy

Media and New Media Literacies

Democracy, Politics and Journalism Ethics

The Cultural Economy

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150-200 word abstract

Headings and sub-headings are encouraged

The Harvard system of referencing should be used

Papers should be prepared as a Word file

Graphs, pictures and tables should be included as appropriate in the same file as the paper

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