

# Racism in the Workplace and Beyond: In Search of Mechanisms *Racialized Emotional Labor*

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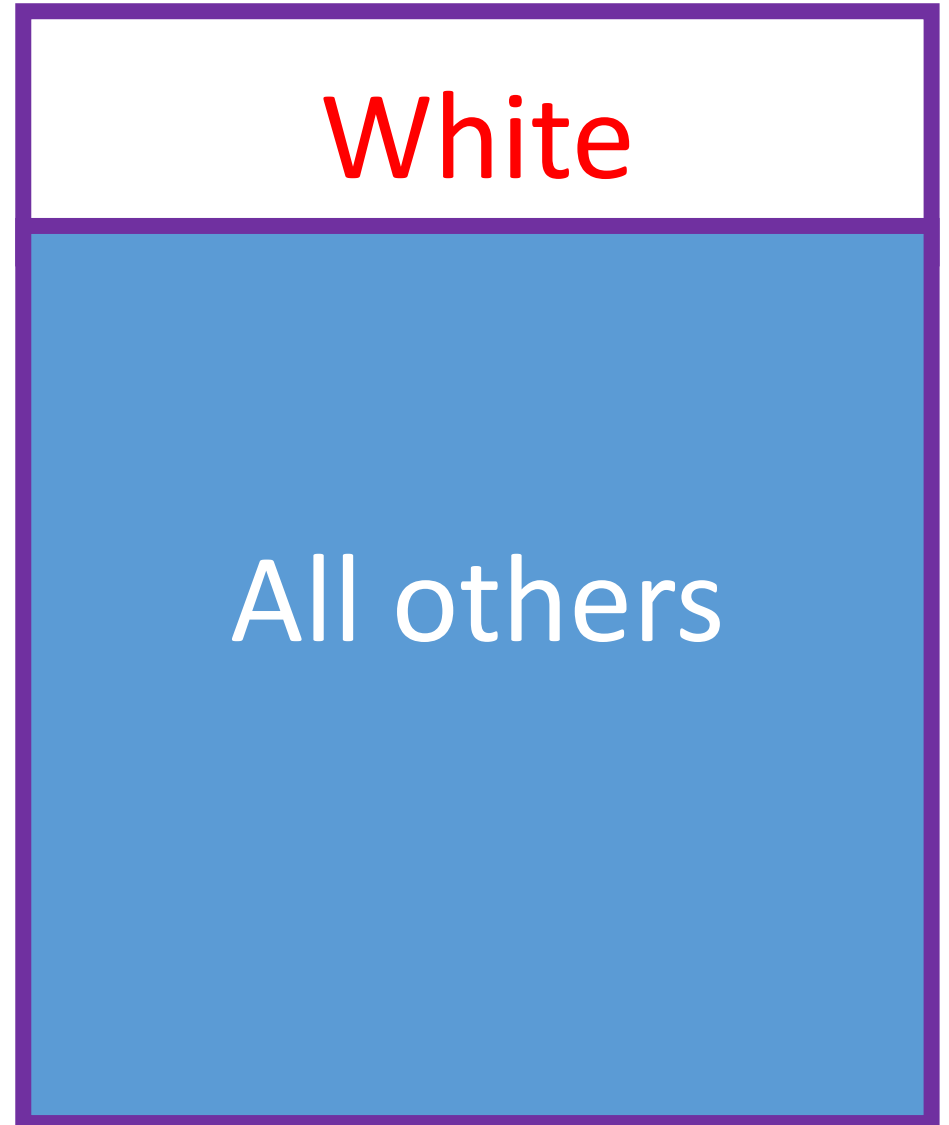
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# Preliminary arguments

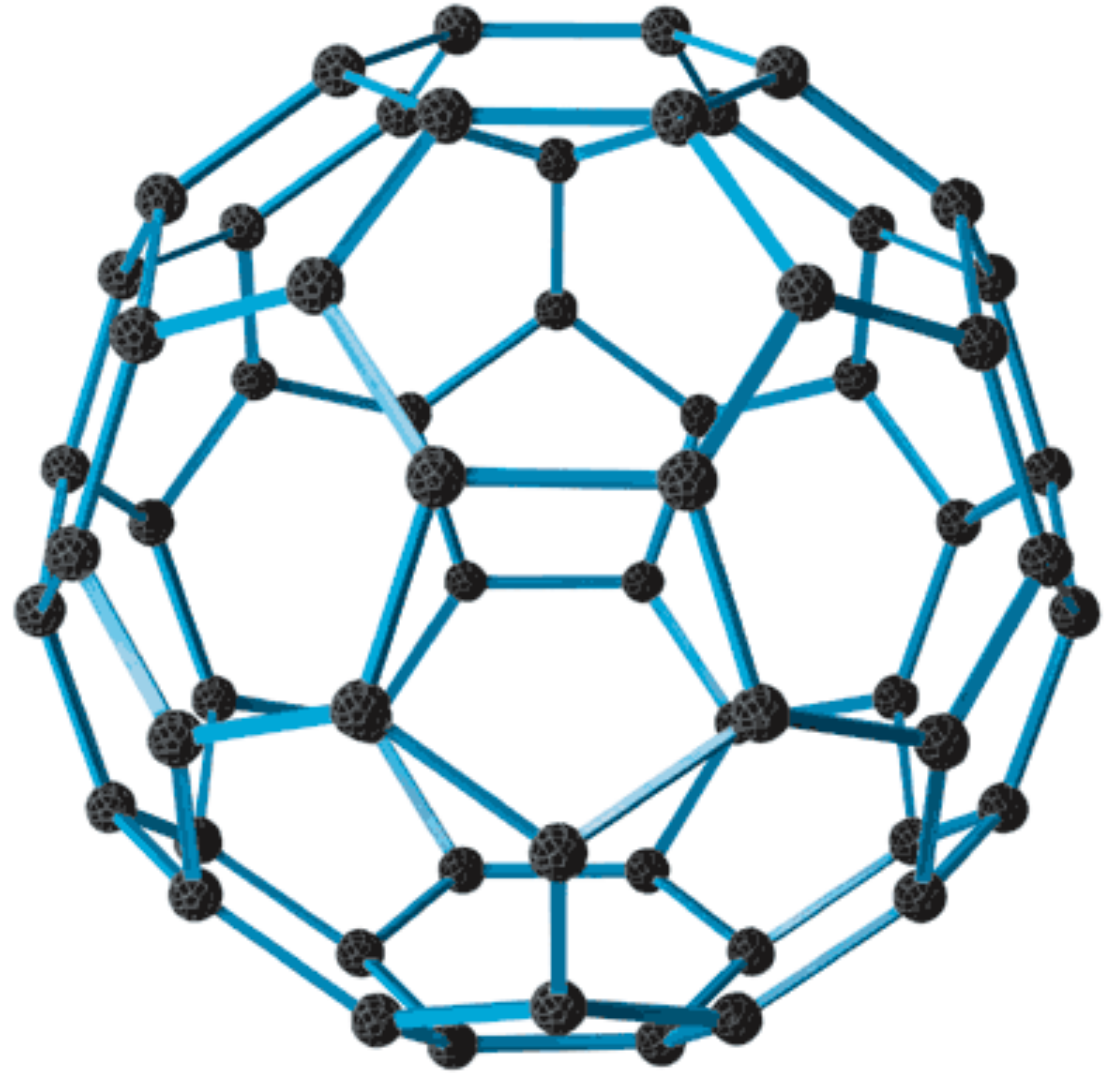
- Structural racism creates racialized emotional rules and emotional stereotypes
- Minorities enact emotional labor to conform to rules
- Conformity to rules confers stress
- Conflict with rules contributes to punishment

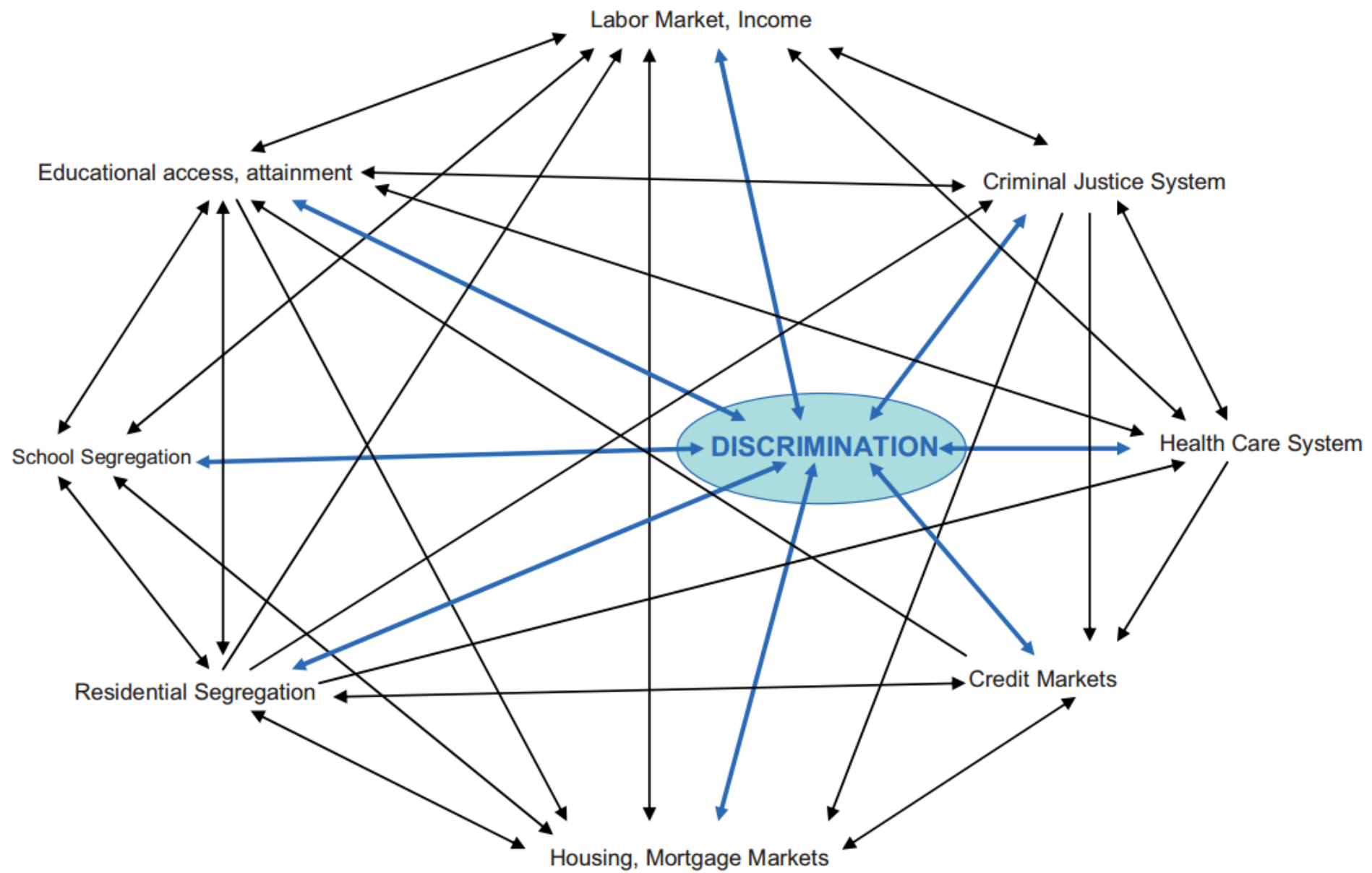
# A Definition

Racism is way to organize all of society that ensures white supremacy; this organization is premised on political categories that we call “races.”



- **Individual**
- **Institutional**
- **Structural**





**Figure 1**

The race discrimination system and emergent discrimination.

Barbara Reskin 2012.

Ann Rev Soc. 38:17-35

# Racism

...provides the rules for perceiving and dealing with the “other”

Bonilla-Silva, 1997. ASR 62(3):465-480.

# Research on Racism & Work

- Hiring
- Promotions, wages
- Punishments, monitoring
- Experiences of discrimination
- Implicit bias
- Segregation
- Hazardous exposures

To perpetuate and maintain white supremacy, white folks have colonized black Americans, and part of that colonizing process has been teaching us to repress our rage, to never make them the targets of any anger we feel about racism.... We now know that one can be exiled forever from the promise of economic well-being if that rage is not permanently silenced.

bell hooks



# The Managed Heart

Commercialization of  
Human Feeling

ARLIE  
RUSSELL  
HOCHSCHILD



# Hochschild: The Managed Heart

Emotions are linked to:

- Capitalism
  - Power
  - Gender
  - Individual outcomes
- 
- Emotional work is ... work

# Concepts

- Emotional management
- Emotional work & emotional labor
- Feeling rules
  - “standards used in emotional conversation to determine what is rightly owed and owing in the currency of feeling”

# Feeling Rules: What we expect from others & ourselves

- Roles
  - Flight attendants & bill collectors
- Situations
  - Funerals & weddings
- Status
  - Gender
  - Race

## From The Managed Heart, cont

- “[the airline] would love nothing better than to get rid of us and fill the plane with **loving, submissive Japanese women....**”(p. 130)
- “You know, these **black men can get real angry.**” (p. 146)

“It is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signal our docility and our acquiescence in our situation.... On the other hand, anything but the sunniest countenance exposes us to being perceived as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous. This means, at the least, that we may be found “difficult” or unpleasant to work with, which is enough to cost one’s livelihood; at worst, being seen as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous has been known to result in rape, arrest, beating and murder.”

Frye, 1983

# Feeling rules for minorities

- Need to be deferential
- Hold back anger
- Connected to emotional stereotypes

# Emotional stereotypes

“The problems that African American men experience with aggression and control often present themselves in one of three ways. First,...[they] may exhibit too much control over their anger, frustration, or other strong emotions, resulting in repression or suppression... Second, they may exhibit too little control... [demonstrating] limited or immature coping skills. Third, [they] may engage in inappropriate channeling processes in which they direct strong emotions inward...[which] lead to stress related illnesses such as hypertension or maladaptive behaviors including substance abuse.”

Courtland C. Lee & Deryl F. Bailey (1997)



We conclude that relative to Caucasians, populations of Asian ancestry are inclined to a greater frequency of inhibitory disorders such as low sexual excitement and premature ejaculation and to a lower frequency of ... AIDS, while populations of African ancestry are inclined to a greater frequency of uninhibited disorders such as rape and unintended pregnancy and ... AIDS.

Rushton & Bogaert, 1989

# Emotional Stereotypes at Work

- Emotional stereotypes mirror and perpetuate fundamental sentiments
- *In ambiguous situations, emotional stereotypes inform the feeling rules used.*
- Persistence & prevalence
  - Institutional nature
  - Racial projects

“I even got a customer complain that I scared them... I was like, “What did I do to scare them?... She said exactly, “I didn’t look inviting.” And I was like, ... why am I supposed to look inviting? But now I understand the reasons... because I look like a scary Black person. That’s what my manager was getting at, but didn’t want to say...And I wasn’t the only Black person who got that.”

Hasford, 2016. Am J Community Psy 57:158-170.

“[Students wonder whether] I’m going to be the kind of professor who makes white people feel bad about what has happened to black people in America.”

Harlow 2003. Soc Psy Q. 66(4): 348-363.

# Emotional work

- Toils undertaken to produce feeling state
- Racialized emotional work

# Emotional Work Everyday

I began to take precautions to make myself less threatening. I give wide berth to nervous people...I may walk by, letting them clear the lobby before I return, so as not to seem to be following them...I whistle melodies from Beethoven and Vivaldi....

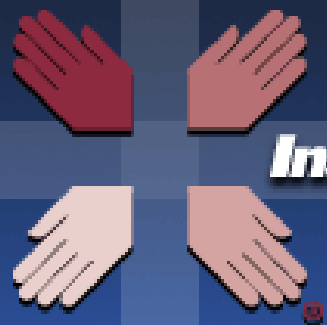
Brent Staples, "Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space."



# Diversity Sensitivity Trainers

“It is critical ... to affirm that one of the costs of racism is the emotional pain it causes all people. We try to create safety for people to express some of those painful emotions....”





# Institute for Diversity in Health Management



# welcome

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## Feeling overwhelmed with affirmative action regulations?

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# Emotional work to perpetuate racism

“...The white racist movement today is most importantly a setting in which he can savor certain sensations... **Organized white racism today is much more about getting the chance to have the feelings than it is about an actual program.** The leader is a man who serves those needs. He provides words that elaborate on the victimization in a context that makes it nonshameful. He provides words and emotions and melodrama that let members feel they are part of something in motion. “

Raphael Ezekiel, 1995. The Racist Mind

# White Aryan Resistance

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believe that the Aryan Republic should undertake to forge a fraternal community of Aryan nations as a new force for order, stability, and understanding in the world.

## **White Self Defense:**

We must have an America in which White men and women can live and work, in their homes and in the streets of our cities, without fear. We must have a government which is not only a guarantor of public order and safety and which preserves the right of White citizens to keep and to bear arms, which is the ancient hallmark of a truly free people, but we must have government which maintains an eternal vigilance against the enemies, both internal and external, of a White America. Every tendency towards degeneracy and subversion, every threat to our racial integrity, every form of organized crime and vice, every element which threatens public terror or chaos must be weeded out and utterly destroyed.



HEY, WHITE MAN... HOW'S YOUR AMERICA BEEN LOOKING TO YOU LATELY? IF YOU DON'T TAKE IT BACK, THEY'LL DAMN SURE TAKE IT OVER!

...AROUND BLACKS



... NEVER RELAX!

# Emotional management

- Dealing with racism *per se*
  - “In time, I learned to smother the rage I felt as so often being taken for a criminal. Not to do so would surely have led to madness...” (Staples)
- Internalized racism
- White guilt



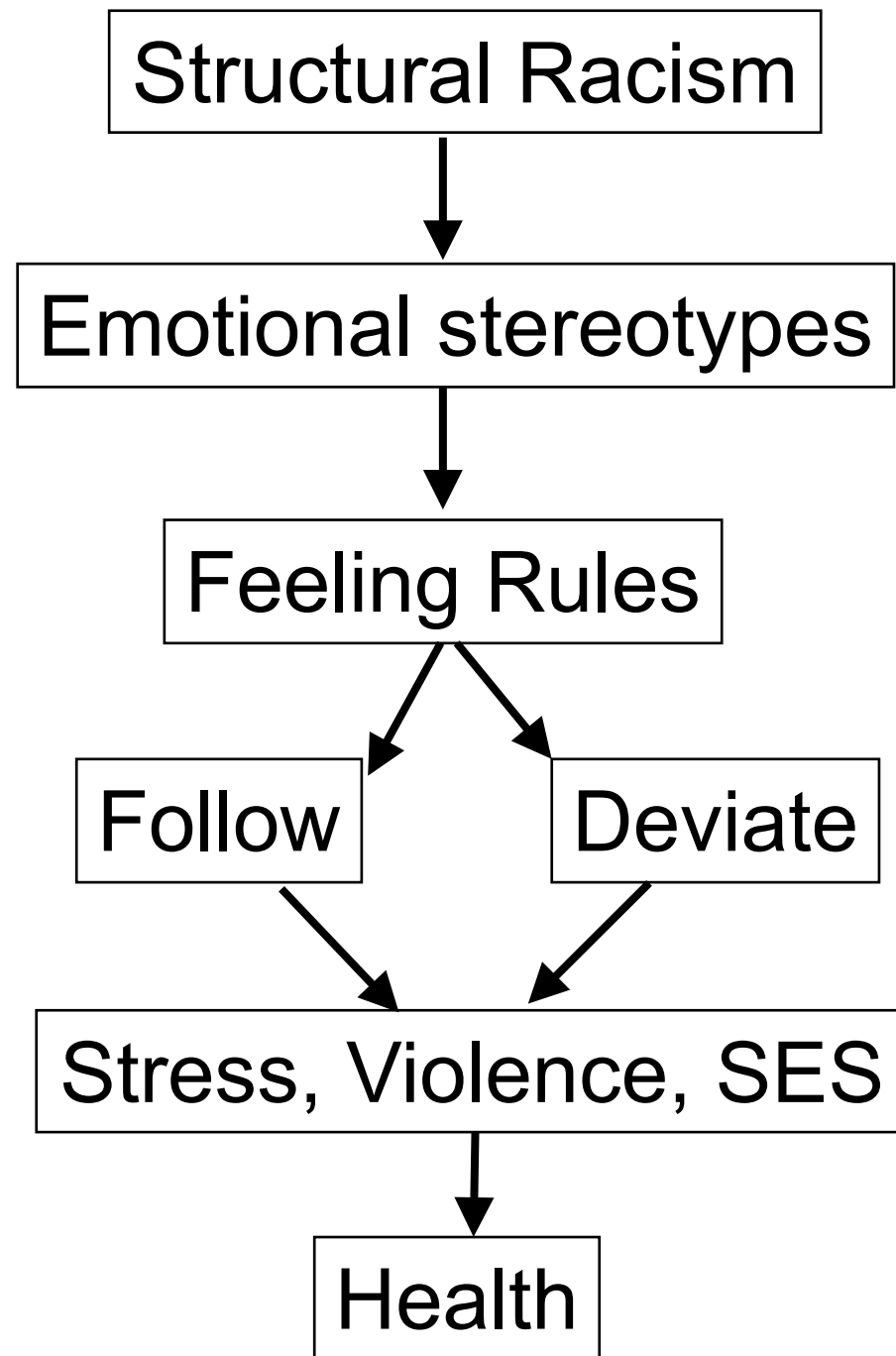
# Emotional labor & health

Shaunbroeck & Jones (2000). Antecedents of workplace emotional labor dimensions and moderators of their effects on physical symptoms. *J Organiz Behav* 21(2): 163-183

Grandey & Mellory (2017). The state of the heart: Emotional labor as emotion regulation reviewed and revisited. *J Occup Health Psych* 22(3): 407-422.

Larson & Yao (2005). Clinical empathy as emotional labor in the patient-physician relationship. *JAMA*. 293(9): 1100-1106.

Hyun et al., 2020. Does Emotional Labor Increase Risk of Suicidal Ideation among Firefighters. *Yonsei Med J*. 61(2); 179-185.



# Recap

- Racism creates racialized emotional rules and emotional stereotypes
- Minorities enact emotional labor to conform to rules
- Conformity to rules confers stress
- Conflict with rules contributes to punishment

# Other readings

- Durr et al., 2011. Keep your 'N' in check: African American women and the interactive effects of etiquette & emotional labor. *Critical Sociology* 37(5): 557-571.
- Evans & Moore. 2015. Impossible burdens: white institutions, emotional labor, and micro-resistance. 3:439-454.
- Myntha & Tuitt. 2019. When the leaves break... *Int Journal of Qualitative Studies in Educaiton* 32(9): 1072-1093
- Kelly et al., 2019. Hidden in plain sight. Uncovering the emotional labor of Black women students at historically white colleges & universities. *J of Diversity in Higher Education*.

Thank you!

# Emotional stereotypes and employment

“Sure, they **still like the Uncle Tom**  
performance... they eat that up!”\*\*

# Racialized Exchanges

- “Why do [the Vietnamese] cheat and steal from us; they should be grateful that we’re here to help them”
- “I would not feel comfortable at all if an Arab-looking person sat next to me on a plane...It’s hard to know who to trust....I would feel nervous. I mean, *who wouldn’t*”

# Knowing the feeling rules

- Told what to do
  - Interpersonal relationships
    - Reminders, sanctions, reactions
  - Formal external channels & experts
    - Bush's pleas for tolerance
  - Vicarious
    - Media reports of how others feel
- When you don't know?
  - Emotional stereotypes



# Racialized Emotional Stereotypes

- Racial groups
  - Devalued emotions
  - Truncated emotional spectrum
  - Lowered ability to control emotions
  - Emotionally unhealthy

Build Cultural  
Competencies

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Explore Unconscious  
Bias

Promote Respect in  
Workplace

Stop Sexual  
Harassment



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“I’m just so aware of this whole black woman as, you know, angry person kind of myth...I do feel like some students expect that I’m going to be more maternal, and if I don’t live up to that, then only place that’s familiar to them...is “Oh, then she must have an attitude.”

Harlow 2003. Soc Psy Q. 66(4): 348-363.