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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
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<tr>
<td>All others</td>
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• 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”

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
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
“[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.”

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.”

“[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.”

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.”
You're a selfish disease carrier!

“It’s a Chinese virus”
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....”
Feeling overwhelmed with affirmative action regulations?

*Sit back and let’s customize your plan.*

Great businesses need great plans and at OutSolve, affirmative action planning and compliance are all we do.
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
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


Structural Racism

Emotional stereotypes

Feeling Rules

Follow

Deviate

Stress, Violence, SES

Health
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


• 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
Choosing Respect
PROMOTE A RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE

D&I Synergistic Relationships:

ASSOCIATION OF ERGS & COUNCILS

DIVERSITY IMPACT AWARDS

ASSOCIATION OF ERGS & COUNCILS
2020 CONFERENCE

PRISM is your total Inclusion and Diversity Training Partner
Diversity and Inclusion Increases Customer Satisfaction, Market Share & Competitive Positioning.

2017 ERG & Council Honors Award
The Top 25 2019 ERG & Council Honors Award Recipients have been announced!

Press Release >>
“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.”