

Racial harassment

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



It has been relatively widely accepted that sexual harassment is a technique used by one dominant group (usually the male) to maintain the subordination of another (usually the female). Like sexual harassment, racial harassment has been found to be closely related to the verbal aspect of bullying. Verbal bullying (or harassment), whether it takes place in the workplace, on the playground, or between persons of different races, often causes the victim to feel terrified. Terror involves the intimidation of one person by another for the purpose of maintaining dominance over him or her (Coloroso, 2003). Verbal bullying is identified as being inclusive of racial slurs, and the degree to which one can consider racial harassment in this way similar to sexual harassment can be ascertained by examining the different levels of similarity that they possess.

Racial harassment is explained as involving behavior that intends to magnify or highlight the subordinate condition of one racial group to another. It is therefore often demonstrated between or among persons of different races in an environment in which one is a member of the majority race and the other a member of the minority race. In such a case, it is usually the member of the majority race that harasses the other. In some cases the minority person is in a subordinate position and is an easy target for victimization. It is often the case that persons who feel oppressed in that way are expected to resist the oppression. It would therefore seem probable that harassment in such a situation comes about to attempt the counteraction of such a possibility. In other cases, the minority person might show more ambition than another member of the majority population, and in that case is racially harassed in order to remind him or her of his "rightful place" of

subordination.

According to the Giuffre and Williams study (1994), one of the four contexts in which the respondents identified actions as being examples of sexual harassment reinforces the idea of dominance as it refers to the exploitation of a powerful position for personal gain. In a situation in which the majority race controls many of the lucrative and influential social positions, racial harassment might be seen as being used to reinforce that dominant position. It highlights the fact that the harasser is in a position to get away with actions that are unfair because of his membership of the majority and powerful race. The psychological effect of this on the victim is great. Researchers have been examining the connection between post-traumatic stress disorder and the effects of racial harassment on the victim. Racial harassment has been considered by some of these psychologists as an injury that behaves like a disorder (Carter, 2003). When reinforcing words by a member of the powerful majority are used in a situation in which the subordinate position of the victim is already evident, the harassment has the violating effect of legitimizing the victim's subordination and making him or her feel that the unjust relationship between the races is the correct one. In this way, racial harassment certainly exposes its usefulness in keeping the subordinate group in mental and physical subjection to the oppression of the dominant race.

Another of the four contexts in the Giuffre and Williams study (1994) depicted racial harassment in which a member of a minority racial group harassed a member of the majority group. This offers a new perspective on the topic, because it seems to demonstrate a situation in which racial

harassment occurs not as an attempt by the dominant race to keep the subordinate one submissive, but rather as a (possible) reaction by a member of the subordinate race to the oppressive nature of the race relationship in his or her environment. This can be seen in the case of a minority man's harassing a white woman.

Racial harassment can be seen to be similar to sexual harassment in that it is often performed by a dominant group to emphasize or take advantage of the dominant position it possesses. The psychological effects of such harassment do run a course that often holds the victim captive, causing his belief in the legitimacy of his oppressed position to increase. However, it has also been seen that it is possible for both to take place in a situation where the oppressed does the harassing, possibly as a reaction to the general situation that characterizes life as a member of an oppressed group.

References

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