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THE ATTRIBUTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS A FUNCTION OF RACE
AND JOB STATUS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fullfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in Psychology:
Industrial/Organizational

by
Michelle Lee Marriott

June 1997

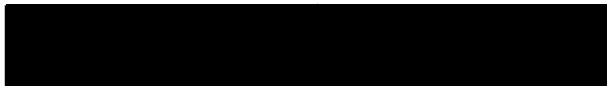
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ABSTRACT

The influx of working women since the 1970's has increased the opportunities for social sexual interactions between men and women at work though many behaviors may be unwanted. This has led many researchers to consider observers' perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment. Research has investigated the influence of respondents' gender, type of behavior, and job status in the attribution of sexual harassment. However, research on the effect of initiator and target race on the attribution of sexual harassment has been limited. To examine the influence of race of the female target and male initiator in combinations with status differences, 267 women and 134 men evaluated a scenario in which job status (department manager or mail clerk) and target and initiator race (black or white) were manipulated in eight conditions containing the same sexually ambiguous comment and two conditions containing an explicit gesture in addition to the sexually ambiguous comment. Participants responded to two scales, one measuring their perception of the initiator's behavior and the second measuring the perceived sexual harassment of the incident. Two 2 (gender of respondent) x 2 (job status) x 2 (race of initiator) x 2 (race of target) ANCOVAs with the perceived

attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate were analyzed. Specific contrasts were also analyzed to examine within race effects as well as an explicit gesture compared to an ambiguous comment alone. Consistent with predictions, women viewed the behavior and the incident as more sexually harassing than did men. The incident was seen as more sexually harassing when instigated by a higher status initiator than a lower status initiator although the effect was specifically found for high status black initiators and not for low status black initiators or for white initiators. Although no target race effects were found, two 3-way interactions on job status, initiator race, and target race were found. Specifically, the initiator's behavior was seen as more offensive and the incident was seen as more sexually harassing when a high status initiator interacted with a target of a different race. Equally, the initiator's behavior was seen as more offensive and the incident was seen as more sexually harassing when the low status initiator interacted with a target of the same race. Additionally, the scenarios containing an explicit gesture were seen as more sexually harassing than were the scenarios containing an ambiguous comment alone; however, no difference was found between high status black or white men when the

scenario contained an explicit gesture. The results of this study support that race influences the attribution of sexual harassment, though these influences are subtle and not easily separated from other variables. Thus, the effects of race of the initiator and the target warrant further investigation.

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To Jas and Bas

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INTRODUCTION

In October 1991, allegations by Anita Hill were publicized at the U.S. Senate Hearings on the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court that Thomas had sexually harassed Hill while under his employment in the early 1980's (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1992). At that time, Thomas was the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Hill's immediate supervisor. In reaction to her claim, there has been much criticism as to what constitutes sexual harassment and, if Thomas had indeed harassed Hill, why she had not come forward during the occurrence of the acts instead of waiting until his nomination. Hill, herself, has become the object of accusations by those who believe she was nothing more than a rejected admirer.

Gender role theory predicts that women will be unlikely to pursue a workplace dispute, such as sexual harassment, to resolution because they may have been socialized to avoid conflict and confrontation with authority, possibly due to a learned lack of self-confidence (Stockard & Johnson, 1992). Women and incumbents of highly sex and race segregated jobs have distinctive types of workplace disputes because they may be the target of specific comments or sabotage (Gwartney

Gibbs & Lach, 1992). Even though the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) published guidelines defining sexual harassment in the early 1980's, the Supreme Court had not yet defined the more subtle alleged behaviors of Clarence Thomas. Thus, if Hill had sensed a lack of support from other managers or Human Resource personnel whose job it was to assist employees in identifying workplace disputes, she may have been resolved to leave her position with the EEOC and pursue an academic career. Leaving a job instead of entering into a nonresponsive dispute forum is consistent with gender role theory (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1992).

In addition to gender role theory, it is important to consider the effect of race in the public's reaction to the allegations by Hill and of her reluctance to file sexual harassment charges against Thomas. Race is a characteristic of token status where women perform male-typed jobs and nonwhites perform white-typed jobs. Because tokens are highly visible, they are pressured to conform to role expectations and tend to be socially isolated, leading to powerlessness and conformity to the dominant workplace culture. If Hill had been considered a token as a black female attorney, she may have lacked critical informal support networks. Accordingly, two or

three of Hill's friends testified that she had mentioned Thomas' behavior to them. However, consistent with token theory, her office staff was unsupportive at the hearings. This suggests that Hill would have lacked office support if she had chosen to pursue a dispute resolution (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1992).

One explanation as to why Hill may have lacked office support suggests that observers expect just consequences between what people do and what happens to them which often results in blaming the victim (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). In order to maintain consistency with what observers expect, the victim of aggression or other negative outcomes will often be perceived as having done something to deserve the consequence. Belief in a woman's immorality may encourage sexual harassment from some men and aggression from both men and women for violation of the moral code (Hemming, 1985). Cohen and Gutek (1985) found that college students tend to focus more attention on the personal aspects of an incident and on the interpersonal relationship between the harasser and target while de-emphasizing variables that directly assess the sexual and harassing nature of the interaction. The authors further suggest that observers in general may fail to recognize the problematic components of these incidents

because they weight the positive aspects of an encounter between a harasser and a target more heavily than the sexually harassing qualities. Observers also tend to make positive assumptions about a relationship between participants when information is lacking.

Although sexual harassment has been widely researched since the early 1980's, the charges against Clarence Thomas by Anita Hill have unveiled new areas that have not been fully explored. Of specific interest in this study is the effect that race and status play in the observer's perception of sexual harassment.

Overview of Sexual Harassment

There has been a steady increase of women in the labor force since the 1950's (Flaim & Fullerton, 1978). The influx of women workers increases the opportunities for social interactions between men and women which may lead to friendship, dating, and even marriage. However, the work setting is different from a primarily social setting because workers are at work to do their job in order to support themselves or their families. Many people also plan to work at the same place for a considerable length of time (Gutek, Morasch & Cohen, 1983).

As more women enter the workforce and work as peers

with men, opportunities for sexual harassment increase. Sexual harassment was ignored during most of the twentieth century not only because women provided cheap labor in low-paying jobs, but also because they were prevented from competing for men's jobs. Thus, women have been the main victims of sexual harassment because of their economic vulnerability. However, the role structure of the workforce has also added to the sexual harassment of women by traditionally placing men in positions of power over women. Consequently, the persistent sex-role stereotypes continue to cloud an employer's perception of sexual harassment. The male role of dominance and the female role of subordination in social relationships reinforce each other in the workplace, allowing women to be blamed for the sexual advances of men and men to be permitted to "sow their wild oats" (Maypole & Skain, 1983).

The Definition and Consequences of Sexual Harassment

The term sexual harassment is defined in the EEOC Sex Discrimination Guidelines (1980) as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; submission to or rejection

of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual; or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (p. 25024)

The definition of sexual harassment by the EEOC (1980) includes the sexualization of a work environment as well as direct socio-sexual behavior between individuals. There are also several nonharassing behaviors, such as sexual comments intended as compliments, initiating dating, flirting and overt sexual comments that may be annoying, but not considered offensive enough to be perceived as harassment by an observer. Therefore, sexual harassment may create an overtly hostile or offensive environment, but can also include jokes, comments, and mild touching as well, as long as the recipient interprets the behavior as threatening or offensive (Gutek, Cohen & Konrad, 1990).

In accordance with the EEOC (1980), Popovich, Gehlauf, Jolton, Somers and Godinho (1992) described "economic injury" in addition to a "hostile environment" as another possible consequence of harassing behavior. Economic injury refers to the explicit or implicit threat

to an individual's job security whereas hostile environment refers to conduct creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment which ultimately affects the target's job performance. The outcome of a hostile environment is not as commonly perceived as a type of sexual harassment as is economic injury. However, this is not to suggest that ambiguous behaviors creating a hostile environment are less severe than those creating economic injury. Ambiguous incidents may actually be perceived as more threatening than economic injuries (Popovich et al., 1992).

The consequences of sexual harassment are widespread, ranging from decreased job performance and health issues to organizational and governmental costs (Fitzgerald, 1993). A victim may experience increased stress or decreased work effectiveness, as a result of any form of sexual harassment (Jensen & Gutek, 1982). Targets of sexual harassment are not the only victims who bear the consequences. Organizations can suffer decreased productivity and work effectiveness, absenteeism, loss of valued employees, damaged organizational climate, financial penalties, and litigation expenses (Terpstra & Baker, 1988). By 1993, the government was spending approximately \$100 million per year in lost productivity

costs (Fitzgerald, 1993). Hemming (1985) proposed that sexual harassment affects a woman's long-term career expectations because changing or transferring jobs interferes with promotions and lessens the opportunities for training based on job experience. The victim of sexual harassment may also forfeit sick pay and pension rights if they are based on years of service. Finally, the victim's self-esteem and self-image may be damaged, especially if she must accept a lower status job or becomes unemployed. It is common for a victim to feel angry, humiliated, ashamed and scared. She may ultimately feel guilty over imagined provocation of the harassment and hatred toward the harasser for profiting at her expense.

The Ambiguity and Attribution of Sexual Harassment

The social nature of the work setting encourages socio-sexual behaviors although a widespread range of sexual behaviors can often be ambiguous and unwanted (Gutek et al., 1983). This has led many researchers to consider the discrepancy between the perceptions of men and women as to what constitutes sexual harassment (Abbey, 1982; Collins & Blodgett, 1981; Saal, Johnson & Weber, 1989). What is intended as platonic friendliness by a woman is often misperceived as sexual interest by a man.

Abbey (1983) examined the perceptions of 72 men and 72 women in judging an ambiguous behavior of a female actor. Male participants rated the behavior of the female actor as more promiscuous and seductive than did female participants. The male participants also perceived the behavior of the male actor as more promiscuous than did female participants. This suggests that men tend to perceive more sexuality in an interaction between a man and a woman than do women.

Additionally, Gutek et al. (1983) studied the perceptions of 218 respondents in interpreting a sexually ambiguous comment between a man and woman at work. They found that women viewed the interaction between the initiator and target as more offensive than did men. Therefore, it appears that women are more likely than men to consider sexual teasing, jokes, looks or stares, gestures, unnecessary physical contact or remarks from a fellow employee as a form of sexual harassment (Johnson, Stockdale & Saal, 1991).

In addition to gender differences, another mediating factor in the perception of sexual harassment is a female target's characteristics. That is, observers tend to view an incident as less harassing when they believe any target characteristic or behavior can be attributed to

encouraging a socio-sexual interaction (Reilly, Carpenter, Dull & Bartlett, 1982). Pryor and Day (1988) examined the perceptions of 48 male and 32 female college students judging the characteristics of the target. They found that a target described as wearing conservative clothes was viewed as more harassed than was a target described as wearing provocative clothes, and, hence, inferring sexual intentions. This was supported for both attractive and average looking women as depicted in prescaled photographs.

However, the same potentially harassing remark made to an unattractive woman was viewed as less harassing than to her attractive or average looking counterparts, regardless of her style of dress. It is evident that observers' perceptions of the attractiveness of the target influence the attribution of sexual harassment. It is expected that the observers' views of attractiveness will influence their perception of an act as sexual harassment, though it may be difficult to predict how it will interact with other variables.

The effect of attribution on the labeling of sexual harassment has also been investigated. Observers were more likely to interpret men's socio-sexual behavior as sexual harassment when the behavior could be attributed to

the initiator's enduring hostility or callousness toward the woman; otherwise the act might be viewed as innocuous (Pryor, 1985). Specifically, if sexual overtures are made consistently over time, and other men do not behave similarly toward the woman, or the harasser makes similar overtures to other women, observers tend to agree that his behavior is sexually harassing (Pryor & Day, 1988).

Observers strongly agree on labeling an act as sexual harassment when it is openly threatening or intruding on the recipient's job security or personal space; however, subtle or ambiguous forms of harassment may not be consistently labeled as sexual harassment (Sheffey & Tindale, 1992). The nature of socio-sexual behaviors at work encourages would-be initiators to be indirect and ambiguous to create an interaction with multiple interpretations. Not only can this ambiguity soften a potential rejection from the recipient, but it can also cloud a threat that could be challenged in court. Potentially harassing comments could be phrased as an expectation to "give more of yourself to your job" (Gutek et al., 1983).

There has been no consensus on what defines a single incident as sexual harassment because single incidents are often ambiguous in their intent and effect (Cohen & Gutek,

1985). An initial sexual signal sent or received at work is likely to be ambiguous. This leads observers to interpret an interaction based on their own preexisting attitudes. However, a single incident should not be overlooked because only one incident needs to occur for it to be considered an act of sexual harassment (Gutek et al., 1983). Although it is common to view repeated acts as sexual harassment, most witnesses observe only one occurrence of the behavior in question (Cohen & Gutek, 1985). Furthermore, it may be difficult to determine whether a specific behavior, such as a sexist comment, creates a hostile or intimidating environment (Frazier, Cochran & Olson, 1995).

Gutek, et al. (1983) examined the attribution of sexual harassment when there was a single incident of mild touching (a pat on the fanny), a non-work related comment on the target's body, and a work related comment on the target's punctuality to a meeting. Each of these single incidents was then combined into an incident of mild touching with a non-work related comment and mild touching with a work related comment. Results indicated that a single incident of either a non-work related or work related comment was rated as less harassing than an incident including mild touching. The researchers

expected that touching combined with a non-work related comment would be considered more harassing than touching combined with a work related comment. However, they found that when mild touching was combined with a non-work related comment, it was rated as equally harassing as when mild touching was combined with a work related comment (Gutek et al., 1983).

This suggests that mild, non-work related touching is considered a form of sexual harassment. Additionally, when touching is combined with a work related comment, especially by a higher status male, the incident may be perceived as a mixed message. It could be seen as an invasion of the target's personal space while evaluating an aspect of her work performance (Gutek et al., 1983). Finally, Gutek et al. (1983) suggested that mild touching operationalized as "a pat on the fanny" may not generalize to other forms of touching.

Collins and Blodgett (1981) also reported a discrepancy in the attribution of sexual harassment between an extreme situation and one viewed as ambiguous. From 1,846 respondents, 87% agreed that a boss threatening to cancel a subordinate's promotion if she does not continue their affair is sexually harassing. However, only 40% of this sample agreed that a man who starts each

work day with a sexual remark and then insists it's an innocent social comment is harassing, while 48% were not sure. In instances of ambiguity, the perceived seriousness of the act seemed to depend upon who was making the advance and the target's perception of the consequences (Collins & Blodgett, 1981).

Coles (1986) examined 88 cases of formal complaints of sexual harassment filed with the San Bernardino County Office of the California Fair Employment and Housing Department from January 1, 1979 through December 31, 1983. The behaviors were categorized as either mild, such as verbal and slight physical contact, or extreme, such as persistent sexual advances, assault, or attempted rape. The complaints filed included verbal sexual harassment (38%), a form of visual harassment (4%), sexual harassment involving touch (27%), threats about the job or persistent sexual advances (25%), and assault or attempted rape (6%).

Out of the 88 cases, 42 were settled by the California Fair Employment and Housing Department in less than 3 months. Sixteen cases were denied by the agency though this was due to insufficient evidence, and 18 individuals pursued their claims in court. These results further support the decreased productivity and increased costs experienced by organizations in litigation caused by

sexual harassment complaints.

Additionally, Terpstra and Cook (1985) examined 76 cases of formal sexual harassment charges filed with the Illinois Department of Human Rights from July 1, 1981 through June 30, 1983 expecting the reported behaviors to be of a serious nature such as sexual assault. Instead, they found the most frequently reported behaviors to be unwanted physical contact (36%), offensive language (29%) and sexual propositions unlinked to job condition (22%), though a combination of offenses may have occurred in a single charge. It appears that sexual comments and unwanted physical contact may occur more frequently than more severe forms of sexual harassment or lead to formal charges.

In summary, it is evident that the majority of observers label an interaction as a form of sexual harassment when it threatens the recipient's job security. Additionally, if mild touching, such as "fanny" patting, is involved, it is interpreted as an invasion of the recipient's personal space and is considered more harassing than a comment or staring (Gutek et al., 1983). However, it appears that offensive comments and sexual propositions occur more frequently than do more severe forms (Terpstra & Cook, 1985). Although there is no

consensus among observers as to whether or not an ambiguous comment constitutes sexual harassment, it is more likely to be witnessed in the workplace than more severe forms. An ambiguous comment is of interest in this study to allow a free interpretation of an interaction that could occur in the workplace and permit variations in responses that are related to the experimental variables under consideration.

Job Status of the Initiator Relative to the Target

The workplace has an internal social system based on a status hierarchy, making it unlike other social settings (Gutek et al., 1983). Sexual harassment, therefore, has become an interaction between relative strangers within this hierarchical structure (Maypole & Skain, 1983). In social interactions, the courting ritual allows men and women opportunities to develop an attraction for each other while the woman maintains the power to withhold consent from the man (Goffman, 1977). Sexual harassment, however, is not based on a mutual attraction, but instead arises from unequal power relations between men and women (Hemming, 1985) and functions as an agent of social control like other forms of sexual victimization (Fitzgerald, 1993). Sexual harassment may be an expression of male power used to keep women in subordinate

positions (Farley, 1978).

The work status of the initiator relative to the recipient influences the perception of sexual harassment (Collins & Bodgitt, 1981). Both men and women tend to label an act, touch or comment as sexual harassment if the initiator is in a higher status position than the recipient (Pryor, 1985). Bosses are held to higher standards of behavior. "Friendly" behavior between coworkers is interpreted as forceful and threatening when initiated by a superior (Collins & Blodgett, 1981). Women reported feeling their job was threatened more by a higher status initiator than by a peer or lower status coworker. In contrast, the same sexually suggestive comment was viewed as friendly and familiar by a lower status initiator because he was lacking in power (Gutek et al., 1983).

During a phone interview, 399 adults were interviewed and asked if they had been the target of an occurrence of sexual harassment. More women than men reported having been harassed by superiors and more men than women reported having been harassed by subordinates (Gutek, Nakamura, Gahart & Handschumacher, 1980). This suggests that sexual harassment often follows the traditional male-female power structure because a male superior has the

power to retaliate if the subordinate refuses. On the other hand, a female subordinate harassing a male superior may be pursuing potential rewards from the male's advantaged power position (Hemming, 1985). A high status initiator is also more likely to perceive an interaction including socio-sexual behaviors as being motivated by interpersonal attraction, though the lower status recipient is more likely to perceive the same interaction as an implicit use of power by the initiator (Jones, 1975).

Till (1980) identified five categories of sexual harassment forming a continuum of severity. These categories are: a) gender harassment, or generalized sexist remarks and behavior; b) seductive behavior, or offensive but sanction free sexual advances; c) sexual bribery, or solicitation of sexual activity by promise of rewards; d) sexual coercion, or solicitation of sexual activity by threat of punishment; and e) sexual assault, or gross sexual imposition. Based on Till's (1980) five categories of sexual harassment, Tata (1993) examined ratings of 120 undergraduates and found no differences between responses to supervisors and coworkers when an incident included sexual bribery, sexual coercion, and sexual assault. However, the hierarchical level

influenced the perception of sexual harassment when an incident involved gender harassment and seductive behavior.

Therefore, consistent with Jones (1975), a recipient of socio-sexual behaviors by a subordinate may perceive the behavior as being motivated by interpersonal attraction, and the recipient of the same behavior by a supervisor may be more likely to consider the behavior as sexual harassment (Tata, 1993). An individual might initiate either gender harassment or a seductive behavior toward a subordinate, coworker, and supervisor assuming that the interaction was innocuous. However, the individual would be surprised and confused that only the subordinate perceived this interaction as sexually harassing when others did not (Tata, 1993).

Similarly, Popovich, Licata, Nokovich, Martelli and Zoloty (1986) examined ratings of 209 undergraduates based on their personal observations at work. Results indicated that supervisors were less likely than coworkers to exhibit harassing behavior. However, in a second study, 362 undergraduates rated similar behaviors based on their personal opinions. Results indicated that observers viewed the same behavior as more harassing when exhibited by a supervisor than by a coworker. Popovich et al.

(1986) summarized the differences between the report of the actual lower frequency of supervisor harassment in the first study and the expected higher frequency of supervisor harassment in the second study, acknowledging first that the rating scales were different, precluding statistical comparisons between the two studies.

Consistent with Collins and Blodgett (1981), it seems that the higher status position has a certain degree of power associated with it. What may initially be expressed by a supervisor as an innocuous behavior, such as a request for a date, may lead the employee to feel threatened if she refuses. Lastly, supervisors may be more careful than coworkers to avoid misunderstandings in their interactions, especially with subordinates, as an effect of sexual harassment training provided only for management which might explain the difference between expected and actual behavior (Popovich et al., 1986).

Littler-Bishop, Seidler-Feller, and Opaluch (1982) explored the social power dimension of social status in the workplace to determine the recipient's reaction to various forms of sexual harassment. They argued that association with a male in a high position may be necessary to gain desired employment or promotions. They further support that women have been socialized to react

to men of higher status more favorably, if not more tolerantly, than to men of equal or lower status.

Littler-Bishop et al. (1982) examined responses of 81 female flight attendants on frequency of sexual harassment and respondents' judgments of women's responses to sexual harassment. An airline setting was chosen because status is not only emphasized, but also strictly defined by the use of titles and uniforms which immediately identifies job status within the company.

Respondents reported the most common harassment experiences to be sexual looking or staring by airplane cleaners and pilots and sexual comments by pilots, though pilots also were seen as initiating significantly more instances of sexual comment and touch than ticket agents or airplane cleaners. In contrast, the equal status position, ticket agents, was reported as less likely to initiate harassment. Pilots may demonstrate higher rates of socio-sexual behavior because their higher status makes them a more desirable socio-sexual partner whereas the others, especially airplane cleaners, may be seen as less desirable. The lower status employees, airplane cleaners, may resort to staring, similar to other forms of street harassment, as a result of peer pressure to defend their masculinity (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982).

Flight attendants reported stronger negative feelings when lower status personnel initiated an invitation or touch than when initiated by equal or higher status personnel, though the amount of contact between employees in different positions was not reported. In contrast to Tata (1993), Littler-Bishop et al. (1982) found no status difference for sexual comment. They explain that respondents may become accustomed to verbal comments by pilots because verbal harassment is more frequent from pilots than from airplane cleaners. Furthermore, they suggest that the higher status pilots are powerful mediators of social rewards whereas the lower status airplane cleaners are a potential social embarrassment; therefore, the flight attendants may be more tolerant of pilot misconduct.

Littler-Bishop et al. (1982) suggested that this study may generalize to all work setting hierarchies, particularly when status is emphasized through the use of titles and uniforms; however, there are several factors which argue against this. First, the interactions among airline personnel may be more socially based than in most organizations. They are in frequent contact with each other though their job duties are not as interdependent as would be found in traditional business settings. Thus,

flight attendants, married or single, may expect a more familiar interaction with other personnel. Littler-Bishop et al. (1982) suggested that according to social exchange theory, flight attendants may be open to social relationships with pilots because of potential social recognition from others. Also, status is determined by the position of the employee. In other words, airplane cleaners can not be promoted into pilot positions and demoting a pilot to a ticket agent is highly unlikely. Therefore, the airline setting is a specialized environment. In a typical organization, individuals are eligible to move up the corporate ladder once hired into the environment. Lastly, pilots are not the immediate supervisors of flight attendants nor are flight attendants the immediate supervisors of airplane cleaners. Therefore, direct comparisons can not be drawn between reactions to sexual harassment by airline personnel and reactions by subordinates to their immediate bosses.

However, consistent with Tata (1993), Littler-Bishop et al. (1982) found that the more imposing the harassment, with the exception of sexual comments, the more negative were the perceived feelings of the recipient.

Additionally, consistent with Lerner and Simmons (1966), the target was perceived by her peers as less likable and

less desirable when the behavior was more imposing, such as touch, compared to a sexual comment. This may reflect the "blame the victim" attitude assuming that she must have provoked the harasser's advances. Recipients of less severe forms of harassment, such as staring, were rated less harshly perhaps because it was more common than more severe forms (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982). Collins and Blodgett (1981) also found that regardless of the type of behavior, women disapproved of harassment slightly more when the victim was a secretary (40%) than when she was an executive (36%). Specifically, one-quarter of the 1,846 respondents would verbally defend a secretary against boss whereas one-fifth would defend a female executive.

In a similar study, Giuffre and Williams (1994) conducted in-depth interviews with ten waitresses and eight waiters from restaurants in Austin, Texas. The respondents were seven white women, two Latinas, one black woman, five white men, two Latinos, and one black man. As with the 81 flight attendants (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982), Giuffre and Williams (1994) addressed the actual occurrence of sexual harassment and the recipients' decisions to label them acts of sexual harassment. They noted that service sector workers, including airline attendants and servers in trendy restaurants, tend to work

in highly sexualized environments, making it difficult to label certain behaviors as sexual harassment. Those involved must make a distinction between illicit and "legitimate" forms of sexuality at work which is highly influenced by workplace culture and the social content of the interaction.

Four of the 18 waitpeople reported having been harassed by the restaurant manager or owner. Several other waitpeople reported that they had witnessed a coworker being harassed by a superior. These waitpeople agreed that the same behavior by a coworker was inappropriate when exhibited by a manager or owner because the waitperson felt that the comment may imply a sexual expectation by the superior as a condition of keeping the job. Two of the women also reported feeling sexually harassed by customers whom they perceived as having power over them (Giuffre & Williams, 1994). Customers have been identified as having a similar economic power over waitpeople as do superiors because the job is dependent on repeat patronage. The customers also control the tip (Crull, 1987). Consistent with Collins and Boldgitt (1981), these reports suggest that socio-sexual behaviors are perceived as more sexually harassing by a superior than by a coworker.

Giuffre and Williams (1994) also examined the effect of race on the labeling of sexual harassment. In the restaurants where the respondents worked, Latinos worked as kitchen cooks and bus personnel while waitpeople were predominately white. Five of the seven white women reported experiencing sexual harassment, though not from fellow waitpeople. If a fellow waitperson touched one of the women, she reported it as "just what we do." The waitresses commented that the waitpeople joke about sex and constantly touch each other; however, the women consider this behavior inappropriate from the kitchen staff. These waitresses further explained that they have a "mutual understanding" with the white men. Giuffre and Williams (1994) identified this as reciprocity and the possibility of intimacy. At the same time, it appears that the women did not consider it possible to have a relationship with anyone from the kitchen.

It is not clear, however, if the white women viewed the kitchen help as more harassing than the white waitpeople because of race or because of their job status. It is possible that waitpeople view the kitchen staff with power over them because they control the outcome of the meals. The waitpeople receive tips based on quick service and appealing food; therefore, the cooks can control a

portion of the waitpeople's income through tips by preparing bad food (Giuffre & Williams, 1994). However, it may be that waitpeople view cooks in moderately priced restaurants, where these respondents worked, as lower status than they are. This would suggest that the waitresses viewed the kitchen staff as undesirable social partners much the same way the flight attendants viewed the airline cleaners.

In conclusion, if the initiator of a socio-sexual behavior has a higher job status relative to the recipient, observers tend to consider this behavior as more sexually harassing than if the initiator has an equal or lower job status relative to the recipient. Supervisors are held to a higher standard of behavior than are their subordinates because a recipient may view the same socio-sexual comment as threatening from a supervisor, but familiar from a coworker (Collins & Blodgett, 1981). However, an initiator in a lower status job may be viewed as an undesirable social partner. Therefore, observers may interpret socio-sexual behavior from a lower status worker as harassing if the recipient appears offended by his attention (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982). Lastly, it should be noted that the sample size of Giuffre and Williams (1994) is very small and, therefore,

lacks statistical power. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that race may play a distinctive role in the attribution of sexual harassment.

The Effect of Race and Gender Stereotyping on the Perception of Sexual Harassment

There is ample research to support the effects of job status on the attribution of sexual harassment; however, there is no direct evidence to support the influence of race stereotyping on the attribution of sexual harassment. There has been a paucity of psychological literature concerning beliefs about black sexuality in particular. Instead, support for black sexuality stereotypes has been autobiographical and anecdotal in nature. Racism has stemmed from a mythical, yet pervasive, belief in the superiority of the white race, thus leaving blacks viewed as animalistic and primitive, and, therefore, more sexual than whites (Davis & Cross, 1979). The conception of black male sexuality may serve as a secondary symbol of manhood because the primary sign of masculinity, a high status job, has been unobtainable (Vontress, 1971). A common belief among whites is that black men are sexually endowed and more sexually potent than white men (Davis & Cross, 1979). Blacks are more liberal, accepting, and open about sex than whites (Weinberg & Williams, 1978).

If black men are believed to lack a civilized internalization of control over sexual impulses, then this belief may further sustain the perception of black male sexuality which in turn may support his inferior status in society (Davis & Cross, 1979).

Staples (1978) also discussed the association of black men with violence. Although many black youths may be socialized and exposed to violence in their environments, it seems to serve as a means of status-conferral for those in the underclass who lack other avenues to express their masculinity (Staples, 1978). This aggression is similar to that of airplane cleaners (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982) who also defended their masculinity as a result of peer pressure because of a lack of social power. Furthermore, the association of black men and violence may also be supported by the racial biases that influence domestic violence culpability attributions. The general public believes that there is a pervasiveness of violence within the black culture and families and that black women are more accustomed to violence than are white women (Edwards, 1989; Coley & Beckett, 1988).

At the same time, wife battering by white men is considered more serious, though more acceptable, than by

black men (Pierce & Harris, 1993). It is likely, then, that once a black man establishes himself as a member of the working class, the general public views him more as an individual and less as a representative of his culture and associates him less with violence. However, there is no indication that the perception of the black man as a sexual predator is also altered. Therefore, the stereotype of the sexual prowess of black men may continue to define them as members of their race.

Regarding the work environment, Lewis (1977) reported that most black men and women have been forced to work at menial and ill-paying jobs. The Statistical Record of Black America (1997) reported there were 58,023,000 white men employed in 1995. Approximately 29% of them were employed in a managerial or professional specialty whereas approximately 20% were employed as machine operators, fabricators or laborers. In comparison, 6,456,000 black men were employed in 1995. Approximately 20% of them were employed in a managerial or professional specialty whereas approximately 30% were employed as machine operators, fabricators or laborers. These percentages confirm that positions of authority and prestige have been occupied mainly by white men which, in turn, reflect a perceived higher social status based on their race (Lewis, 1977),

supporting that black men are perceived in a lower social status than white men based on their race.

In the attribution of sexual harassment, therefore, it is more likely that white men would be perceived as more sexually harassing than would black men based on their perceived higher social status and the assumption that white men are in higher job positions than are black men. It would be more likely that the same socio-sexual behaviors exhibited by black men would be seen as more consistent with their sexual nature and more flirtatious than as an expression of power and, therefore, less threatening than by white men.

Bayton, McAlister, and Hamer (1956) systematically varied both race and class to investigate race by class stereotypes. They found that lower-class status accounted for negative stereotypes of blacks and upper-class status accounted for the positive stereotypes of whites. They concluded that previous race stereotypes were possibly race-by-class stereotypes determined by social class status that observers attributed to each race. They further proposed that status attributes do not appear in isolation in the real world because individuals occupy more than one status position, for example, gender and race, at any given time. It may be that research

participants cannot imagine a member of a race without attributing a gender, age, or social status to the stimulus person (Landrine, 1985). Sex-role stereotypes were found to differ significantly by race. White men and women were attributed more traditional sex-role stereotypes than were blacks (Bayton & Muldrow, 1968).

In addition to Bayton and Muldrow's (1968) findings that sex-role stereotypes differ between race, Landrine (1985) examined the ratings of 44 participants on black and white women stereotypes and low and middle class women on 23 adjectives. Black women were viewed as dirty, hostile, and superstitious whereas white women were viewed as competent, dependent, emotional, intelligent, passive, talkative, vain, and warm. Lower-class women were also viewed as hostile and superstitious whereas middle-class women were viewed as competent, intelligent, vain, and warm. Although the sample size of this study is very small and, therefore, lacks statistical power, these results suggest that women are stereotyped differently based on their race and their assumed social status, with white women viewed more traditionally and less negatively than black women.

Females have generally deferred to male authority both in the home and in society (Millet, 1970), though

there is a general belief that black females hold a more egalitarian position relative to black men, especially within the family (Bernard, 1966). The low social status of black men has prevented them from suppressing black women in the same manner in which white men have dominated white women (Staples, 1978). Instead, there is an interdependency between black men and women to financially support their family. Black women are, thus, described as more self-sufficient, as well as more aggressive, than white women. Accordingly, female black children are socialized to doubt the reliability, trustworthiness, and goodness of men in general (Rainwater, 1970). Black women may act independently of men if they perceive them as unreliable. The general public may then perceive black women as self-reliant (Turner & Turner, 1974).

In addition to the perception of black women as "strong" is the depiction of her as highly sexualized and, therefore, responsible for her own exploitation (Young, 1989). Mapp (1982) described the stereotype of black women in films as a "sex object." He distinguished between the seductress who is in command of the situation at all times and the sex object who is used and abused without rationale by white and black males in films. This portrayal also suggests that black women are easily

accessible and even yearn for interracial romantic alliances at the price of being nothing more than a dedicated mistress. Even though white women have been portrayed in similar roles, they have been seen in numerous positive portrayals as well (Mapp, 1982).

It appears that there are distinct sex-by-race stereotypes with white men as socially dominant over black men and women. White women are seen as dependent on men and passive in society. Black men are seen as inferior to white men though equal to black women. Both black men and women are seen as highly sexualized compared to whites. Finally, black women are seen as hostile and self-reliant. However, it is important to note that these views reflect traditional racial stereotypes. As workplace diversity increases, the historical stereotypes ascribed to these individuals by race and gender may be less relevant which suggests that the perceptions of black men and women are slowly adapting to their new roles.

One approach that may account for race perceptions of sexual harassment is tokenism. Kanter (1977) proposed a theory of tokenism in which tokens are members of a subgroup composing less than 15% of the whole work group which she refers to as a "numeric skewness". This status is generally attributed to women. Tokens typically

receive heightened attention or visibility. They, then, not only feel pressure to perform beyond expectations of their male counterparts, but they also perceive that their differences from their male peers are exaggerated. This perception, in turn, leads them to feel isolated from informal social and professional networks and ultimately to feel encapsulated into gender-stereotyped roles (Kanter, 1977). This gender status appears to be a negative effect for token women. On the other hand, the heightened attention and visibility of token men seem to work to their advantage (Yoder & Sinnett, 1985). Yoder (1991) believed another factor influencing token status is occupation appropriateness defined by a normative aspect of what is or is not appropriate work for men and women and the ratio of women to men workers.

Yoder (1991) also discussed the effect of the increasing number of women in white male dominated occupations. Men in these occupations tend to feel threatened by the intrusion of women because, in the past, pay and prestige had been associated with a higher number of men employed in these positions. Men are, therefore, concerned that this influx will lessen the prestige of their occupation. Ott (1989) compared skewed (less than 15% female) and tilted (between 15 and 35% female) work

groups. Token women from skewed work groups reported more negative consequences such as greater visibility, more social isolation, greater role encapsulation and more sexual harassment than did women in tilted groups.

Therefore, it appears that men also react to the growing level of lower status minorities with heightened levels of discriminatory behavior in an attempt to limit minority power gains. Specifically, higher status men create negative consequences in the form of sexual harassment, wage inequities, and blocked mobility to channel women into less prestigious subspecialties while protecting their "territory" from intrusion (Yoder, 1991).

Additional research on token status reveals that minority women, in particular black women, experience more incidents of sexual harassment than do white women. Black women may be the target of sexual harassment more often than white women because of their vulnerability in the workplace (Mackinnon, 1979). Specifically, women who have a visible status characteristic, such as race, are more likely to be the target of harassment because they are a member of a distinct minority. This visible status characteristic can then be used to further reinforce gender and race stratification (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982). The sex-object stereotype of black women (Mapp, 1982) and

the belief that a victim of aggression must have done something to deserve it (Hemming, 1985) may add to black women's vulnerability in the workplace.

Mansfield, Koch, Henderson, Vicary, Cohn and Young (1991) interviewed 151 female city transit workers and 71 skilled tradeswomen, two traditionally male occupations. In both job categories, black women experienced at least one form of discrimination more frequently than did white women. The researchers also reported that tradeswomen in general experience more encounters of sexual harassment than do women transit workers. They attribute this to the smaller proportion of tradeswomen than women transit workers. They suggest that as more women enter a traditionally male dominated occupation, the increased number of women slowly breaks down the gender barrier creating a less hostile environment. Therefore, if black women remain in a smaller proportion to white women in these jobs, it is expected that black women will continue to be more sexually harassed than white women.

Fain and Anderton (1987) reviewed questionnaires developed by the United States Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies (1981) which were administered to federal employees. Seven types of sexual harassment behaviors, roughly ranked by severity, were examined:

assault, favors, touch, gestures, calls, dates and jokes. Individuals who responded to the questionnaire indicated relationships between minority status and pressure for sexual favors, gestures, and dates were statistically significant. Minority women were more likely to feel sexually harassed by these behaviors than were white women. Consistent with Yoder (1991), these results further support that a perceived ethnic social status has an effect within the organization.

Following Fain and Anderton (1987), Niebuhr and Boyles (1991) examined data developed by the Defense Manpower Data Center and administered to approximately 20,400 active military personnel. The researchers considered possible interactions between racial categories and variables other than type of harassment. They based their study on this interaction aspect using rank status, gender pioneer status (positions dominated by males), marital status, and harasser-target racial group status to examine differences in victim power or status.

Niebuhr and Boyles (1991) found that white female officers reported more sexual harassment than did minority female officers. However, minority officer and enlisted women were more likely to be harassed by a male from a different race than were white females, though this may be

due to the overall larger white male officer population in the military. In contrast, minority female gender pioneers were more sexually harassed than were white female gender pioneers. Equally, unmarried minority women were more sexually harassed than were unmarried white women. It appears that status of the harasser and target is broadly defined at work and can include (but not be limited to) racial, job type, gender, and marital status. Research has supported that minority women, specifically black women, are more likely to be sexually harassed than are white women; nevertheless, to date, no research has been reported on the perceptions of sexual harassment based on a target's race.

In summary, higher social status and higher level positions in the workplace have been attributed more to white men than to black men. If black men are considered more sexual by nature, then a more subtle form of sexual advance, such as a comment, may be considered part of their nature. However, if a sexual advance is more overt, such as touching, it may be seen as more consistent with domestic violence myths and, therefore, more unacceptable from a black man than from a white man. Additionally, white women are stereotyped as passive and dependent on men whereas black women are stereotyped as hostile, self-

reliant, and sexual. In the attribution of sexual harassment, observers seem to consider women in stereotypic lower-status work-related roles consistent with their racial status. White women, therefore, may be seen as less likely to defend themselves compared to black women in incidents of sexual harassment.

However, when women are in a token role at work (Kanter, 1977), specifically in a higher status work role and, therefore, in a nonstereotypic position, the stereotypic lower-status role may no longer apply. According to token theory as discussed by Yoder (1991), black women may be perceived as the target of sexual harassment because they are attributed token status for both race and gender, making them a double token in the workplace. Higher status black women may be perceived as a greater threat in the workplace than both higher status white women and lower status women regardless of race and suffer more sexual harassment as a form of race discrimination as well.

In a study of the effects of race of harasser and target on perceptions of sexual harassment, Marriott (1993) examined the perceptions of 288 non-black participants in interpreting a sexually ambiguous comment between a man and woman at work, varying the race and job

status of the initiator relative to the target. Race was depicted in photographs followed by a written scenario. The initiator was male and the target was female. The status of the initiator was either lower (custodian), equal (department manager) or higher (Director of Research and Production) status relative to the target. Twelve versions of the scenario were produced. Each race level was combined with one of the three status levels.

The results indicated that the white initiator was seen as more sexually harassing than the black initiator and that the black initiator was seen as more friendly than the white initiator, regardless of job status. Observers also attributed sexual harassment toward the target based not only on her race but on her job status as well. A high status black woman and a low status white woman were seen as more harassed than a high status white woman and a low status black woman. These results are consistent with the race stereotypes of black men as sexual and white men as powerful regardless of their job status. If high status men are seen as more threatening but low status men are seen as less socially desirable, then the effects of job status may be secondary to the effects of race. These results also support that women are more likely to be perceived in terms of their gender

stereotype (Landrine, 1985) in lower status jobs, specifically, that white women in lower status jobs are perceived as more sexually harassed than are black women. However, as women enter high status positions, they appear to be viewed consistently with token theory (Kanter, 1977), specifically, that black women in high status positions are perceived as double tokens and, therefore, more sexually harassed than white women.

The present study was based on previous research by Marriott (1993), with variations of the job status. The low status job was changed to a mail clerk instead of a custodian and the high status job to a department manager instead of Director of Research and Production. The equal status job was omitted. The same ambiguous comment was used in similar scenarios to those used by Marriott (1993).

Predictions for the Ambiguous Condition

1. Women will interpret the situation as more sexually harassing than will men.
2. Based on race as a status cue, white men will be perceived as more harassing than will black men.
3. High status men will be perceived as more harassing than will low status men.

Predictions for Specific Contrasts

4. The effect of status will depend on the initiator's race.

4a. High status white men will be perceived as more sexually harassing than will low status white men.

4b. There will be no significant difference between black high status men and black low status men.

5. The attribution of sexual harassment will be influenced by the target's race.

5a. White low status women will be perceived as more harassed than will black low status women.

5b. Black high status women will be perceived as more harassed than will white high status women.

Predictions for the Explicit Condition Versus the Ambiguous Condition

6. Women will perceive the explicit situation as more sexually harassing than will men.

7. The explicit situation will be perceived as more harassing than will the situation involving an ambiguous comment alone.

8. The black high status harasser will be perceived as more harassing than will the white high status harasser when the explicit situation involves a white target.

METHOD

Respondents

The sample consisted of 267 female (67%) and 134 male (33%) community college students recruited from San Bernardino Valley College. The respondents were enrolled in freshmen level Speech, English and Psychology classes.

Participants were between the ages of 18 and 58 with 50% falling in the 18-22 range with a mean age of 25.88 years ($SD = 8.9$). There were 78 African American/black (20%), 29 Asian or Pacific Islander (7%), 140 Caucasian/European American (34%), 137 Hispanic or Mexican American (34%), and 3 American Indian respondents (1%). Fourteen individuals (4%) reported their ethnicity as other than one of those listed or refrained from responding. Consistent with the fact that the sample was comprised of college students, 58% of the participants earned a yearly income of under \$10,000 and 42% reported 1-4 years of work experience. Thirty percent of the respondents had previously participated in a workshop or seminar on sexual harassment and 70% had not.

Independent Variables

Three independent variables were manipulated in a scenario describing an ambiguous act that could be interpreted as sexual harassment. The first manipulated

variable was race of the initiator. In one level, the initiator was black; in the other level, the initiator was white. Both were men. The second variable was race of the target. In one level, the target was black; in the other level, the target was white. Both were women. Race was depicted with two photographs, one of the harasser and the other of the target. Race was combined as follows: black initiator-black target, black initiator-white target, white initiator-white target, white initiator-black target. The third manipulated variable was status of the initiator relative to the target; the initiator was either of a lower or higher job status relative to the target. The higher status position was a department manager in charge of 176 employees. The lower status position was a mail clerk for the corporation.

The scenario for high job status initiator and ambiguous comment follows.

Sharon and Mr. Johnson work for the same corporation.

Mr. Johnson is the director of a department in charge of 176 employees. As part of his monthly routine, he makes rounds to his department managers to inquire about the status of their programs.

One day during his rounds, Mr. Johnson is standing alone in the hallway reviewing a file one of his managers

has just given him. One of the firm's mail clerks, Sharon, is in the hallway delivering mail. As she passes him from behind, he looks up from the file. Sharon says, "Oh, hi Mr. Johnson." He grins and responds, "You're looking good today, deliciously good."

The scenario for low job status initiator and ambiguous comment follows.

Ms. Johnson and Mike work for the same corporation.

Ms. Johnson is the director of a department in charge of 176 employees. As part of her monthly routine, she makes rounds to her department managers to inquire about the status of their programs.

One day during her rounds, Ms. Johnson is standing alone in the hallway reviewing a file one of her managers has just given her.

One of the firm's mail clerks, Mike, is in the hallway delivering mail. As he passes her from behind, he stops briefly. She looks up from the file and says, "Oh, hi Mike." He grins and responds, "You're looking good today, deliciously good."

Ten versions of the scenario were produced. In the first eight conditions, each race level was combined with each status level and the scenario contained a sexually ambiguous comment. The design was a 2 (race of initiator)

x 2 (race of target) x 2 (status of initiator) x 2 (gender of respondent) analysis of covariance with the attractiveness of the target and the initiator as the covariates. Two additional conditions were added to the design in which the harasser was a white high status initiator with a white target and a black high status initiator with a white target. In these conditions, the scenarios were identical to the ambiguous conditions in which the initiator was of a higher status relative to the target, but an explicit gesture was added to the final sentence: "He grins, pats her on the fanny, and responds, "You're looking good today, deliciously good". The design was a 2 (type of situation) x 2 (initiator race) analysis of covariance with attractiveness of the target and the initiator as the covariate.

Dependent Variables

The following two scales were assessed on a 14 item 7 point Likert-type questionnaire with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

1. The Initiator's Behavior Scale - Six items measured observers' perceptions of the initiator's harassing behavior (alpha = .78): the initiator is flattering the target; the initiator is friendly; the initiator is out-of-line; the initiator's behavior is insulting; the

initiator is trying to be nice; the initiator is intimidating the target. Items 1, 2, and 5 were analyzed by reverse scoring.

2. The Perceived Harassment Scale - Five items measured observers' perceptions of the incident as sexually harassing (alpha = .89): this is an example of sexual harassment; the target should file a complaint; the initiator should be fired; the initiator should be reprimanded; this behavior is unacceptable in the workplace.

3. Manipulation Take - A manipulation take item was used to test the respondents' observation of status in the scenario: the initiator has more status than the target. The responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

4. Covariates - Two items served as potential covariates based on participant rating of the attractiveness of two of the four models depicting race: the initiator is attractive; the target is attractive. The responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Procedure

Fifteen classes participated in the study. Students in each class were assigned to one of the ten scenarios, though only those scenarios sharing a similar race

combination were used in any one class to minimize the possibility of an experimenter effect. Classes were assigned scenarios based on a rotational basis. For example, the conditions high status black initiator, black target, ambiguous situation; low status black initiator, black target, ambiguous situation were administered to the first class. Next, the conditions high status black initiator, white target, ambiguous situation; low status black initiator, white target, ambiguous situation; high status white initiator, black target, ambiguous situation; low status white initiator, black target, ambiguous situation; and high status black initiator, white target, explicit situation were administered to the second class. Finally, the conditions high status white initiator, white target, ambiguous situation; low status white initiator, white target, ambiguous situation; and high status white initiator, white target, explicit situation were administered to the third class.

This process was repeated. The first two conditions were again administered to the fourth class, continuing the rotation. Participants were instructed that they were responding to a 14-item questionnaire on a social interaction between a man and woman at work and were asked to provide personal demographic information. The students

were told that their participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and that participation would not affect their course grade.

Participants then read the scenario with pictures attached depicting the race of the initiator and the target. After reading the scenario, they responded to the questionnaire measuring their perception of sexual harassment. After the questionnaires were collected, the students were debriefed on the details of the study. They were given a phone number in order to contact the researcher if they wished to inquire about the results of the study.

RESULTS

The manipulation as measured by, "The initiator has more status than the target," was effective, $F(1, 400) = 357.07, < .001$. The strength of the relationship was $n^2 = .47$. Respondents found that the high status initiator ($M = 4.98, SD = 1.72$), department manager, had more status than did the low status initiator ($M = 2.01, SD = 1.27$), mail clerk.

The attractiveness of the target was not affected by the race of the target, $F(1, 329) = 2.33, p > .05$. Furthermore, the covariate, attractiveness of the target, was not significantly associated with either the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $r(330) = -.00, p > .05$, or with the Perceived Harassment Scale, $r(330) = .01, p > .05$, and was therefore omitted from the analyses as a covariate.

The covariate, attractiveness of the initiator, was rated the same across all of the conditions for the black and white initiators, $F(1, 329) = .750, p > .05$. However, a 3-way interaction approaching significance between the variables of initiator's race, target's race, and initiator's job status was found in relation to the initiator's perceived attractiveness, $F(1, 329) = 2.99, p < .10, n^2 = .04$. The means, as displayed in Table 1,

Table 1

Means for the Interaction of Harasser Status, Harasser Race, and Target Race on the Perceived Attractiveness of the Initiator (n = 331)

<u>Harasser Race</u>	<u>Harasser Status</u>			
	<u>High</u>		<u>Low</u>	
	<u>Target Race</u>		<u>Target Race</u>	
	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
<u>Black</u>				
<u>M</u>	3.55	3.21	2.95	3.62
<u>SD</u>	1.58	1.55	1.39	1.23
<u>White</u>				
<u>M</u>	3.38	3.45	3.15	2.96
<u>SD</u>	1.42	1.60	1.59	1.48

suggest a tendency to see the initiator as less attractive when a high status initiator was black and the target was white than when a high status initiator was black and the target was black. Similarly, the initiator was seen as less attractive when a high status initiator was white and the target was black than when a high status initiator was white and the target was white.

However, the initiator was seen as less attractive when a low status initiator was black and the target was black than when a low status initiator was black and the target was white, as well as when a low status initiator was white and the target was white than when a low status initiator was white and the target was black.

The covariate, attractiveness of the initiator, was significantly associated with the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $r(330) = -.11$, $p < .05$, and with the Perceived Harassment Scale, $r(330) = -.12$, $p < .05$. The more harassing an initiator was found, the less attractive he was rated.

A significant correlation between the Initiator's Behavior Scale and the Perceived Harassment Scale, $r(330) = .70$, $p < .05$, was found, suggesting that both scales were measuring overlapping perceptions.

Overview of the Analyses

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, involving the ambiguous conditions, were tested using a 2 (initiator race) x 2 (target race) x 2 (job status) x 2 (gender of respondents) between subjects analysis of covariance with attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate for both the Initiator's Behavior Scale and the Perceived Harassment Scale. Additional interactions from the 3-way analyses of initiator's race, target race, and job status are presented.

Following the 3-way interactions, specific contrasts are presented to test hypotheses 4 and 5. Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 involved the explicit situation, either itself or in combination with the ambiguous situation as an independent variable. Finally, a factor analysis was tested on the 11 dependent variable items.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1, "Women will interpret the ambiguous situation as more harassing than will men," was supported. A significant main effect was found for the variable gender of respondents, $F(1, 313) = 22.70, p < .001$ on the Initiator's Behavior Scale. The strength of the relationship was $n^2 = .07$. Women ($M = 5.12, SD = 1.20$) perceived the harasser's behavior as more offensive than

did men ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.31$). Additionally, a significant main effect was found for gender of the respondents, $F(1, 313) = 30.80$, $p < .001$ on the Perceived Harassment Scale. The strength of the relationship was $n^2 = .09$. Women ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.24$) perceived the incident as more sexually harassing than did men ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.44$).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2, "White men will be perceived as more harassing than will black men," was not supported, $F(1, 313) = 3.04$, $p > .05$, on the Initiator's Behavior Scale. However, the results approached significance with $p < .10$, $n^2 = .010$, providing nonsignificant support that the behavior of white men ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.23$) was seen as more offensive than that of black men ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.32$). The Perceived Harassment Scale was not supported for Hypothesis 2, $F(1, 313) = .281$, $p < .05$.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3, "High status men will be perceived as more harassing than will low status men," was not supported, $F(1, 313) = 2.07$, $p > .05$ on the Initiator's Behavior Scale. The high status harasser's behavior was not seen as more offensive than that of the low status harasser. However, Hypothesis 3 was supported on the

Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1, 313) = 7.20, p < .01, n^2 = .023$. High status men ($M = 5.02, SD = 1.34$) were perceived as more sexually harassing than were low status men ($M = 4.69, SD = 1.37$).

3-Way Interactions

A 3-way interaction approaching significance between the variables initiator's race, target's race, and initiator's job status, $F(1, 313) = 3.74, p = .054$, was found on the Initiator's Behavior Scale. In order to analyze this interaction, a second analysis was run without the covariate. A significant 3-way interaction between initiator's race, target's race, and initiator's job status was found, $F(1, 314) = 4.30, p < .05$. The strength of the relationship was $n^2 = .014$, an increase from $n^2 = .010$ with the covariate.

The means, as displayed in Table 2, show that the initiator's behavior was seen as more offensive when a high status initiator was black and the target was white than when a high status initiator was black and the target was black. Similarly, the behavior was seen as more offensive when a high status initiator was white and the target was black than when a high status initiator was white and the target was white. Similarly, the behavior was seen as more offensive when a low status initiator was black and the target was black than when a low status initiator was black and the target was white, as well as when a low status initiator was white and the target was black than when a low status initiator was white and the target was white.

Table 2

Means for the Interaction of Harasser Status, Harasser Race, and Target Race on the Initiator's Behavior Scale
(n = 331)

<u>Harasser Race</u>	<u>Harasser Status</u>			
	<u>High</u>		<u>Low</u>	
	<u>Target Race</u>		<u>Target Race</u>	
	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
<u>Black</u>				
<u>M</u>	4.71	4.93	4.78	4.54
<u>SD</u>	1.40	1.22	1.30	1.36
<u>White</u>				
<u>M</u>	5.16	4.98	4.85	5.16
<u>SD</u>	1.34	1.04	1.35	1.22

target was black.

A significant 3-way interaction between the variables initiator's race, target's race, and initiator's job status, $F(1, 313) = 5.80, p < .05$, was found on the Perceived Harassment Scale, $\eta^2 = .018$. The means, as displayed in Table 3, show that the initiator's behavior was seen as more sexually harassing when a high status initiator was black and the target was white than when a high status initiator was black and the target was black. Similarly, the behavior was seen as more sexually harassing when a high status initiator was white and the target was black than when a high status initiator was white and the target was white. However, the behavior was also seen as more sexually harassing when a low status initiator was black and the target was black than when a low status initiator was black and the target was white, as well as when a low status initiator was white and the target was white than when a low status initiator was white and the target was black.

No two means in specific comparisons of either interaction were significantly different from each other. However, the patterns of the means for both the Initiator's Behavior Scale and the Perceived Harassment Scale suggest that high status initiators were seen as

Table 3

Means for the Interaction of Harasser Status, Harasser Race, and Target Race on the Perceived Harassment Scale
(n = 331)

<u>Harasser Race</u>	<u>Harasser Status</u>			
	<u>High</u>		<u>Low</u>	
	<u>Target Race</u>		<u>Target Race</u>	
	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
<u>Black</u>				
<u>M</u>	4.76	5.19	4.78	4.35
<u>SD</u>	1.52	1.15	1.24	1.50
<u>White</u>				
<u>M</u>	5.10	5.04	4.63	4.99
<u>SD</u>	1.39	1.30	1.42	1.28

more sexually harassing when the target was of a different race than when the target was of the same race. However, when the initiator was low status, he was seen as more sexually harassing when the target was of the same race than when the target was of a different race.

Contrasts

Two one-way analyses of covariance with attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate were performed for the variable harasser's job status (high and low) for Hypothesis 4a, "High status white men will be perceived as more sexually harassing than will low status white men". Hypothesis 4a was not supported for the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1, 313) = .15, p > .05$, or for the Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1, 313) = 1.91, p > .05$.

Two one-way analyses of covariance with attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate were performed for the variable harasser's job status (high and low) for Hypothesis 4b, "There will be no significant difference between black high status men and black low status men." Hypothesis 4b was partially supported. No significant difference was found between high status black men and low status black men on the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1, 162) = .718, p > .05$. However, a significant

difference was found on the Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1,162) = 4.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .023$. High status black men ($M = 4.98, SD = 1.36$) were perceived as more sexually harassing than were low status black men ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.39$).

Two one-way analyses of covariance were performed for the variable target race (black and white) for Hypothesis 5a, "White low status women will be perceived as more sexually harassed than will black low status women." Hypothesis 5a was not supported. There was no significant difference between low status white women and low status black women for the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1, 163) = .03, p > .05$, or for the Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1,163) = .84, p > .05$.

Two one-way analyses of covariance were performed for the variable target race (black and white) for Hypothesis 5b, "Black high status women will be perceived as more harassed than will white high status women". Hypothesis 5b was not supported. There was no significant difference between high status black women and high status white women for the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1,163) = .09, p > .05$, or for the Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1,163) = .01, p > .05$.

Explicit Condition Versus Ambiguous Condition

Two 2 (harasser race) x 2 (gender of respondent) analyses of covariance with attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate were performed on responses to the scenarios with an explicit gesture for Hypothesis 6, "Women will perceive the explicit situation as more harassing than will men." Hypothesis 6 was supported for the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1,149) = 6.07, p < .01, n^2 = .036$. Women ($M = 5.81, SD = 1.02$) perceived the behavior of the initiator in the explicit situation as more offensive than did men ($M = 5.1, SD = 1.34$). Additionally, Hypothesis 6 was supported for the Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1,149) = 8.58, p < .01, n^2 = .048$. Women ($M = 6.02, SD = 1.03$) found the explicit situation more sexually harassing than did men ($M = 5.64, SD = 1.49$).

Two 2 (harasser race) x 2 (type of situation) analyses of covariance with attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate were performed for Hypothesis 7, "The explicit situation will be perceived as more harassing than will the situation involving an ambiguous comment alone," and for Hypothesis 8, "The black high status harasser will be perceived as more harassing than will the white high status harasser when the explicit

situation involves a white target." Hypothesis 7 was supported for the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1,149) = 12.53, p < .001, \eta^2 = .074$. Respondents viewed the behavior of the initiator in the explicit situation ($M = 5.57, SD = 1.18$) as more offensive than in the ambiguous comment alone ($M = 4.89, SD = 1.28$). Similarly, Hypothesis 7 was supported for the Perceived Harassment Scale, $F(1,149) = 22.50, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$. Respondents found the explicit situation ($M = 6.0, SD = 1.24$) more sexually harassing than the ambiguous comment alone ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.37$).

Hypothesis 8 was not supported for the Initiator's Behavior Scale, $F(1,152) = .46, p < .05$, or for the Perceived Situation Scale, $F(1,152) = 1.10, p < .05$. Thus, a significant difference was not found between the high status black versus the high status white harasser when the target was white in an explicit situation.

Factor Analysis

The eleven dependent variable items were factor analyzed using oblimin rotation. Two factors emerged, both with eigenvalues greater than 1 and factor loadings with an absolute value greater than .4. The first factor accounted for 50.1% of the variance and consisted of eight items with factor loadings ranging from .52 to .81. All

five items of the Perceived Harassment Scale were included on the first factor: this is an example of sexual harassment; the target should file a complaint; the initiator should be fired; the initiator should be reprimanded; this behavior is unacceptable in the workplace, and three items from the Initiator's Behavior Scale: the initiator is out-of-line; the initiator behavior is insulting; the initiator is intimidating the target.

The second factor accounted for 10.8% of the variance and consisted of the three reversed score items of the Initiator's Behavior Scale. The factor loadings of the 3 items ranged from .71 to .79. The second factor consisted of the following items: the initiator is flattering the target; the initiator is friendly; the initiator is trying to be nice. There was crossloading on factor 2 of 3 additional items that primarily loaded on factor 1: the target should file a complaint; this is an example of sexual harassment; the initiator should be fired, with loadings from .45 to .49.

Analyses of covariance, with attractiveness of the initiator as the covariate, were run on the factor based scales. Similar results were found for the factor based scales as with the a-priori scales for each hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Sexual harassment is a complex social problem. Factors that can add to its complexity are perceived attractiveness of the initiator and target, gender differences in the evaluation of socio-sexual behaviors, severity of harassment, and the status of the initiator relative to the target. Of particular interest in this study was the effect of race on the attribution of sexual harassment.

Gender Differences

The first hypothesis which predicted that women would view the ambiguous situation as more harassing than would men and the sixth hypothesis which predicted that women would view the explicit situation as more harassing than would men were supported. Women evaluated the initiator's behavior as more offensive than did men. Similarly, women perceived the incident, whether ambiguous or explicit, as more harassing than did men.

These results are consistent with data on sexual harassment that show that women are more likely to label a particular behavior as sexually harassing than are men. For example, Gutek et al. (1983) reported that women view ambiguous, but potentially sexual, behaviors as more negative experiences, and therefore, more likely to be

sexually harassing than do men. Furthermore, Saal et al. (1989) support that men are prone to see more sexuality in women's behaviors though women report attempting to create a pleasant social environment by behaving in a warm, friendly and outgoing manner. If men tend to perceive women's friendly behaviors as a sign of sexual interest, then men may aggressively respond to a woman's friendliness which she may, in turn, construe as sexual harassment.

Pryor and Day (1985) found that respondents tend to evaluate an interaction between a man and woman from the perspective of the same gender involved in the interaction. Thus, female respondents would consider the ambiguous comment from the point of view of the target, and male respondents would consider it from the point of view of the initiator. This would support the gender differences in this study. If men imagine themselves making the ambiguous comment, they may view the male initiator's behavior as a more innocuous social interaction which would be well-meaning though perhaps misunderstood. However, if women imagine themselves as being the target of the same comment, they may react less tolerably and feel more compromised.

Explicit Condition Versus Ambiguous Condition

The seventh hypothesis predicting that the explicit situation would be perceived as more harassing than would the situation involving an ambiguous comment alone was supported. In general, respondents view an act involving touch as encroaching on a woman's personal space and less acceptable than sexual comments alone (Gutek et al., 1983). Respondents may be more hesitant to label an ambiguous comment as sexually harassing than an incident involving touch because they tend to make positive assumptions about the interaction when they lack information (Cohen & Gutek, 1985). Respondents would, therefore, be less inclined to attribute negative motives to the initiator. Instead, they may consider an initiator's ambiguous comment as an awkward attempt to express a socio-sexual interest in the target. Respondents may believe they need more information about the outcome, and therefore, excuse the initiator's social ineptness.

Respondents may also feel reluctant to make a judgment of the initiator's behavior if they believe that the incident is an isolated occurrence and, thus, lacking in information (Cohen & Gutek, 1985). Instead, respondents may put the responsibility of accepting or rejecting the initiator's social sexual advance on the

target. Respondents may feel that the ambiguous comment is in poor taste, but that a comment alone is more easily ignored than if the initiator also touches the target. A target of an ambiguous comment may, therefore, be encouraged to overlook the initiator's behavior unless the behavior is repeated.

Job Status of the Initiator Relative to the Target

The third hypothesis predicting that high status men would be perceived as more harassing than would low status men was not supported on the Initiator's Behavior Scale; however, it was supported on the Perceived Harassment Scale. It has been well supported that supervisors are held to higher standards of conduct and found more sexually harassing for the same behavior than are coworkers or subordinates (Collins & Blodgett, 1981; Gutek et al., 1983; Jones, 1985; Tata, 1993).

This is not necessarily inconsistent with the results of this study. The Initiator's Behavior Scale examined respondents' perception of the ambiguous behavior in relation to the job status of the initiator. It may be that respondents did not view the behavior itself as more disturbing from a high or low status initiator. For example, the behavior was not seen as more or less intimidating or insulting from an initiator with higher or

lower status relative to the target.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that the same behavior is viewed as less appropriate from a department manager than from a mail clerk in this study because respondents considered the incident as an example of sexual harassment and agreed that the higher status initiator should be held accountable. Therefore, although the ambiguous comment may not be considered more insulting by a department manager than by a mail clerk, it may be seen as an abuse of power and possibly as creating a compromised work environment.

Consistent with Popovich et al. (1986), it may be that respondents expect a supervisor to maintain a higher level of professionalism with subordinates. It is, in fact, the responsibility of a supervisor to cultivate a safe and comfortable work environment for all employees. Furthermore, high status employees are expected to set an example of acceptable behavior among employees. Therefore, the same ambiguous comment may be tolerated or ignored from a subordinate though viewed as less acceptable and, thus, sexually harassing from a supervisor.

These data are not consistent with Littler-Bishop et al. (1982) who found that employees in lower status

positions relative to the target were considered as more sexually harassing than their higher status counterparts. This, however, may reflect the internal organizational structure of individual work sites. That is, a job status reflects an organization's hiring requirements, pay level, promotional scale and even certain educational achievements. If pilots must meet rigorous requirements for their jobs, though minimal requirements are necessary for airplane cleaners, it would be expected that job status alone reflected a level of social desirability. However, in this study, the position of mail clerk may not be considered as negatively as an airplane cleaner. Though a mail clerk has not achieved the same status as a department manager, it is not inconceivable that a mail clerk can move up in the work status hierarchy which then suggests that a mail clerk may be viewed as more socially desirable than an airplane cleaner. Therefore, in this study, the ambiguous comment was not considered more insulting or out-of-line from a mail clerk because of his lower job status relative to a department manager.

The Effect of Race on the Attribution of Sexual Harassment

In general, the hypotheses examining the effect of race on the attribution of sexual harassment were not supported. Hypothesis 2, predicting that white men would

be perceived as more sexually harassing than would black men, was nonsignificantly supported on the Initiator's Behavior Scale, but was not supported on the Perceived Harassment Scale. It appears that there is a tendency to interpret the same ambiguous comment as more insulting and less flattering or friendly from a white initiator than from a black initiator. Respondents agree that the comment did not warrant a formal complaint against the white initiator compared to the black initiator as creating a sexually harassing incident because the results were not significant on the Perceived Harassment Scale; yet, the results on the Initiator's Behavior Scale suggest that respondents did not tolerate the comment as well by a white initiator as by a black initiator.

This may lend support for antiquated stereotypes which suggest that black men are perceived as more sexual than white men (Davis & Cross, 1979), whereas white men are considered as having a higher social status compared to black men (Lewis, 1977). A sexually ambiguous comment is less acceptable from a white initiator than from a black initiator. Such a comment may be perceived as more in character with a more liberal and open sexual nature as ascribed to black men. However, the same ambiguous comment from a white man may be perceived as too bold and

forward for his traditional social role. Although the behavior of white men was not strongly supported on the Initiator's Behavior Scale as more insulting and less friendly than that of black men, these results show a trend in the perception of respondents to view the behavior of the initiator differently based on race. That is, a sexually ambiguous comment by a black man may be considered less intimidating than by a white man if the black man is not attributed equal status to the white man because of his race.

This premise may be further supported by status effects within black and white initiator conditions. For black initiators, no status difference was found on the Initiator's Behavior Scale; however, contrary to prediction, high status black men were found to be more sexually harassing than were low status black men on the Perceived Harassment Scale. It appears that high status black men are expected to maintain a higher standard of conduct than are low status black men. If black men have historically been associated with menial and ill-paying jobs (Lewis, 1977), then respondents may scrutinize their actions more as black men gain higher status jobs such as department managers.

A sexually ambiguous comment may still be construed

as in-character for black men, but once a black man breaks from his historical second-class role and achieves a position which is recognized in the workplace as a high status position, the same sexually ambiguous comment by a black male department manager is less tolerated than by a black male mail clerk. Instead, the comment may be viewed as an abuse of power by a black department manager.

Surprisingly, with white initiators, status had no effect on either perceptions of initiators' behavior or on judgments of sexual harassment. It appears, therefore, that in the present study, the behavior of white men was not associated with their job status as compared to ratings of black men. If race is a visual status cue, observers may associate white men as being of a similar status to each other and recognize their job status secondarily. Equally, if black men are associated with a lower status relative to white men based on race, a higher job status may create a stronger impact once a black man is recognized in a contradictory role relative to his stereotype.

These data are not consistent with Yoder and Sinnett (1985) who found that the heightened attention and visibility of token men seemed to work in their favor. Although token status is generally attributed to women, it

also refers to nonwhites in white-typed jobs (Kanter, 1977). Thus, a black man in a high status position may feel more pressure to conform to role expectations and feel socially isolated, similar to women. A high status black man may have to prove himself as an appropriate choice for his position at work. The increase in the number of high status black men may threaten the job security and prestige traditionally held by white men. Consequently, respondents may expect a high status black man to conduct himself at work less stereotypically open and liberal about sex, that is, more consistently with the stereotype of white men because a status effect was only significant for black men.

In contrast to the race of the initiator, no main effects were found in this study regarding the race of the target and the attribution of sexual harassment. However, subtle effects that involved the race of the target, as well as the race of the initiator and the job status of the initiator were found. A 3-way interaction with the variables initiator's race, target's race, and initiator's status was found for both the Initiator's Behavior Scale and the Perceived Harassment Scale.

Respondents perceived the behavior of the high status initiator as more offensive when his target was of a

different race. In addition, there was a tendency among respondents to perceive the initiator as less attractive in a 3-way interaction similar to the offensiveness ratings when the covariate was removed. This suggests that the perceived attractiveness of the initiator may have been a by-product of the initiator's perceived offensiveness. If the initiator's behavior was less tolerated, he was also perceived as less attractive. Nonetheless, respondents viewed the incident as more sexually harassing by the high status initiator when his target was of a different race, regardless of his perceived attractiveness.

Respondents may consider the behavior and incident of a high status initiator as an abuse of power. He may be perceived as taking advantage of his work position to put social pressure on a target to accept an interracial interaction that she may not otherwise allow. Respondents may then perceive that the target has been compromised and cannot openly respond to a superior's comment if she is concerned that her response could be interpreted as a rejection based on their racial differences. However, his abuse of power may also be related to race discrimination. The sexually ambiguous comment could be perceived as insincere and demeaning, and thus, a form of harassment.

Conversely, respondents perceived the behavior of the low status initiator as more offensive when his target was of the same race. Again, the results were nonsignificantly supported until the removal of the covariate, attractiveness of the initiator. However, the incident was viewed as more sexually harassing by the low status initiator when his target was of the same race, regardless of his perceived attractiveness.

Where respondents may expect more professionalism and a higher standard of conduct from a high status male, they may also expect a more professional expression of respect towards a high status female. A socio-sexual comment at work does not allow clear boundaries for the female. Though socio-sexual behaviors may or may not be viewed as appropriate between any racial mix, respondents may interpret a sexually ambiguous comment from a male subordinate of the same race as a sign of disrespect. Because women in token positions, such as managers, are highly visible and socially isolated (Kanter, 1977), respondents may expect male subordinates to show social support for a woman of the same race. That is, male subordinates may be expected to be sensitive and helpful to a same-race female superior, or at the very least, to avoid compromising behaviors. This may ultimately become

an issue of race loyalty through support or race betrayal through disrespect.

In summary, the interactions for both the Initiator's Behavior Scale and the Perceived Harassment Scale suggest that race of the initiator alone does not make a difference in the attribution of sexual harassment. However, consistent with Niebur and Boyles (1991) and Fain and Anderton (1987), race is affected by compounding variables. In this study, the effect of race of the initiator was moderated by the initiator's job status and the race of the target.

Comparisons between the Present Study and Previous Research by Marriott (1993)

There were several differences in the results between the present study and the previous study by Marriott (1993) though the design was replicated in the present study. Specifically, the same pictures were used to depict the race of the models as well as similar scenarios describing the same sexually ambiguous comment in the present study. Nonetheless, in the analysis of the previous study, questionnaire items were examined individually. Six of the 14 items were significant. These six items were then used as the basis for the Initiator's Behavior Scale and the Perceived Harassment

Scale analyzed in the present study. Some items omitted in the present study may have inadvertently focused attention on the target's behavior in the study by Marriott (1993). Although these items were not significant in the previous study, their mere presence may have influenced the respondents' ratings.

Additionally, the low status job position was changed from custodian in the previous study to mail clerk in the present study. According to Littler-Bishop et al. (1982), airplane cleaners were found as socially undesirable because their uniforms signaled a low status affiliation with the airlines. Consequently, airplane cleaners were found more sexually harassing than were pilots. To avoid the same confusion of a custodian's social status within a company, the low status position was changed to mail clerk. Furthermore, the pictures used were not congruent with the image of custodian because the male models wore a shirt and tie and the female models wore a dress instead of a uniform commonly associated with a custodian. However, the change from custodian in the previous study to mail clerk in the present study may have produced a different effect.

Marriott (1993) found that job status interacted with the race of the target. Specifically for the targets, a

black department manager was found more sexually harassed than was a white department manager, though a white custodian was found more sexually harassed than was a black custodian. These results were not replicated in the present study suggesting that the type of job as well as the status associated with it may have subtly influenced the perception of sexual harassment. It is important to note, however, that the results of the present study and the previous study by Marriott (1993) do not contradict each other. Instead, the previous study focused on perceptions of both the initiator and target whereas the present study focused on the initiator alone.

Perhaps the most important distinction between the previous and present studies is the procedure used. Two hundred and eighty-eight non-black participants responded to the same questionnaire in one of twelve conditions in the previous study. However, the procedure did not follow a systematic approach. The majority of participants were solicited from San Diego State University (approximately 100 miles south of San Bernardino), though additional participants were solicited from the community who had no affiliation with the university. Additionally, no demographic or background information was recorded for the respondents. As the previous study was a requirement for

an undergraduate Experimental Psychology class, this procedure was allowed. However, in the present study, the procedure to collect data was more carefully supervised and controlled.

Although the results were not replicated from Marriott (1993), the findings from both studies suggest that race complicates the perception of sexual harassment and warrants further examination. Moreover, these influences may be somewhat environmentally biased because participants for both studies were drawn from neighboring communities.

Limitations and Recommendations

The findings of this study support that race influences the attribution of sexual harassment, though these influences are subtle and not easily defined. The interactions suggest the possibility of intraorganizational effects due to an overlapping of effects of race and organizational inequalities. However, the results of this study may not generalize into the workplace. The use of photographs, rather than verbal descriptions, to depict race allowed effective experimental impact which may have decreased the experimental effect by increasing the respondents' attention to the variables for initiator and target race.

Respondents may have implicitly or explicitly controlled race effects when the initiator or target was black in an attempt not to be biased.

This demand characteristic is less likely to occur in the workplace because incidents of sexual harassment are more random, and reactions to them would be more spontaneous. Observers may feel that their opinions would be more anonymous in the workplace or, perhaps, that their judgments would be more meaningful than would their ratings of a similar incident during a research study. The use of a sexually ambiguous comment also may have limited the respondents' reactions to race. It may be necessary to examine the effects of race and job status with a more explicit form of sexual harassment than an ambiguous comment or a mild form of touch. An explicit gesture may prompt reactions similar to those of the domestic violence culpability attributions which might reveal less controlled responses to race effects.

Another limitation of this study was the underrepresentation of black respondents. It may be beneficial to recruit an equal number of participants from each ethnic background to examine variations among groups more extensively. For example, the attractiveness variable functioned as a covariate in this study, but it may be

equally interesting to investigate the effects of attractiveness ratings within each ethnic group. Likewise, it may be important to examine respondents' ratings of additional ethnic groups. Additional data would allow further consideration of the perceptions of race stereotypes and how they may influence individuals' attitudes in the workplace and in the attribution of sexual harassment. Workplace diversity may create opportunities for individuals to interact with different ethnic groups which may not be experienced in social settings. This exposure may help to erase preconceived ideas of others based on race.

Lastly, it may be important to examine how individuals with different organizational backgrounds perceive the sexually ambiguous comment. Terpstra and Baker (1987) found that working women may experience more instances of sexual harassment than female students. Working women, therefore, may become more sensitized and less tolerant of sexually ambiguous harassment behaviors than students. Also, the same sexually ambiguous behaviors between men and women may not be appreciated in all work environments and perceived as sexual harassment in some settings, but not others.

Nevertheless, these results suggest that

organizations may benefit from examining the effects of issues concerning race in the attribution of sexual harassment. The subtle effects of race of the initiator and the target suggest that race is a contextual factor that cannot be isolated from other variables. It is also important to note that effects of race may not generalize from one environment to another which may require further investigation.

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