

Racialized Sexism: Nonverbal Displays of Power in the Workplace are Evaluated as More Masculine When Displayed by White (vs. Black) Women with Negative Implications for their Experience of Sexism and Hiring

Alex Tran, Erin Cooley, Jackie Lisnek,
Jazmin Brown-Iannuzzi

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“Sexism isn't a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. It doesn't happen to black and white women the same way.”

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, 2017





Why body postures in the workplace?

They are ubiquitous.

Why body postures in the workplace?

- ◆ Bodily postures infer
 - ◆ Power
 - ◆ Status
 - ◆ Confidence
 - ◆ Upward mobility

- ◆ But is it true for everyone?





Racialized-Gender Stereotype

- ◇ Gender and race are two of the most salient social categories in human perception.
- ◇ Perceptions of gender or race do not operate in isolation, but instead intersect.
- ◇ Compared to Black women, White women are perceived as
 - ◇ More prototypically “women”
 - ◇ More feminine



Leshin et al., 2022; Schug et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2014

Perception of Power is Gendered and Racialized

- ◇ Stringent gender roles prescribing how men and women “should” behave
 - ◇ Men - Dominant and competitive
 - ◇ Women - Submissive and Communal
- ◇ **Violations** of these racialized gender roles can yield negative social consequences given the persistence of sexism.
- ◇ Power is linked with masculinity
 - ◇ White women displaying high-power poses may elicit backlash for violating gender roles

Putting it together

Stereotypes

- White women:
Feminine, in need of protection
- Black women:
Masculine, Strong,
Powerful, Assertive

Powerful bodily displays

White (vs. Black) women may be perceived as more masculine and less feminine when engaging in high-power poses

Downstream Consequences - Sexism

- ◇ Ambivalent sexism
 - ◇ **Hostile sexism**: antipathy toward women who deviate from traditional and submissive gender roles.
 - ◇ **Benevolent sexism**: praises women who embrace traditional and submissive gender roles.
- ◇ If White (vs. Black) women may be perceived as violating their gender roles to a greater degree when engaging in high-power poses, people may apply to them
 - ◇ Less benevolent sexism
 - ◇ More hostile sexism
- ◇ This may impact hiring desirability.

Study 1

Design

- 2 (woman's race: Black vs. White) x 2 (power: high power vs. low power)
- Within-subject

Participants

- 508 participants from CloudResearch
- Predominantly White women
 - 50% White women
 - 67.5% women
 - 72.2% White or Caucasian,

Measures:

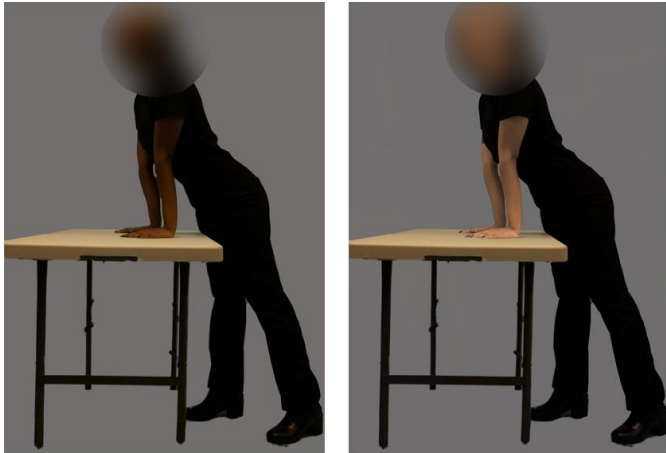
- Bem's (1974) Sex Roles Inventory
 - 4 masculine items
 - 4 feminine items



Low Power



High Power

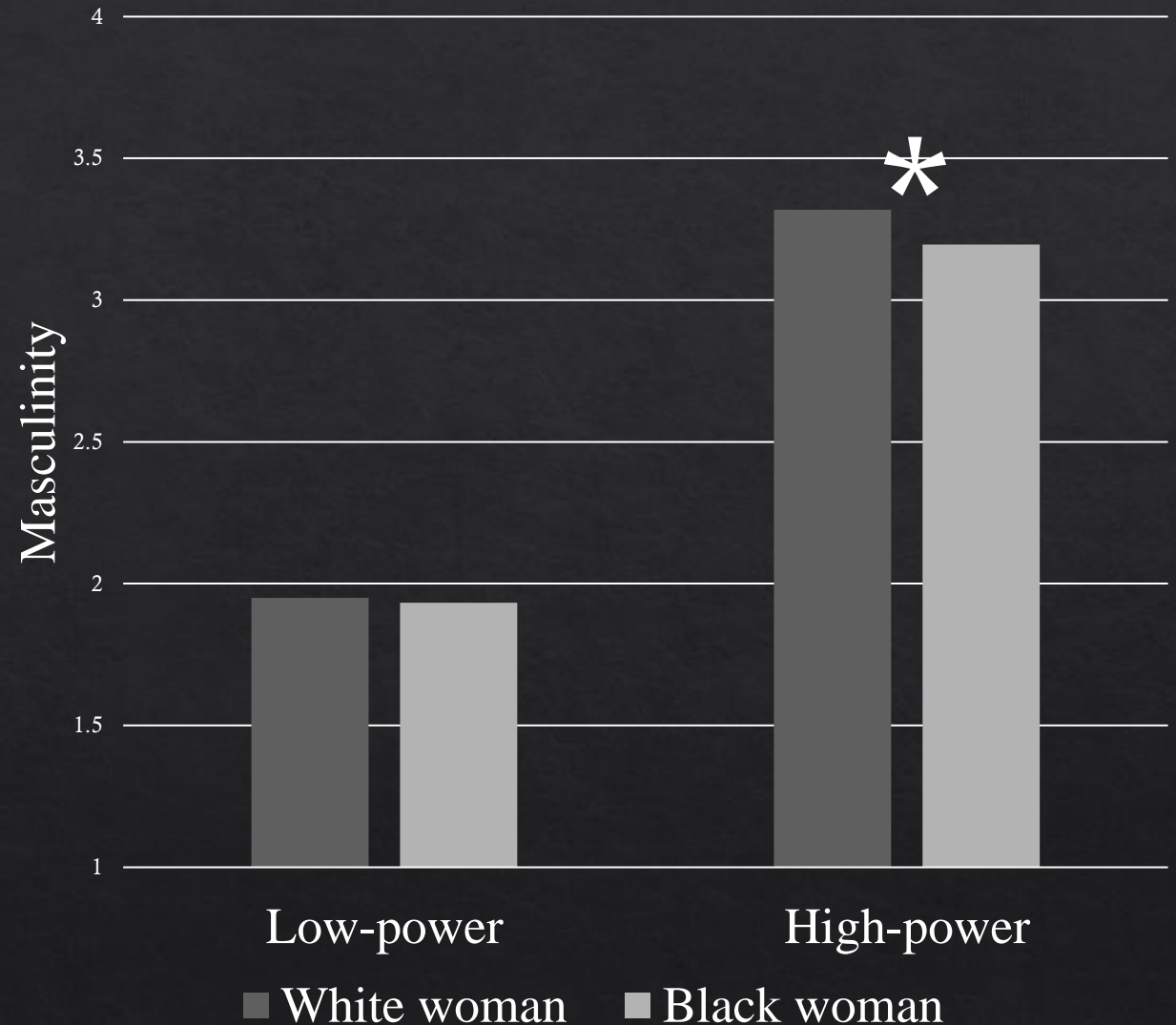


Study 1

Study 1: Results

◆ Perceived masculinity

- ◆ Interaction between race and body pose, $F(1, 507) = 26.88, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .050$.
- ◆ White women in high-power poses were perceived to be significantly more masculine than Black women in those same poses, $p < .001$

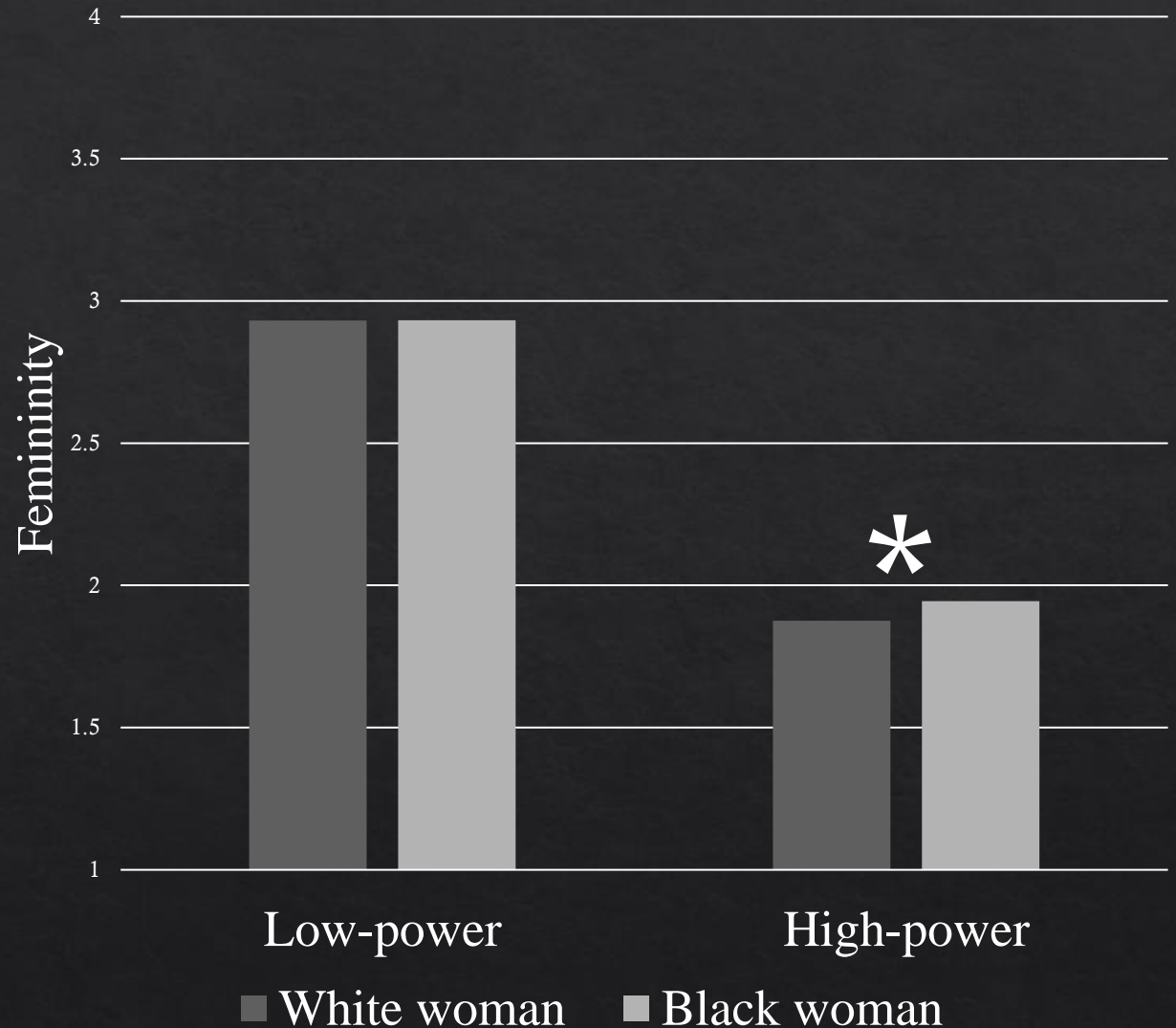


Study 1: Results

◇ Perceived femininity

◇ Interaction between race and body pose, $F(1, 507) = 15.22$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$.

◇ White women in high-power poses were perceived to be significantly less feminine than Black women in those same poses, $p < .001$



Study 1: Discussion

- ◆ White women are perceived as particularly high in masculinity and low in femininity when engaging in high-power poses compared to Black women.

Study 2: Race and Gendered Humans

Design

- 2 (woman's race: Black vs. White) x 2 (power: high power vs. low power)
- Within-subject

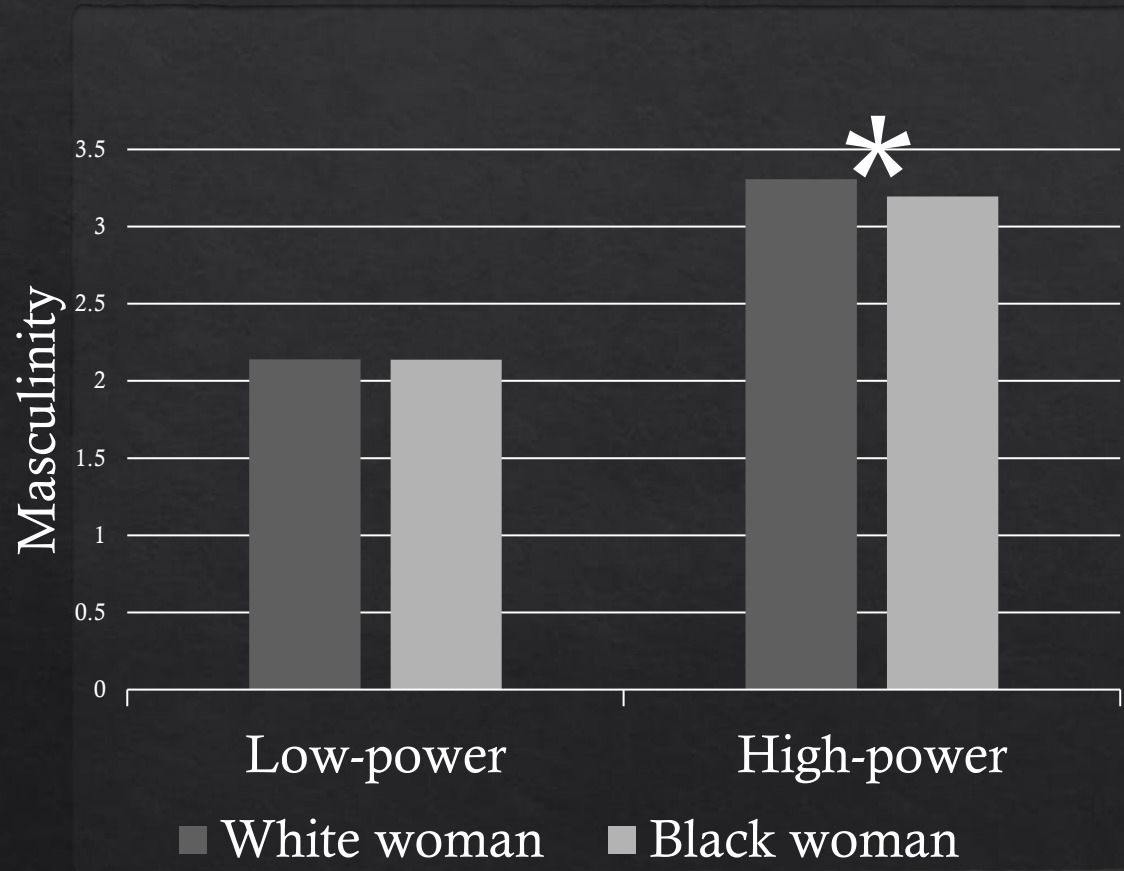
Participants

- 512 participants from CloudResearch
- Predominantly White women
 - 48.05% White women
 - 64.3% women
 - 76% White or Caucasian

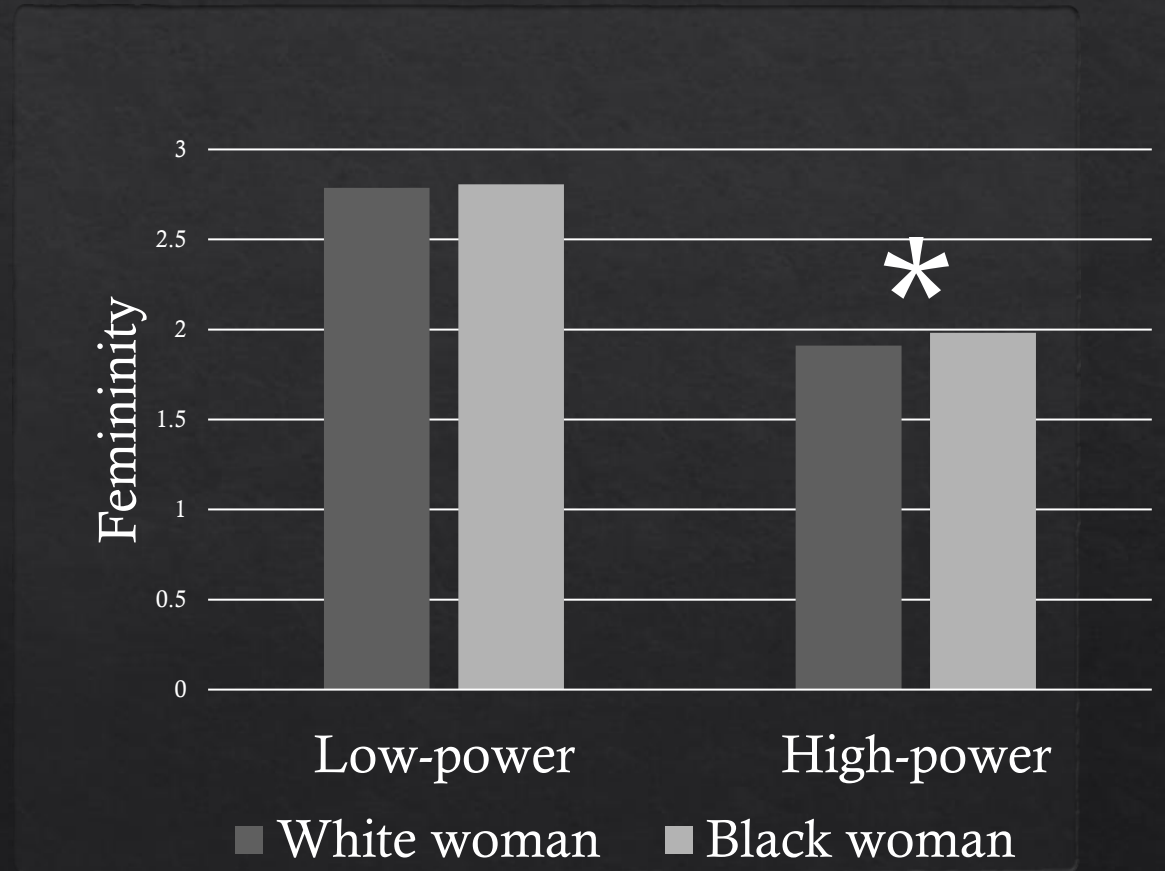
Measures

- Rollero et al. (2014)'s Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)
 - 5 benevolent sexism items
 - Women like [name] should be cherished and protected by men
 - 5 hostile sexism items
 - Women like [name] seek to gain power by getting control over men
- Bem's (1974) Sex Roles Inventory
 - 4 masculine items
 - 4 feminine items
- One slider-scale measuring hiring desirability

Study 2: Results



$F(1, 511) = 32.38, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .060.$



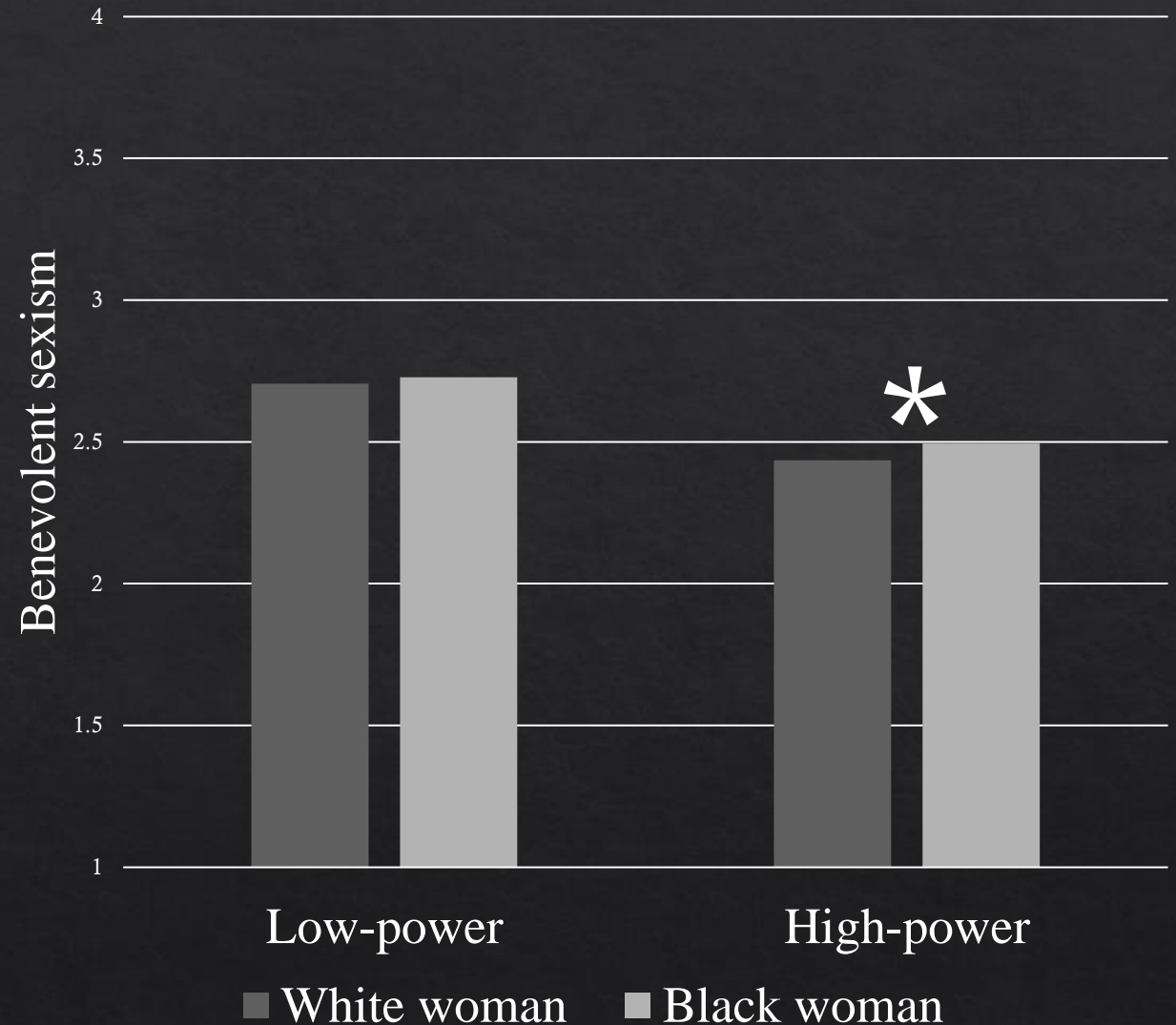
$F(1, 511) = 5.95, p = .015, \eta_p^2 = .012.$

Study 2: Results

◆ Benevolent sexism

◆ Interaction between race and body pose, $F(1, 511) = 5.37, p = .021, \eta_p^2 = .010$

◆ White women in high-power poses experienced less benevolent sexism compared to Black women, $p < .001$

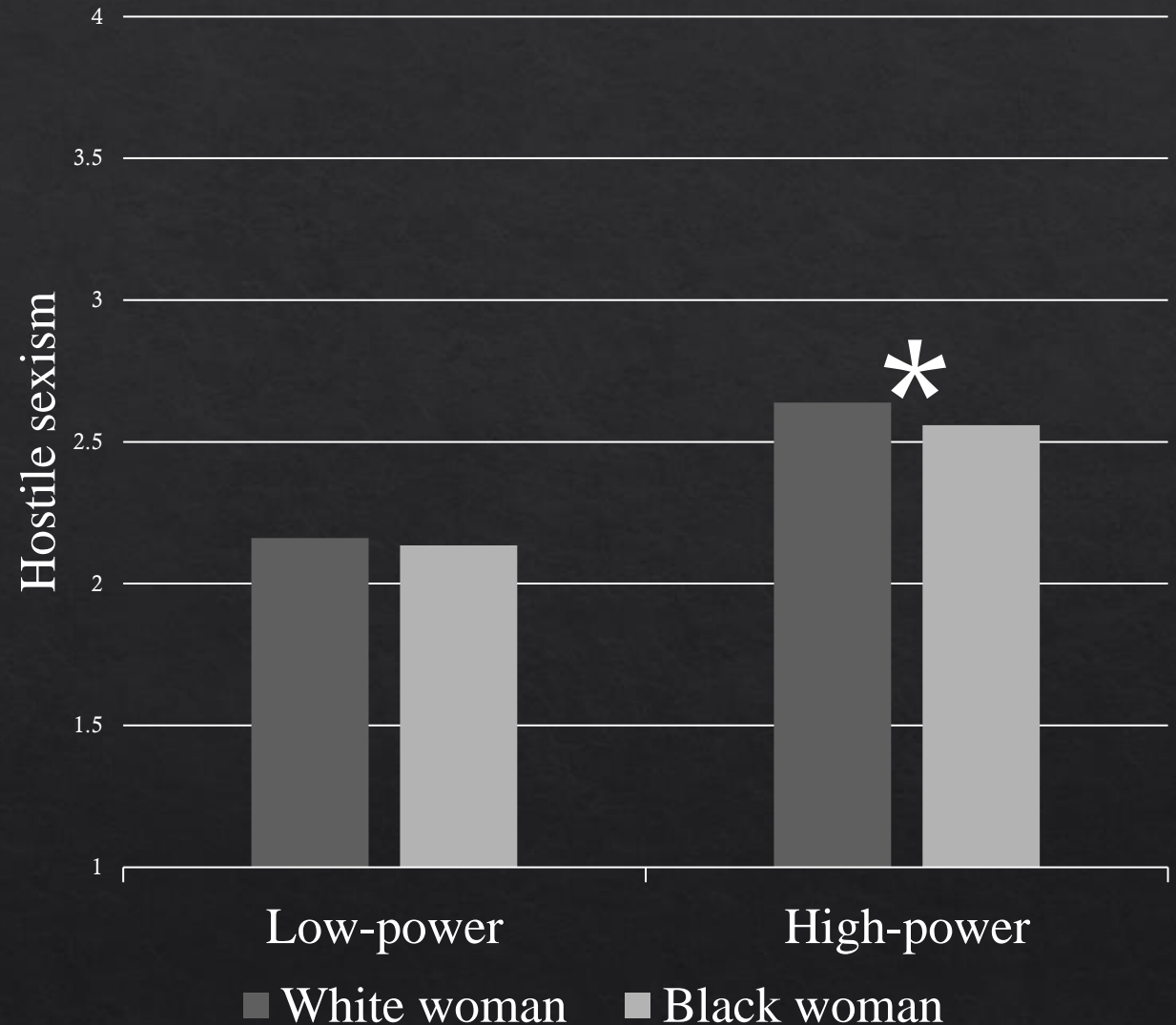


Study 2: Results

◆ Hostile sexism

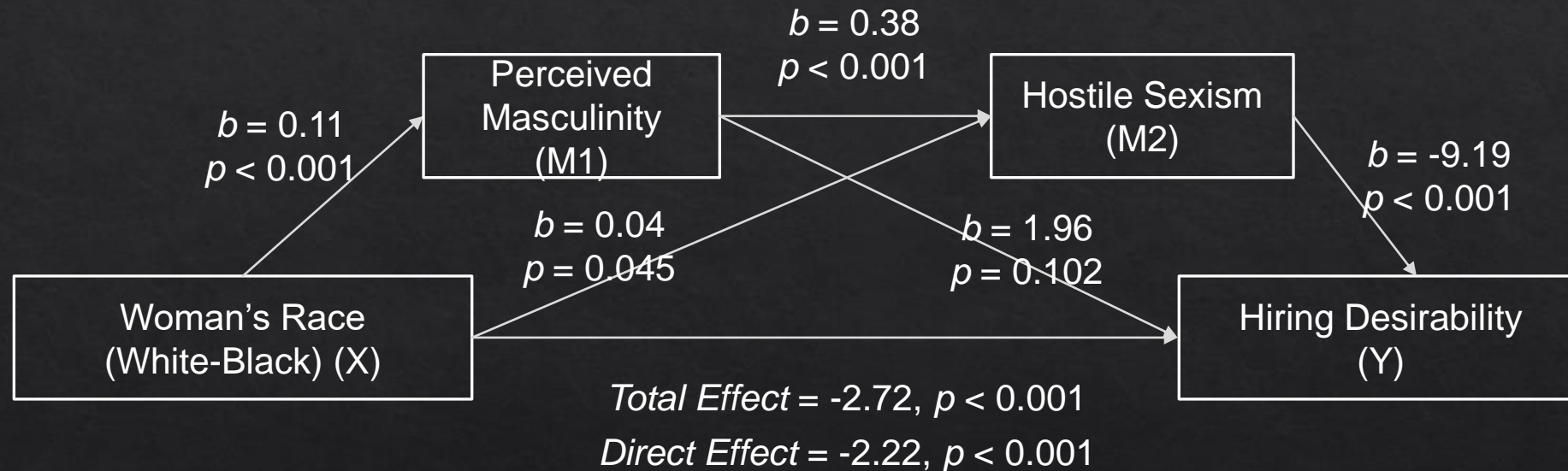
◆ Interaction between race and body pose, $F(1, 511) = 8.43$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .016$

◆ White women in high-power poses experienced more hostile sexism compared to Black women, $p < .001$



Study 2: Results

High Power Poses



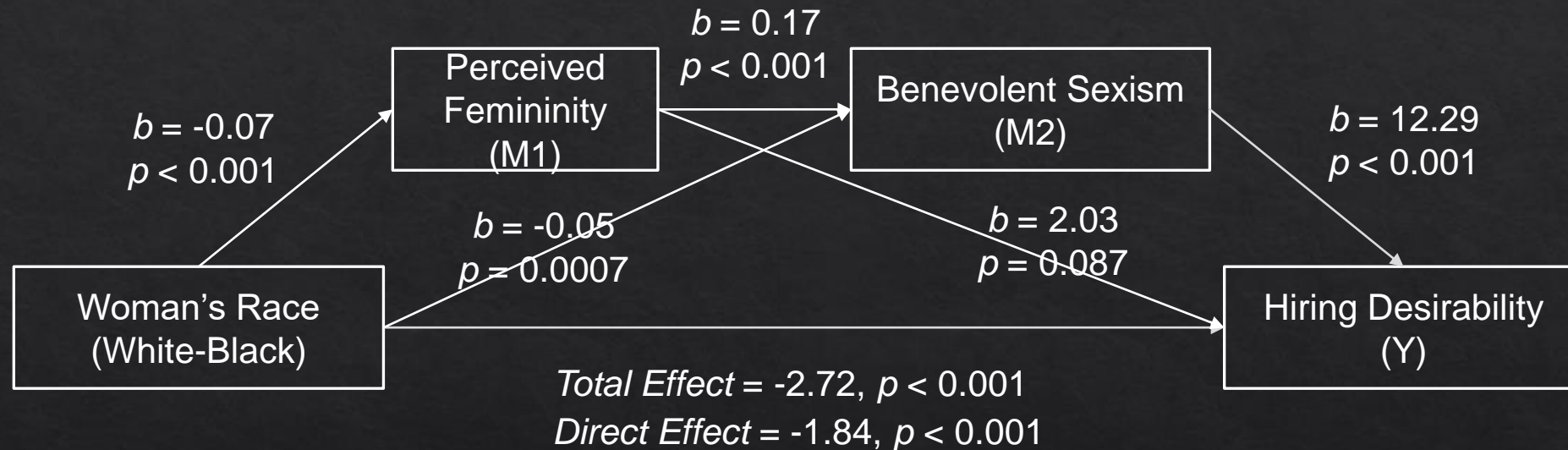
Woman's race → Perceived Masculinity → Hostile Sexism → Hiring: $b = -0.39$, 95% CI [-0.67, -0.17]

Woman's race → Hostile Sexism → Hiring: $b = -0.33$, 95% CI [-0.73, -0.01]

Woman's race → Perceived Masculinity → Hiring: $b = 0.22$, 95% CI [-0.32, 0.70]

Study 2: Results

High Power Poses



Woman's race → Perceived Femininity → Benevolent Sexism → Hiring: $b = -0.15$, 95% CI [-0.39, -0.007]

Woman's race → Benevolent Sexism → Hiring: $b = -0.58$, 95% CI [-1.00, -0.22]

Woman's race → Perceived Femininity → Hiring: $b = -0.15$, 95% CI [-0.47, 0.13]

Discussion

- ◇ Study 1: White women + high-power poses = more masculine and less feminine than Black women
- ◇ Study 2: More hostile and less benevolent sexism
 - ◇ Decreased their likelihood of being hired.

Conclusion

- ◆ Black and White women exerting nonverbal displays connoting power do not experience sexism in the same ways.
- ◆ White women - more prototypical “women”
 - ◆ Heightened perception of masculinity when engaging in high-power bodily displays.
 - ◆ Less desirable in hiring contexts.



Thank you!