Racialized Sexism: Nonverbal Displays of Power in Workplace Settings are Evaluated as More Masculine When Displayed by White (vs. Black) Women With Implications for the Expression of Ambivalent Sexism

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Abstract

We hypothesized that White (vs. Black) women in high- (vs. low-) power poses would be evaluated as particularly masculine and unfeminine due to greater perceived violations of gendered racial stereotypes. As predicted, White (vs. Black) women in high- (but not low-) power poses were evaluated as more masculine and less feminine (Studies 1-3). Moreover, greater perceived masculinity of White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses predicted more hostile sexism; and, lesser perceived femininity of White (vs. Black) women predicted less benevolent sexism. Finally, these associations between masculinity/ hostile sexism and femininity/benevolent sexism serially mediated reduced hiring desirability of White (vs. Black) women (Study 2). Study 3 replicated these serial indirect effects and found that these effects emerged regardless of job status and even when controlling for socially desirable responding. We conclude that gendered racism leads sexism to be expressed toward White and Black women embodying power in distinct ways.

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

(Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2017)

Stereotypes about women emerged from the historical convergence of slavery, patriarchy, and strict gender roles. This history shaped starkly different stereotypes for women based on their racial/ethnic background. Stereotypes about the aggressive and animalistic nature of Black people were used to justify enslaving Black men and women (Plous & Williams, 1995). In contrast, prominent gender stereotypes depicted White women as delicate, morally pure, and needing protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The "strong Black woman" stereotype persists today as a way to reify Black women's purported innate ability to be resilient and powerful, even in the face of racism and trauma (Donovan & West, 2015). Furthermore, recent research finds that White women are stereotyped to be more morally pure and in need of protection than Black women (McMahon & Kahn, 2016).

Thus, Crenshaw's statement that "sexism isn't a one-size-fits-all phenomenon" describes both historical and persistent inequalities at the intersection of racial/ethnic and gender lines.

In the current article, we interrogate the intersection between racism and sexism to explore how nonverbal displays of power in workplace settings influence perceptions of Black and White women. Displays of power are particularly important in the workplace because those who view

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such powerful displays may assume the target person making these displays is powerful, competent, and of higher status (Hall et al., 2005), potentially increasing the likelihood of upward mobility for the target.

Power displays, however, may also influence the expression of sexism. In particular, due to historical forces that shaped stereotypes of White women as fragile/delicate and Black women as strong/powerful, we hypothesize that White women in high-power poses may be particularly likely to be perceived as violating their gender roles, and thus particularly masculine and unfeminine. If so, White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses may experience more hostile and less benevolent sexism in response to these nonverbal displays. As a result, they may be rated as less desirable hires.

Gendered-Race Stereotypes

The impact of the U.S.' history of gendered racism persists today. The well-supported theory of "intersectionality" describes how experiences of gender and race do not operate in isolation, but instead intersect (Crenshaw, 2017; hooks, 1989). Although "intersectionality" was originally theorized to help address the *experiences* of Black women at the intersection of race and gender, social psychologists have extrapolated this theory to help understand the *expression* of prejudice at the intersection of identities (Petsko et al., 2022). From prior social psychological work, we know that the perception of, and stereotypes associated with Black and White women differ. For example, pictures of Black women are more frequently miscategorized as men as compared with miscategorization rates of pictures of Black men, White men, or White women (Goff et al., 2008). Furthermore, White women continue to be perceived as more prototypical "women" (Leshin et al., 2022) and as more feminine than Black women (Schug et al., 2015). Moreover, this gendering of race is not only expressed by adults but also by children (Lei et al., 2020) suggesting that these processes arise early in development and persist over time. Together, these findings reflect that womanhood and femininity are stereotypically linked with being a White woman. Thus, displays of power may be perceived differently when enacted by a White (vs. Black) woman.

Power is Gendered and Racialized

Perceptions of power are tied to leadership and corporate success (Henley, 2012). On average, people who are perceived to be more powerful are superior decision-makers, more creative, and better at sustaining business relationships compared with those perceived to be less powerful (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008). There are different ways people can inform others that they are powerful. These include verbal assertions of one's power, such as by being dominant in conversations. These also include nonverbal displays that are interpreted as powerful, such as initiating firm handshakes or using expansive gestures. Assumptions of power are even

made based on extremely minimal information, such as a momentary bodily pose (Carney et al., 2010).

However, the positivity associated with power displays, even brief nonverbal displays of power, is unlikely to be universal. This is because society has established stringent gender roles prescribing how men and women "should" behave—including whether they should appear dominant and competitive (men) or submissive and communal (women; Eagly, 1987). For example, White women who act in agentic and dominant ways experience lower status and lower salaries than men who behave in the same way, and these effects hold even for White women who work in environments that encourage competition, and for White women who hold high-power positions (i.e., CEO; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). Together, these results suggest that violations of these gendered roles can yield negative social consequences given the persistence of sexism.

Given that power is also linked with masculinity (Bailey et al., 2017), White women displaying high-power poses may elicit backlash for violating gender roles. Indeed, some research has begun to test this question. This work generally finds that White women and men are *explicitly* evaluated similarly when engaging in high-power poses; however, there is some evidence that, on a more automatic or *implicit* measure, people perceive White women in high-power poses as violating expected norms of femininity (Bailey et al., 2020). Such a perception is important because deviating from one's gendered social roles, as reviewed above, can elicit prejudice (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Although these findings begin to address how power may be gendered in ways that are consequential for women who choose to convey power nonverbally, this work is limited by its sole focus on the perception of *White* men and women.

The reviewed research suggests that power displays may lead to backlash for some women. Indeed, recent theory (i.e., the MOSAIC model; Hall et al., 2019) has helped to delineate the ways by which intersectional stereotypes, including gendered racial stereotypes, yield expectations for how people should behave as well as backlash toward those who do not conform. Here, we propose that because White women are stereotypically assumed to be feminine and in need of protection (McMahon & Kahn, 2016), and Black women are stereotypically assumed to be strong and powerful (Donovan & West, 2015), White (vs. Black) women may be perceived as violating their gender roles to a greater degree when engaging in high-power poses (see also Kelley, 1971). As a result, the same high-power pose may seem particularly masculine and unfeminine when portrayed by a White (vs. Black) woman.

Gendered Racial Stereotyping May Impact the Expression of Ambivalent Sexism

Perceptions of femininity and masculinity are important because they may impact the expression of sexism.

Ambivalent sexism theory suggests that sexism is comprised of two complementary ideologies: hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism reflects antipathy for women who deviate from traditional and submissive gender roles. Benevolent sexism praises women who embrace traditional and submissive gender roles. Although these sexist attitudes are traditionally conceptualized as stable beliefs that an individual holds about *all* women, more recent research has investigated the extent to which race/ethnicity may impact the application of these sexist beliefs (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2022; McMahon & Kahn, 2016). For example, research has found that participants are more likely to apply benevolent sexist stereotypes, such as that women are pure, to White (vs. Black) women (McMahon & Kahn, 2016). This suggests that White (vs. Black) women are perceived to be more closely aligned with the feminine principles that underpin the application of benevolent sexism.

Building from these prior findings, we reason that if White women—women who are expected to be feminine—assert a masculinized high-power pose, then they might be perceived as violating their gender roles to a greater degree than Black women in the same pose. As a result, they may be evaluated as particularly masculine and unfeminine. This violation of gendered social roles may then lead perceivers observing White women in high-power poses to express more hostile, and less benevolent, sexism than when observing Black women in the same poses.

The Expression of Ambivalent Sexism May Impact Hiring Desirability

The expression of hostile and benevolent sexism may subsequently impact a wide range of judgments and actions toward women. For example, previous research finds that both hostile and benevolent sexism predict more blame of the victim and less willingness to intervene in a situation in which a Black woman is at risk of sexual assault (Katz et al., 2017). Furthermore, benevolent sexism predicted greater support for equity-related policies that supported hiring women into feminine, but not masculine, positions (Hideg & Ferris, 2016). Extending from this work, we investigate whether the extent to which participants believed hostile and benevolent sexist statements applied to White and Black women would impact participants' reported likelihood of hiring these women. We anticipate that participants who perceive gender role violations by White women conveying power may express more hostile sexism (which is often directed toward women who violate their gender roles) and less benevolent sexism (which is often directed toward women who abide by their gender roles) toward these women. More hostile sexism might then predict a lower likelihood of hiring these women (Masser & Abrams, 2004); likewise, although benevolent sexism has many pernicious

consequences for women, less benevolent sexism may also predict a lower likelihood of hiring these women due to reduced perceptions of warmth/likeability (Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019).

Overview of Present Research

Across a pilot study and three experiments, we evaluated how high- and low-power poses influenced evaluations of Black and White women in a corporate setting. First, a pilot study tested, and found evidence for, our assumption that high-power poses would be perceived as more "masculine" than low-power poses. These pilot data and analyses appear in Supplemental Materials. Next, in Studies 1 and 2, we examined whether White (vs. Black) women engaging in masculinized high- (vs. low-) power poses might be evaluated as more masculine and unfeminine. We further tested whether differences in perceived femininity and masculinity predicted the expression of more hostile sexism and less benevolent sexism, and whether these processes mediated reduced hiring desirability for White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses. Finally, Study 3 replicated racial differences in evaluations of White and Black women in high-power poses and further tested the role of job status and socially desirable responding. We report all conditions, data exclusions, and variables below. Data, syntax, and materials are available via the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/exras/). Study 2 was pre-registered.[1]

Statistical Power

For each study, we recruited 500 participants via CloudResearch. This sample size provided sufficient power to detect a small-to-medium effect size in each study (see Supplemental Materials for *a priori* power analyses). Deviations from the recruited sample size are due to idiosyncrasies of the recruitment platform and are outside the researchers' control.

Study 1

We hypothesized that White women engaging in high-power poses would be perceived as more masculine and less feminine than Black women engaging in the same pose. Because of the centrality of power in the workplace, we examined this hypothesis in a workplace setting.

Method

Participants

Our final sample was 508 participants (67.5% women, 31.3% men, 1.2% another gender identity) who were on average 35.74 years old (*SD* = 10.53). The racial/ethnic makeup of the participants was 72.2% White or Caucasian, 14% Black or
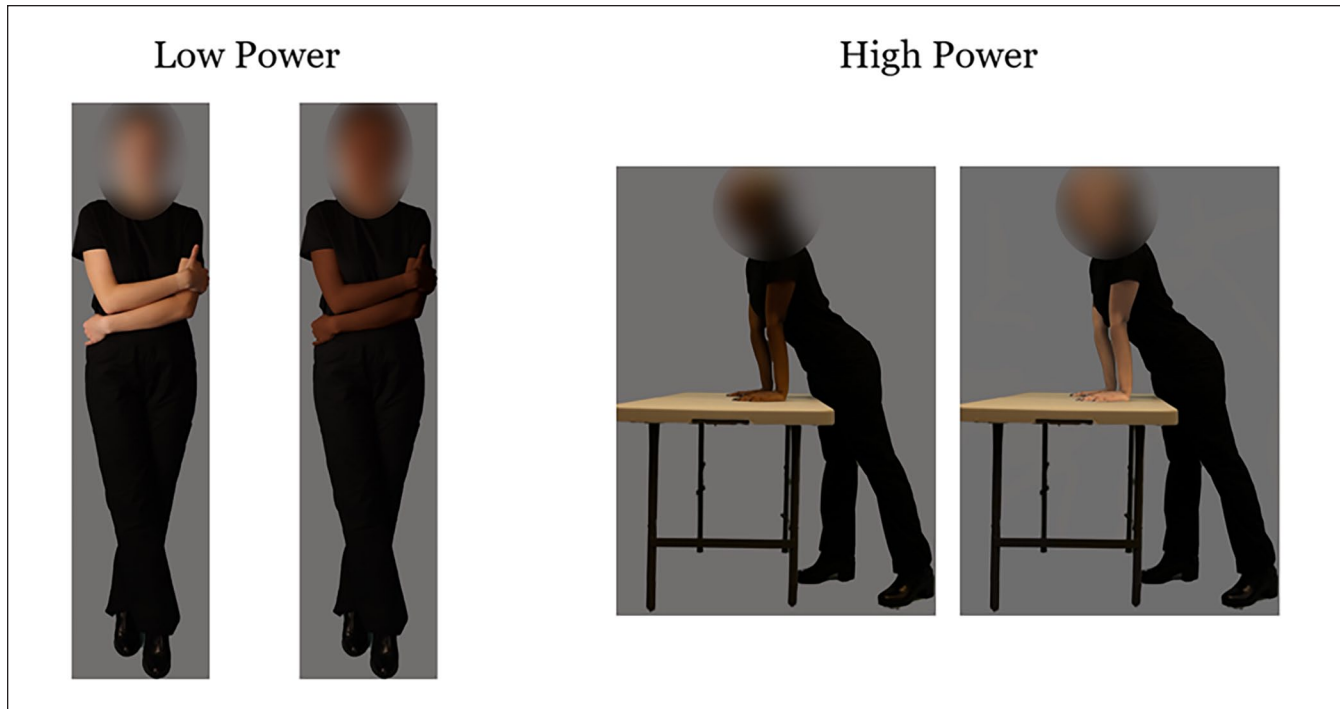
Figure 1. Samples of High and Low Power Poses Depicted by Black and White Women, Study 1.

African American, 1.2% Native American or Pacific Islander, 7.1% Asian, 2.4% Multiracial, and 3.1% another race.

Procedure

After providing informed consent, participants learned that they would see images of people in corporate settings and that we were interested in their evaluations of these people. Participants then saw 8 Black women and 8 White women, half of whom were in high-, and half of whom were in low-, power poses (Carney et al., 2010). Participants were asked to imagine these women were making these poses during a meeting (see Figure 1 for sample stimuli; all stimuli appear at our OSF link; see Supplemental Materials for information on image generation and pre-testing).

Participants were given the following context for each image:

> "This is [name], [age]. During a business meeting, you saw her showing the body posture below."

To enhance our cover story, we paired images with names associated with Black and White women (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). To avoid order effects, we also created 2 stimuli conditions. Within each condition, an image of a woman's face was randomly paired with a race-matching body pose, name, and age. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these stimuli conditions. Thus, all participants saw all 16 pictured women, but the order of these

women and the pose they were making was randomized across conditions.

Participants reported the degree to which they perceived each pictured woman to represent masculine traits: independent, assertive, strong personality, and aggressive; and feminine traits: sensitive, compassionate, fragile, and emotional (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *extremely*; Bem, 1974). We averaged ratings of the masculine traits for each pose type (high- vs. low-power) and pictured race (Black vs. White) such that higher numbers indicated greater perceived masculinity ($\alpha_{\text{Black Women High-Power}}$ = .90; $\alpha_{\text{Black Women Low-Power}}$ = .94; $\alpha_{\text{White Women High-Power}}$ = .89; $\alpha_{\text{White Women Low-Power}}$ = .92). We averaged ratings of the feminine traits for each pose type (high- vs. low-power) and pictured race (Black vs. White) such that higher numbers indicated greater perceived femininity ($\alpha_{\text{Black Women High-Power}}$ = .92; $\alpha_{\text{Black Women Low-Power}}$ = .92; $\alpha_{\text{White Women High-Power}}$ = .92; $\alpha_{\text{White Women Low-Power}}$ = .90).

Results

To examine whether race moderated the effect of power posing on evaluations of Black and White women, we conducted two 2 (woman's race: Black vs. White) × 2 (pose: high-power vs. low-power) repeated-measures analyses of variance (ANOVAs) predicting perceptions of masculinity and femininity. We hypothesized that White women in high-power power poses would be perceived as significantly more masculine and less feminine than Black women in the same poses.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Masculinity Ratings of Black and White women in High- and Low-Power Poses, Study 1.

	Pose			
	Low-power		High-power	
Women's race	M	SD	M	SD
Black women	1.93	0.70	3.20	0.70
White women	1.95	0.68	3.32	0.69

Note. SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Femininity Ratings of Black and White women in High- and Low-Power Poses, Study 1.

	Pose			
	Low-power		High-power	
Women's race	M	SD	M	SD
Black women	2.93	0.73	1.94	0.65
White women	2.93	0.72	1.88	0.65

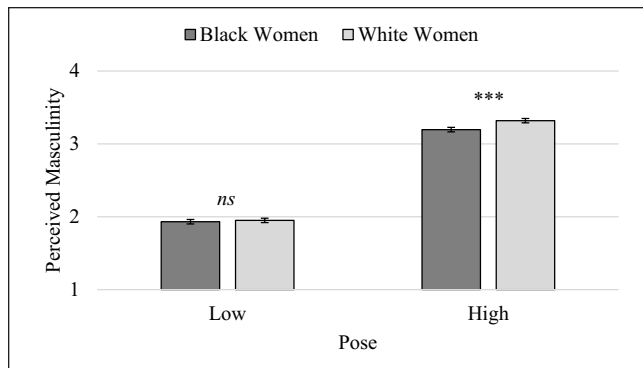*Note.* SD = Standard Deviation.

Figure 2. Race by Power Pose Interaction Predicting Perceived Masculinity, Study 1.
Note. Error bars represent ±1 standard error of the mean. Three asterisks indicate that the simple effect of interest has a *p*-value of less than .001. The "ns" indicates that the simple effect of interest has a *p*-value <.05.
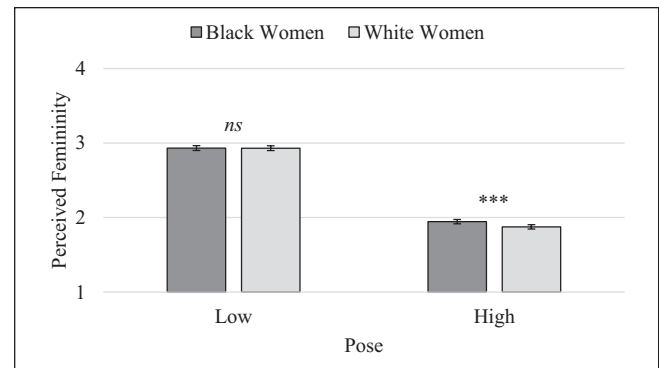

Figure 3. Race by Power Pose Interaction Predicting Perceived Femininity, Study 1.
Note. Error bars represent ±1 standard error of the mean. Three asterisks indicate that the simple effect of interest has a *p*-value of less than .001. The "ns" indicates that the simple effect of interest has a *p*-value greater than .05.

Perceived Masculinity

When predicting perceived masculinity, results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1, 507) = 47.57, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .086$, and power pose, $F(1, 507) = 1,241.14, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .71$, which were qualified by a significant interaction between race and power pose, $F(1, 507) = 26.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .050$ (see Table 1 and Figure 2). We decomposed these interactions two ways: (a) investigating whether women in the same pose were rated differently based on their race and (b) investigating whether women of the same race were rated differently based on their pose.

As anticipated, White women in high-power poses were perceived to be significantly more masculine than Black women in those same poses, $M_{dif} = 0.12, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.09, 0.15]. When women were in low-power poses, there was no difference in the perceptions of masculinity of White women and Black women, $M_{dif} = 0.02, p = .180, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [−0.01, 0.04]. Next, we investigated whether women of the same race were rated differently based on their pose. Black women in high-power poses were rated as more masculine than Black women in low-power poses, $M_{dif} = 1.26$, $p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI}_{Mdif}$ [1.19, 1.34]. And, the effect of pose

emerged for White women, but the difference in masculinity ratings based on pose was larger, $M_{dif} = 1.37, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [1.29, 1.44].

Perceived Femininity

When predicting perceived femininity, results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1, 507) = 12.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .024$, and power pose, $F(1, 507) = 994.89, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .66$, which were qualified by a significant interaction between race and power pose, $F(1, 507) = 15.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .029$ (see Table 2 and Figure 3). Similar to the perceived masculinity ratings, we again decomposed these interactions two ways.

First, as anticipated, White women in high-power poses were perceived to be significantly less feminine than Black women in high-power poses, $M_{dif} = -0.07, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [−0.09, −0.05]. When women were in low-power poses, there was no difference in the perceived femininity of White and Black women, $M_{dif} = -0.001, p = .931, 95\% \text{ CI}_{Mdif}$ [−0.03, 0.03]. We also decomposed this interaction by investigating the differences between poses in perceived femininity for Black and White women. Black women in high-power

poses were rated as less feminine than Black women in low-power poses, $M_{dif} = -0.99$, $p < .001$, 95% CI$_{Mdif}$ [−1.05, −0.92]. And, the same effect of pose emerged for White women, but the difference in femininity ratings was larger, $M_{dif} = -1.06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI$_{Mdif}$ [−1.12, −0.99].

Discussion

As hypothesized, within a corporate setting, we found that White women in high-power poses were perceived as more masculine and less feminine than Black women in those same poses. In contrast, White and Black women in low-power poses were perceived as comparably masculine and feminine.

Study 2

Next, we sought to replicate and extend upon these findings by investigating the downstream consequences of these gendered perceptions of power on the expression of ambivalent sexism, as well as the reported likelihood of hiring the women. We anticipated that if White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses were perceived as more masculine and less feminine, these perceived violations of gender stereotypes may respectively lead participants to express more hostile and less benevolent sexism toward these women. The differential expression of sexism toward White and Black women may then predict participants' reported likelihood of hiring these women.

Method

Participants

Our final sample was 512 participants (64.3% women, 34.6% men, 1.2% another gender identity) who were on average 36.26 years old ($SD = 11.02$). The racial/ethnic makeup of the participants was 76% White or Caucasian, 11.5% Black or African American, 0.6% Native American or Pacific Islander, 6.8% Asian, 3.3% Multiracial, and 1.8% another race.

Procedure

The procedure of Study 2 was identical to Study 1, except for the inclusion of additional dependent variables: the degree to which hostile and benevolent sexist statements applied to each woman, and the reported likelihood of hiring the women.

To assess the expression of ambivalent sexism, we adapted statements from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Rollero et al., 2014). Five statements assessed the expression of benevolent sexist attitudes toward women (e.g., "Women like [name] should be cherished and protected by men") and five statements assessed the expression of hostile sexist attitudes toward women (e.g., "Women like [name] seek to gain

power by getting control over men"; 1 = *strongly disagree;* 5 = *strongly agree*). We averaged the expression of benevolent sexist attitudes toward each pose type (high- vs. low-power) and pictured race (Black vs. White) such that higher numbers indicated the greater expression of benevolent sexism ($\alpha_{\text{Black Women High-Power}} = .95$; $\alpha_{\text{Black Women Low-Power}} = .96$; $\alpha_{\text{White Women High-Power}} = .95$; $\alpha_{\text{White Women Low-Power}} = .96$). We also averaged the expression of hostile sexist attitudes toward each pose type (high- vs. low-power) and pictured race (Black vs. White) such that higher numbers indicated the greater expression of hostile sexism ($\alpha_{\text{Black Women High-Power}} = .96$; $\alpha_{\text{Black Women Low-Power}} = .97$; $\alpha_{\text{White Women High-Power}} = .96$; $\alpha_{\text{White Women Low-Power}} = .96$).

Next, participants were asked to imagine that they were in the position of deciding whether to hire each of the depicted women and to report their likelihood of hiring her on a scale from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 100 (*extremely likely*). We averaged hiring likelihood for each pose type (high- vs. low-power) and pictured race (Black vs White) such that higher numbers indicated a greater likelihood of hiring ($\alpha_{\text{Black Women High-Power}} = .76$; $\alpha_{\text{Black Women Low-Power}} = .83$; $\alpha_{\text{White Women High-Power}} = .70$; $\alpha_{\text{White Women Low-Power}} = .76$).

Participants concluded by providing demographic information and a measure of internal motivations to respond without racial prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998). Participants also completed several exploratory measures: Explicit prejudice toward a variety of racial groups via feeling thermometers and measures of gender and race essentialism (Skewes et al., 2018; Williams & Eberhardt, 2008). As these items were exploratory, they will not be discussed further. Finally, participants were debriefed and compensated for their participation.

Results

To examine whether race moderated the effect of power posing on evaluations of Black and White women, we conducted 2 (woman's race: Black vs. White) × 2 (pose: high-power vs. low-power) repeated-measures ANOVAs predicting perceptions of masculinity, femininity, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and the likelihood of hiring the pictured women. See Table 3 for means and standard deviations for all dependent variables of interest. Finally, we investigated whether perceived masculinity/femininity and ambivalent sexism serially mediated the relationship between the race of the women in a high-power pose and the reported likelihood of hiring these women.

Perceived Masculinity and Femininity

When predicting perceived masculinity, the results replicated Study 1: there was a main effect of race, $F(1, 511) = 21.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .040$, a main effect of power pose, $F(1, 511) = 875.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .63$, and a race-by-pose interaction,
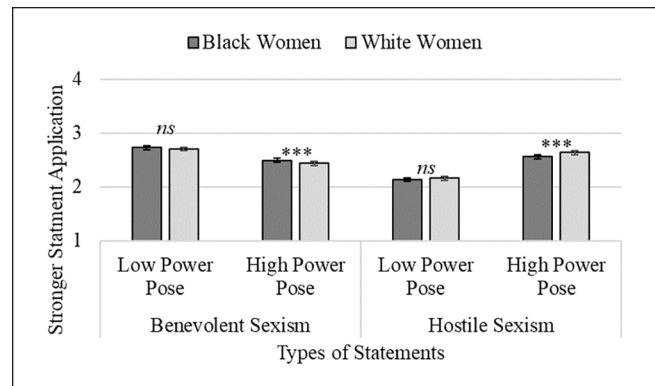
Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables of Interest for Black and White women in High- and Low-Power Poses, Study 2.

	Pose			
	Low-power		High-power	
Women's race	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Perceived masculinity				
Black women	2.14	0.71	3.19	0.74
White women	2.14	0.68	3.31	0.78
Perceived femininity				
Black women	2.81	0.71	1.98	0.63
White women	2.79	0.70	1.91	0.64
Application of hostile sexism				
Black women	2.14	0.82	2.56	0.89
White women	2.16	0.79	2.64	0.92
Application of benevolent sexism				
Black women	2.73	0.84	2.49	0.75
White women	2.70	0.81	2.44	0.78
Likelihood of hiring				
Black women	59.56	18.50	38.91	20.16
White women	56.91	17.38	36.19	19.07

Note. SD = Standard Deviation.

Figure 4. Race by Power Pose Interaction Predicting the Application of Ambivalent Sexism Statements, Study 2.
Note. Error bars represent ± 1 standard error of the mean. Three asterisks indicate that the simple effect of interest has a *p*-value of >.001. The "ns" indicates that the simple effect of interest has a *p*-value greater than .05.

Black women in high-power poses, $M_{dif} = 0.82, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.76, 0.89]. And, the same effect of pose emerged for White women, but the difference in femininity ratings was slightly larger, $M_{dif} = 0.88, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.81, 0.94].

Expression of Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Next, we examined the expression of hostile sexism toward the women based on their race and power pose. Results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1, 511) = 15.77, p < .001,$ $\eta_p^2 = .03$, a main effect of power pose, $F(1, 511) = 200.08,$ $p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .28$, and the predicted race-by-pose interaction, $F(1, 511) = 8.39, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .02$ (see Figure 4 right panel). As predicted, when displaying high-power poses, participants expressed more hostile sexism to White vs. Black women, $M_{dif} = 0.08, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.04, 0.12]. When women were in low-power poses, there was no difference in the expression of hostile sexism to White or Black women, $M_{dif} = 0.03, p = .062, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [-0.001, 0.05]. In addition, participants expressed more hostile sexism to Black women in high- (vs. low-) power poses, $M_{dif} = 0.42, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.36, 0.49]. And, the same effect of pose emerged for White women, but the difference in the expression of hostile sexism was slightly larger, $M_{dif} = 0.48,$ $p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.41, 0.54].

We also examined the expression of benevolent sexism toward women based on their race and power pose. Results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1, 511) = 14.41, p < .001,$ $\eta_p^2 = .03$, a main effect of power pose, $F(1, 511) = 141.34,$ $p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .22$, and the predicted race-by-pose interaction, $F(1, 511) = 5.39, p = .021, \eta_p^2 = .01$ (see Figure 4 left panel). As predicted, when displaying high-power poses, participants expressed less benevolent sexism toward White vs. Black women, $M_{dif} = -0.06, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [-0.09, -0.03]. When women were in low-power poses, there was no difference in the expression of benevolent sexism toward

$F(1, 511) = 32.38, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$). Similar to the previous study, we decomposed all the interactions two ways: (a) investigating whether women in the same pose were rated differently based on their race and (b) investigating whether women of the same race were rated differently based on their pose. Replicating Study 1, White women in high-power poses were perceived to be significantly more masculine than Black women in the same poses, $M_{dif} = 0.11, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.08, 0.15]. When women were in low-power poses, there was no difference in the perceived masculinity of White and Black women, $M_{dif} = 0.002, p = .913, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [-0.03, 0.03]. Black women in high-power poses were rated as more masculine than Black women in low-power poses, $M_{dif} = 1.06, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [0.98, 1.13]. And, the same effect of pose emerged for White women, but the difference in masculinity ratings was larger, $M_{dif} = 1.17, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [1.09, 1.24].

Perceptions of femininity were also replicated in Study 1. There was a main effect of race, $F(1, 511) = 14.20, p < .001,$ $\eta_p^2 = .027$, a main effect of power pose, $F(1, 511) = 798.81,$ $p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .61$, and the predicted race-by-pose interaction, $F(1, 511) = 5.92, p = .015, \eta_p^2 = .011$. Again, White women in high-power poses were perceived to be significantly less feminine than Black women in the same poses, $M_{dif} = -0.07, p < .001, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [-0.10, -0.04]. When women were in low-power poses, there was no difference in the perceived femininity of White women and Black women, $M_{dif} = -0.02, p = .251, 95\%$ CI_{Mdif} [-0.05, 0.01]. Black women in low-power poses were rated as more feminine than
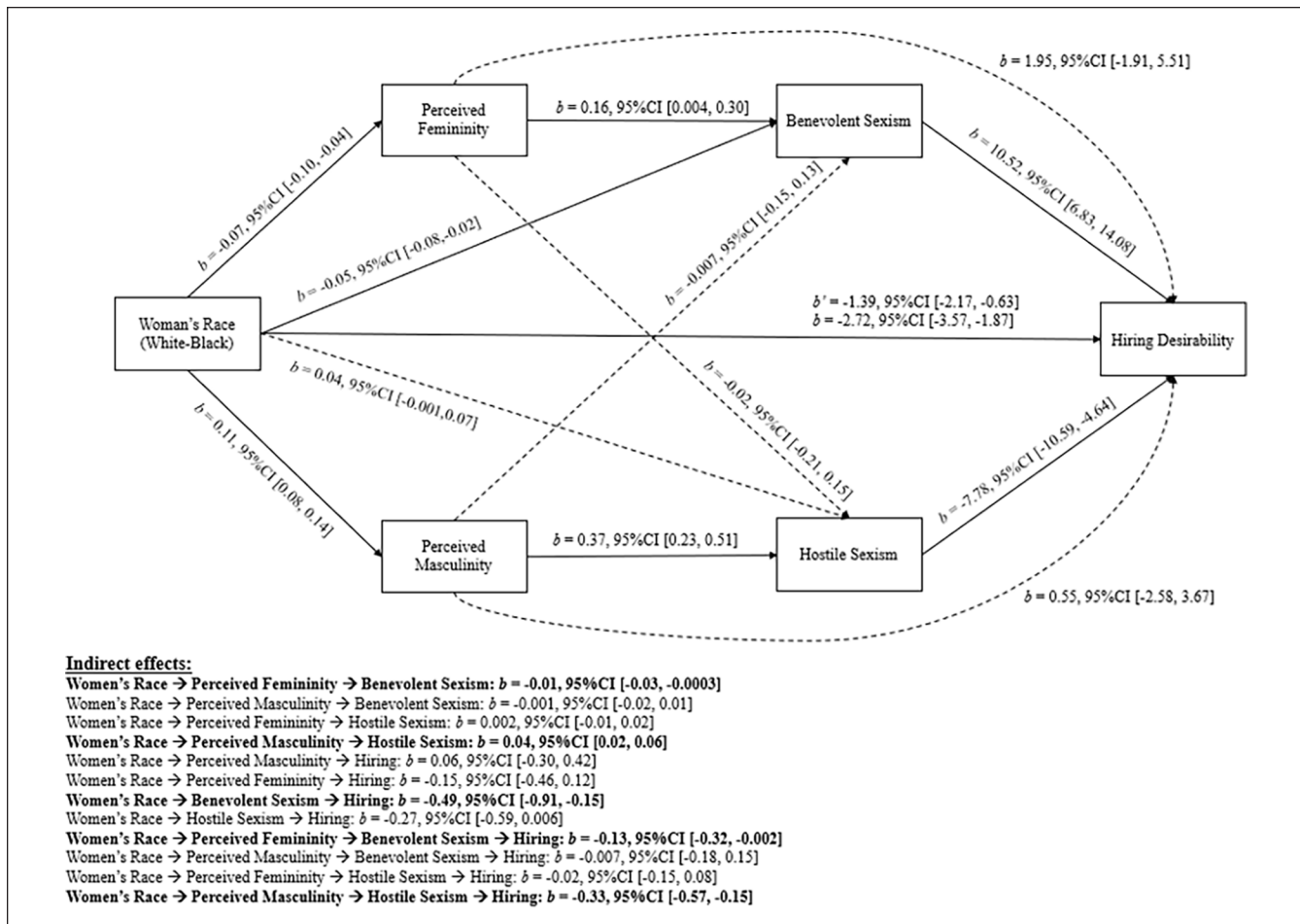
Figure 5. Parallel Serial Mediation of the Relationship Between the Women's Race and Participants' Reported Likelihood of Hiring Those Women by Perceptions of Masculinity/Femininity and Hostile/Benevolent Sexism, Study 2.
Note. Statistically significant indirect effects are bolded; statistically significant pathways are solid lines; pathways that did not reach statistical significance are dotted lines.

White vs. Black women, $M_{dif} = -0.02$, $p = .066$, 95% CI_{Mdif} [−0.05, 0.002]. In addition, participants expressed less benevolent sexism toward Black women in high- (vs. low-) power poses, $M_{dif} = -0.23$, $p < .001$, 95% CI_{Mdif} [−0.28, −0.19]. And, the same effect of pose emerged for White women, but the difference in the expression of benevolent sexism by pose was slightly larger, $M_{dif} = -0.27$, $p < .001$, 95% CI_{Mdif} [−0.31, −0.23].

Likelihood of Hiring

Finally, we examined whether participants' likelihood of hiring these women varied based on their race and power pose. A main effect of race indicated that participants reported being more likely to hire Black women than White women overall, $F(1, 510) = 52.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. A main effect of power pose indicated that participants reported being more likely to hire women engaging in high-power than in low-power poses, $F(1, 510) = 545.70$, $p < .001$,

$\eta_p^2 = .52$. In contrast to all other outcomes, these main effects were not qualified by a race-by-pose interaction, $F(1, 510) = .02$, $p = .890$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

Serial Mediation Model Predicting the Likelihood of Hiring

Next, we assessed whether the effect of race on evaluations of high-power posing women affected the reported likelihood of hiring those women indirectly through perceived masculinity/femininity and the expression of ambivalent sexism. Our parallel serial mediation model is depicted in Figure 5. The bottom serial mediation pathway examined whether, among women in high-power poses, women's race (White-Black; X) led to a lower reported likelihood of hiring White versus Black women (Y) due to perceiving White (vs. Black) women as more masculine ($M1$) and associated increases in the expression of hostile sexism ($M2$) to White (vs. Black) women. The top serial mediation path tested whether, among

women in high-power poses, women's race (White-Black; *X*) led to a lower reported likelihood of hiring White versus Black women (*Y*) due to perceiving White (vs. Black) as less feminine (*M3*) and associated decreases in the expression of benevolent sexism (*M4*) to White (vs. Black) women. To test this model, we ran a two-condition within-participant parallel serial mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrapped resamples in *R* (R Core Team, 2023).[2] Variables were entered in their raw scale form.

Results of this mediation model revealed that the tendency to report a lower likelihood of hiring a White (vs. Black) woman in a high-power pose was mediated by the expression of greater hostile sexism, and less benevolent sexism, toward those women. Likewise, we observed the predicted serial indirect effects from women's race to perceived masculinity to the expression of hostile sexism to hiring likelihood; and, from women's race to perceived femininity to the expression of benevolent sexism to hiring likelihood. These serial indirect effects suggest that distinct perceptions of the masculinity and femininity of high-power posing White and Black women underlie shifts in the expression of hostile and benevolent sexism, respectively, with implications for reported hiring likelihood (see Figure 5).

Discussion

The results of Study 2 replicated the finding that high-power poses are perceived as significantly more masculine, and less feminine when displayed by White versus Black women. Extending from Study 1, we also found that participants expressed more hostile sexism, and less benevolent sexism, to White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses, and that both of these shifts in ambivalent sexism mediated racial differences in hiring desirability. Finally, our parallel serial mediation model also revealed that relative to Black women in high-power poses, White women in high-power poses were perceived to be more masculine and less feminine. These gendered cognitions, respectively, predicted the expression of more hostile and less benevolent sexism, which, in turn, predicted a reduced likelihood of hiring the White (vs. Black) women.

Participants also reported they would be more likely to hire Black (vs. White) women, regardless of the target's pose. Although there has been some evidence of progress in terms of representation of Black women in some corporate positions (e.g., a 47% increase for Black women between 2020 and 2022; Deloitte, 2023), the preference for Black (vs. White) women observed in the present work is noteworthy, given the persistence of anti-Black racism in the United States and employment-related outcomes in particular (Women's Bureau, 2022). Thus, one possible explanation for our observed pro-Black biases may be social desirability effects. Therefore, in Study 3, we extended upon our Study 2 findings by replicating our parallel serial mediation model while also measuring and controlling for external

motivations to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998) to assess the potential role of socially desirable responding. Likewise, we sought to examine the potential role of job status. We reasoned that because the job description in Study 2 was vague, it would be informative to explore whether Black (vs. White) women are rated as more desirable hires, but perhaps only for jobs of a certain status.

Study 3

In our final study, we had three goals. First, we aimed to replicate the race effects observed in evaluations of high-power-posing women within Studies 1 and 2. Second, we manipulated the status of the job to which the women were applying (CEO vs. administrative assistant) to investigate whether job status influenced perceptions of masculinity/femininity, the expression of ambivalent sexism, and participants' reported likelihood of hiring the White versus Black women. We reasoned that if participants reported a lower likelihood of hiring White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses due to perceived violations of their gender roles, White (vs. Black) women vying for high- (vs. low-) status jobs may be particularly likely to experience such outcomes. Namely, in such a case, both the high-power physical pose and high-status job aspiration would jointly violate their gender roles, perhaps leading to a greater backlash. Finally, we sought to better understand whether participants' overall greater reported likelihood of hiring Black (vs. White) women reflected socially desirable responses by measuring and controlling for external motivations to respond without prejudice.

Method

Participants

Our final sample was 519 participants (56.1% women, 35.6% men, 1.3% another gender identity, and 6.9% did not respond). Of those who responded, the average age was 37.03 years old (*SD* = 11.88). The racial/ethnic makeup of the participants was 68% White or Caucasian, 10.6% Black or African American, 1.3% Native American or Pacific Islander, 5.8% Asian, 4.6% Multiracial, 2.7% another race, and 6.9% did not respond.

Procedure

The procedure for Study 3 was the same as Study 2 with three exceptions. First, we focused exclusively on Black and White women in high-power poses given that our effects were specific to women in these poses in Studies 1 and 2.[3] Second, we added a between-subjects manipulation of job status. Participants were told that the women they were about to view had applied to either a high-status job as a corporate executive or a low-status job as an administrative assistant. Participants also learned that they would see the poses that

these women were making while waiting to be interviewed for the job and that such poses can be informative for evaluating job applicants as a cover story. After this manipulation, participants made the same ratings of all women, as in Study 2. Third, we assessed the potential role of socially desirable responding in our findings by adding a five-item measure of external motivations to respond without prejudice (i.e., EMS; Plant & Devine, 1998; $\alpha = .90$) to use as a control variable in our mediation models. Agreement to EMS items were assessed on a 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*) scale.

Results

We conducted 2 (woman's race: Black vs. White) $\times$ 2 (job status: high vs. low) mixed-model ANOVAs predicting each of our key dependent variables: perceived masculinity/femininity, the expression of hostile/benevolent sexism, and the reported likelihood of hiring the pictured women. Finally, we replicated our parallel serial mediation models from Study 2, collapsing across job status conditions and controlling for EMS.

Evaluating Moderation by Job Status

Perceived Masculinity and Femininity. Overall, the findings for perceived masculinity and femininity of high-power posing women replicated Studies 1 and 2. When predicting perceived masculinity, there was a significant main effect of women's race, $F(1, 504) = 7.25, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .01$. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, White women ($M = 3.25, SE = .03$) in high-power poses were perceived as more masculine than Black women in those same poses ($M = 3.20, SE = .03$). The main effect of job status condition was not statistically significant, $F(1, 504) = 0.77, p = .381, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and the race-by-job status interaction was not statistically significant, $F(1, 504) = .001, p = .975, \eta_p^2 = .00$. This suggests that these race effects on perceived masculinity may emerge for high-power posing women applying for both high- and low-status jobs.

When predicting perceived femininity, there was a significant main effect of women's race, $F(1, 504) = 4.19, p = .041, \eta_p^2 = .01$. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, White women ($M = 2.04, SE = .03$) in high-power poses were perceived as less feminine than Black women in those same poses ($M = 2.07, SE = .03$). The main effect of job status condition was not statistically significant, $F(1, 504) = 0.12, p = .734, \eta_p^2 = .00$; nor was the race-by-job status interaction, $F(1, 504) = 1.08, p = .300, \eta_p^2 = .00$. This suggests that these race effects on perceived femininity may emerge for high-power posing women applying for both high- and low-status jobs.

Expression of Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. Next, we examined the expression of hostile sexism to women based on their race and job status condition. Again, results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1, 503) = 13.68, p <$

.001, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, when displaying high-power poses, participants expressed more hostile sexism to White women ($M = 2.68, SE = .04$) than to Black women ($M = 2.63, SE = .04$). There was not a significant main effect of job status condition, $F(1, 503) = 0.01 p = .917, \eta_p^2 = .00$, nor a significant race-by-job status interaction, $F(1, 503) = 1.37, p = .243, \eta_p^2 = .00$. This suggests that these race effects on hostile sexism may emerge for high-power posing women applying for both high- and low-status jobs.

We also examined the expression of benevolent sexism to the women based on their race and job status condition. Results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1, 503) = 24.17, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, when displaying high-power poses, participants expressed less benevolent sexism to White women ($M = 2.36, SE = .04$) than to Black women ($M = 2.43, SE = .04$). There was not a significant main effect of job status condition, $F(1, 503) = 0.14, p = .707, \eta_p^2 = .00$, nor a significant race-by-job status interaction, $F(1, 503) = 1.13, p = .289, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

Likelihood of Hiring. Finally, we examined participants' reported likelihood of hiring these women based on their race and job status condition. Again, we found a significant main effect of race such that participants reported being significantly more likely to hire Black women ($M = 36.83, SE = 0.98$), as opposed to White women ($M = 34.24, SE = 0.94$), $F(1, 502) = 31.57, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$. The main effect of job status was not statistically significant, $F(1, 502) = 1.97, p = 1.61, \eta_p^2 = .00$. There was, however, a significant race-by-job status interaction, $F(1, 502) = 3.91, p = .049, \eta_p^2 = .01$.

To probe this interaction, we investigated the effect of race separately for participants in the high- and low-status job conditions. For participants in the low-status job condition, there was a significant effect of race such that participants reported being more likely to hire Black women ($M = 37.68, SE = 1.44$) relative to White women ($M = 35.99, SE = 1.43$), $t(252) = 2.56, p = .011, 95\%$ CI [0.39, 2.98]. A similar pattern was observed in the high-status job condition, but the difference between the reported likelihood of hiring Black ($M = 35.99, SE = 1.31$) vs. White women ($M = 32.48, SE = 1.21$) was more extreme, $t(250) = 5.40, p < .001, 95\%$ CI [2.23, 4.79].

Replicating Our Parallel Serial Mediation Model, Controlling for Social Desirability

Next, we replicated our parallel serial mediation model from Study 2, by collapsing across job status conditions.[4] Critically, when testing this model in Study 3, we controlled for EMS to assure that our predicted effects emerged above and beyond variability due to socially desirable responses.[5]
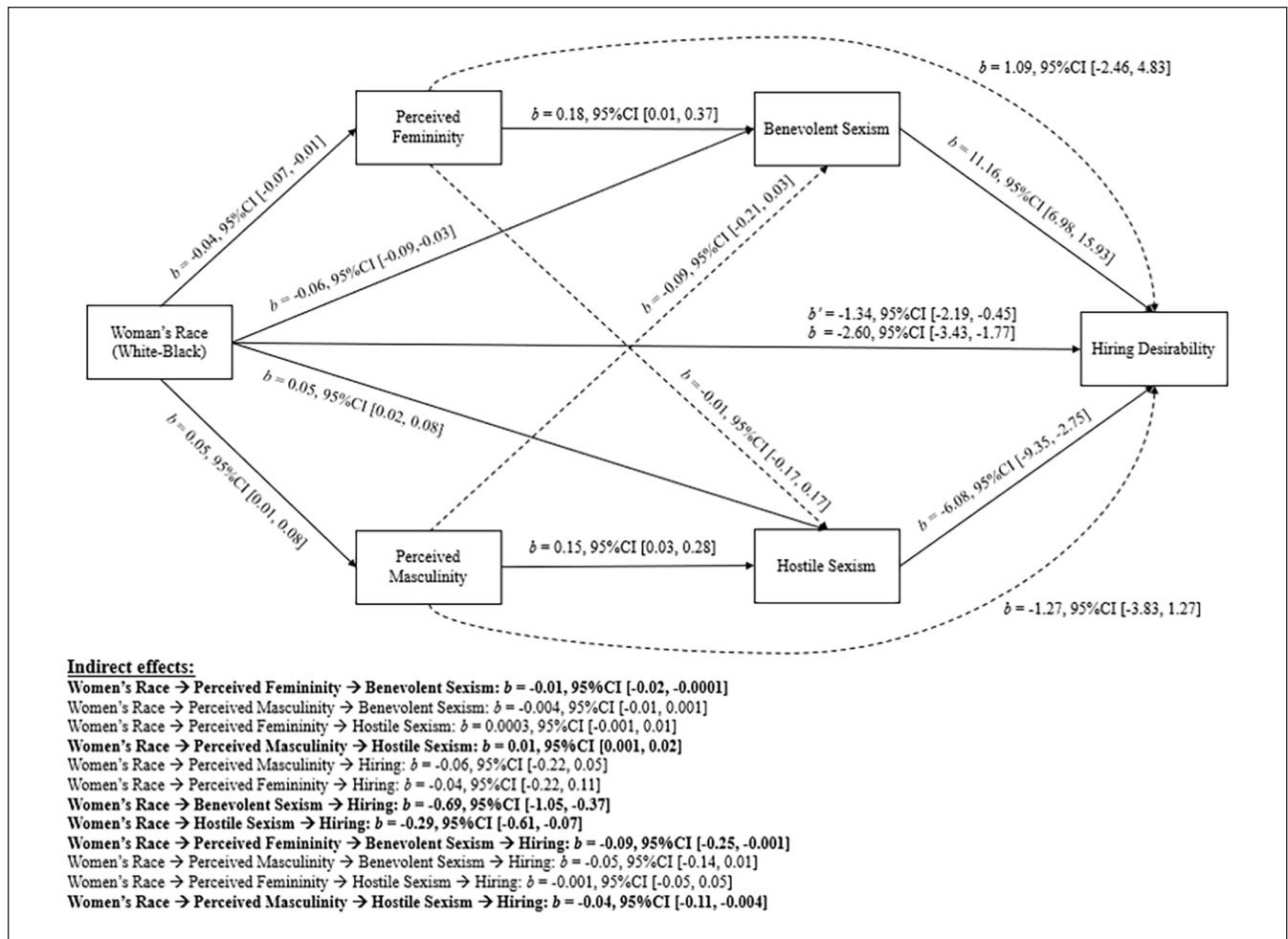
Figure 6. Parallel Serial Mediation of the Relationship Between Women's Race and Participants' Reported Likelihood of Hiring Those Women by Perceptions of Masculinity/Femininity and Hostile/Benevolent Sexism, Study 3.
Note. Statistically significant indirect effects are bolded; statistically significant pathways are solid lines; pathways that did not reach statistical significance are dotted lines.

As can be seen in Figure 6, our key indirect effects observed in Study 2 replicated in Study 3. Most notably, White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses were rated as both more masculine and less feminine, and these gendered perceptions, respectively, predicted the expression of increased hostile and decreased benevolent sexism, which then serially mediated reduced reported hiring desirability for White (vs. Black) women.

Discussion

Study 3 extended upon our prior findings in several ways. First, Study 3 indicated that the race effect we had observed in Study 2—namely the reduced likelihood of hiring a White woman relative to Black women when they are engaging in high-power poses—was significantly more pronounced when the women were vying for a high- (vs.

low-) status job. That said, this effect was statistically significant in both the high- and the low-status job conditions. This pattern of findings is consistent with the theory that sexism functions to keep White women from violating their gender roles and attaining power (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Second, Study 3 provided evidence against an alternative explanation of our findings—socially desirable responding—by demonstrating that the effects observed in Study 2 replicated when additionally controlling for external motivations to respond without racial prejudice. Together, these findings suggest that White (vs. Black) women may be more expected to adhere to feminine gender roles due to the gendering of race. Thus, perceivers who see White (vs. Black) women who violate these gender roles, such as by conveying power non-verbally, may shift their expression of ambivalent sexism, with potential implications for hiring decisions.

General Discussion

The historical impact of slavery and traditional gender roles has created a culture of racialized sexism that persists today: White (vs. Black) women are more likely to be perceived as feminine (e.g., hooks, 1989), and Black (vs. White) women are more likely to be perceived as strong or powerful (e.g., Donovan & West, 2015). The current research investigated whether (majority-White) perceivers express more hostile and less benevolent sexism to White (vs. Black) women conveying power nonverbally because such a power display is perceived to violate gendered racial norms.

In Studies 1 and 2, we found that perceptions of masculinity and femininity differed depending on whether Black or White women were displaying high- or low-power poses. Consistent with our hypotheses, White (vs. Black) women were perceived as more masculine and less feminine when engaging in high- (but not low-) power poses. Studies 2 and 3 also investigated whether participants would differentially express hostile and benevolent sexism to Black and White women in high-power poses. As expected, participants applied more hostile sexism and less benevolent sexism to White (vs. Black) women in high-power poses. Finally, Studies 2 and 3 also investigated a parallel-serial mediation model to test whether perceptions of masculinity/femininity and ambivalent sexism serially mediated the relationship between the high-power posing women's race and the reported likelihood of hiring those women. Results revealed that, relative to Black women in high-power poses, White women in high-power poses were perceived as more masculine and less feminine. These gendered perceptions, respectively, mediated the increased expression of hostile sexism and reduced expression of benevolent sexism toward these women, which, in turn, predicted the lower reported likelihood of hiring them. Notably, these findings suggest that gendered cognitions at least partially underpin the expression of ambivalent sexism. More generally, these findings suggest that nonverbal power displays are affected by gendered racial stereotypes and lead to differential judgments based on the race of the women engaging in these displays.

Although much of the existing research on ambivalent sexism has overlooked race/ethnicity or focused on the expression of sexism toward White women, theories and research suggest that sexism is not a "one-size-fits-all" experience. Rather, the experience of sexism depends on the intersection of different social categories, including race (Crenshaw, 2017). Research finds that race influences how gender is perceived (Goff et al., 2008), the attention that (White) perceivers give to women (Sesko & Biernat, 2010), and the content of the stereotypes that are applied (Hall et al., 2019). As a result, sexism may be expressed toward women of different races in distinct ways when they engage in behaviors, such as power poses, which are perceived as violating feminine gender roles.

The current findings build upon this theory and research by investigating how gender, power, and race collide in a consequential workplace setting. Perceptions of power are tied to leadership and corporate success (Henley, 2012). Thus, perceptions of power can potentially have positive consequences, such as increasing one's likelihood of being hired. However, this positivity is likely to depend on the race of the women displaying power. Overall, our findings are consistent with models of intersectionality (e.g., Hall et al., 2019). We find that White (vs. Black) women are perceived as violating their gender roles more strongly when engaging in masculinized high-power poses. This perceived violation of their gender roles may then impede their ability to ascend to high-power positions through perceivers' expression of sexism and reduced hiring endorsement.

Future Directions

Our theory led us to compare the effect of women's race on women engaging in high- versus low-power poses. However, another way to think about our findings is to examine the effect of pose separately for White and Black women. Under this alternative framing, we can see that power poses shifted perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and expressions of hostile and benevolent sexism, in the same direction for evaluations of both White and Black women; these shifts were just greater in response to White (vs. Black) women. Thus, it is possible that participants were simply less attuned to the nonverbal nuances displayed by Black (vs. White) women. Such a possibility would be consistent with the literature on the ways that Black women's intersecting identities can elicit a lack of social attention (Neel & Lassetter, 2019; Sesko & Biernat, 2010).

Similarly, although we found that greater benevolent sexism expressed toward Black (vs. White) women was predictive of a greater reported likelihood of hiring those women, this does not imply that benevolent sexism is "good." Although benevolent sexism may lead people to evaluate women as more likable, which may increase reported hiring desirability (as we find here), this does not mean it would translate to actual hiring decisions or to a healthy work environment. For example, once hired, these women may be likely to experience detrimental outcomes such as low career support (Hideg & Shen, 2019), or punishment for trying to ascend rank (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Although we focus here on the tendency to perceive a White (vs. Black) woman as more masculine when they engage in masculinized behaviors, such as a power pose, previous research has found that Black (vs. White) women are perceived as more feminine when they engage in feminized behaviors, such as a genuine smile (Cooley et al., 2018). This may suggest that Black women who engage in highly feminized behaviors may seem particularly feminine given that they are displaying such femininity despite their association with "men" (Hall et al., 2019; Kelley, 1971). Here, however, we did not find that Black women were perceived as more

feminine than White women when engaging in relatively feminine low-power poses. Instead, we found that White and Black women were evaluated similarly when engaging in low-power poses. One possible reason for this null effect may be what we observed in our pilot study: Low-power poses were not perceived to be feminine to the same degree that high-power poses were perceived to be masculine (see Supplemental Materials for these exploratory analyses). Because Black women are expected to have both feminine and masculine characteristics (Hall et al., 2019), gender-neutral (or only *slightly* feminine) behaviors may not seem discrepant from their expected gender roles in the same way that masculine behaviors are perceived as discrepant from White women's gender roles. Future research could manipulate the degree of masculinity and femininity of the behaviors that Black and White women engage in to test these possibilities.

Unexpectedly, in Study 2, we found that participants were more likely to hire Black (vs. White) women regardless of whether they were engaging in a low-power or high-power pose. Although our theory predicted this race effect on hiring women in high-power poses, we did not predict this race effect for women in low-power poses. One possible explanation for this lack of moderation by pose for the hiring outcome could be that participants were trying to avoid seeming racist. We tried to address this alternative explanation in our statistical modeling in Study 3 by controlling for EMS. Inconsistent with this explanation, White (vs. Black) women continued to be perceived as more masculine, predicting greater expressions of hostile sexism, and, thus, reduced their hiring desirability even with a measure of socially desirable responding included as a control variable in our model. That said, there are a variety of other possible explanations for this pro-Black bias. Double standards of competence theory (Rosette & Tost, 2010) would predict that Black (vs. White) women applying for the same job may be perceived as doubly competent because they had to overcome barriers posed by racism. Alternatively, preferences for otherwise comparable Black (vs. White) women may have stemmed from equity-based intentions to right systemic anti-Black racism. Thus, the present findings do not suggest Black women are free from the experience of anti-Black racism, nor that White women are the sole targets of sexism. In fact, perceivers also expressed greater hostile sexism to Black women in high- (vs. low-) power poses, just to a lesser degree than they expressed to White women. Likewise, these findings do not negate evidence that White women benefit from the power often associated with Whiteness in the United States (Kohn, 2013). Instead, these findings suggest that, in the workplace, there are complex processes determining how perceivers express sexist attitudes in response to women's displays of power based on the women's race.

Relatedly, we should note that the present data reflect the evaluations of majority-White samples. Different patterns may emerge among more racially diverse samples such that these findings may be moderated by participants' own racial or gender identity. For example, given that our majority-White samples expressed more hostile sexism for White than Black women, it is possible that ambivalent sexism is more likely to be directed toward racial ingroup members (Xiao et al., 2023). Future research should continue to explore the role of perceiver race and gender in these processes.

It would also be fruitful to investigate whether these patterns replicate with more varied physical postures; without the inclusion of names for the women (Gaddis, 2017); as well as in more externally valid field experiments. Although our studies maximized internal validity to help establish psychological processes, this also came with the tradeoff of potentially low external validity of our contrived scenarios and images. For example, these data cannot speak to whether high-power poses by White women result in greater hostile sexism over time, such as in the situation of having a coworker who continually poses in high- (vs. low-) power poses. One possibility is that hostile sexism could compound over time; another is that hostile sexism may be mitigated due to habituation. We hope the current research lays the foundation for future field experiments investigating these processes directly.

Conclusion

In the corporate world, Black and White women are vastly underrepresented in high-power positions: only 5.7% of board seats held in Fortune 500 companies were held by women of color in 2020 and only 20.9% were held by White women. Between 2020 and 2022, Black women gained 86 seats and White women gained 95 seats, representing both a notable increase for both groups and continued underrepresentation (Deloitte, 2023). Despite these shared challenges, theories of intersectionality suggest that Black and White women do not experience sexism in the same ways (Crenshaw, 2017). Here we find evidence that, because White women are perceived to be more prototypical "women" than Black women (Goff et al., 2008), they may be perceived as particularly masculine when engaging in behaviors that are perceived as violating feminine social roles. And, this process may elicit ambivalent sexism with potential implications for corporate outcomes such as hiring desirability.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material is available online with this article.

Notes

1. https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=2HM_QB6
2. R code available on OSF. Model specifics were driven by Reviewer comments. The serial indirect effects also emerge if we include internal motivations to respond without prejudice (IMS) as a control variable; the code and results for this alternative model appear on OSF.
3. Order was randomized.
4. Given that effects were either not moderated by job status, or when moderated (i.e., for hiring), emerged in both conditions, we collapsed across job status to parallel our Study 2 statistical model.
5. Our key predicted indirect effects continue to be statistically significant if we additionally control for IMS.

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