# Identity Matters:
## An Intersectional Examination of Women's Bodily Displays

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## A Missing Piece

Although well studied in social psychology (Dovidio et al. 1988; Henley 1995), relatively little research in gesture studies has explored how identity influences others' perception of bodily expressions (Bailey & Kelly, 2015).

## Questions

How do body postures and salient aspects of identity–race and gender–intersect to influence:
- Others' masculinity/femininity evaluations of women of different races?
- Women's experience of sexism?

**High-Power**  **Low-Power**

## Method & Design

- Participants: 512 from CloudResearch
- 2 (race: Black/White) x 2 (high-power/low-power bodily displays) within-subjects design
- See pictures of face-body pairs, asked to imagine a corporate hiring context, and respond to various questions for each pair (see Measures)
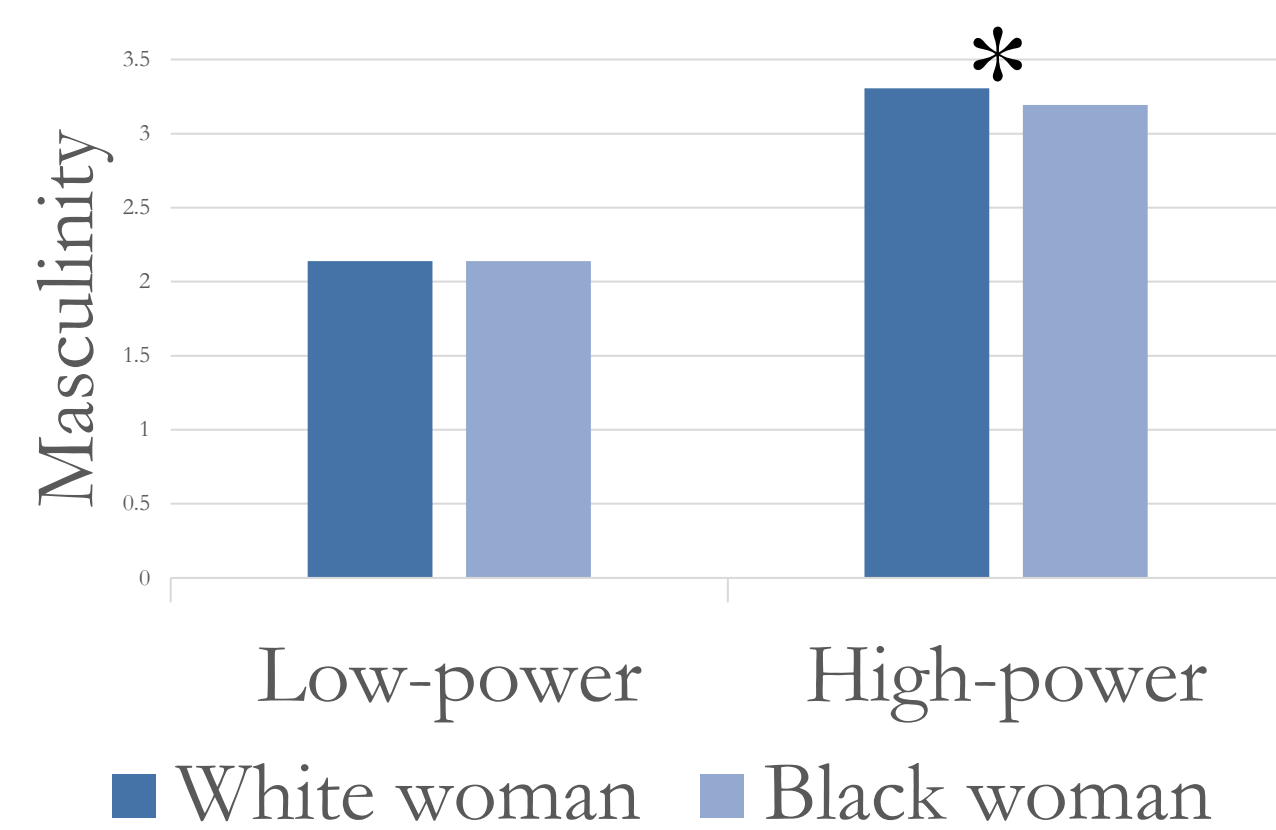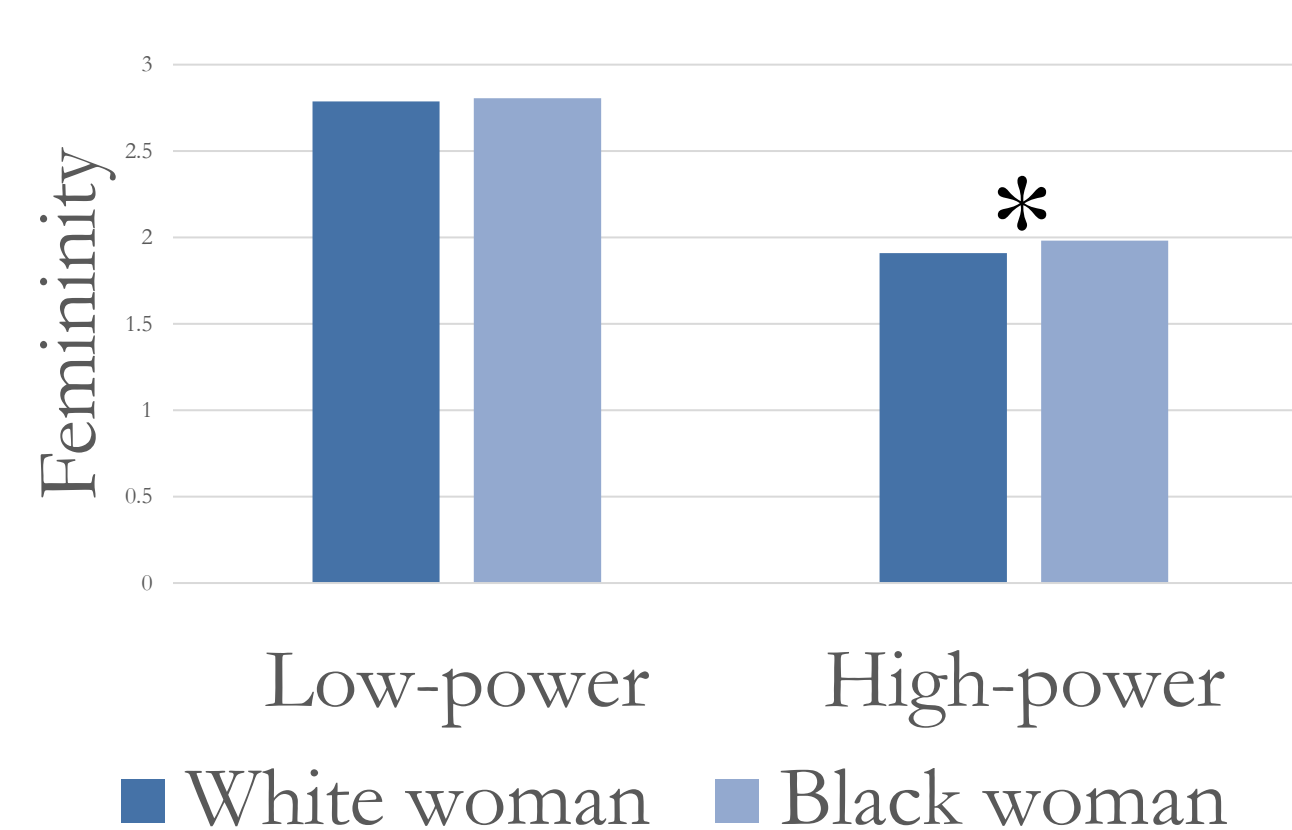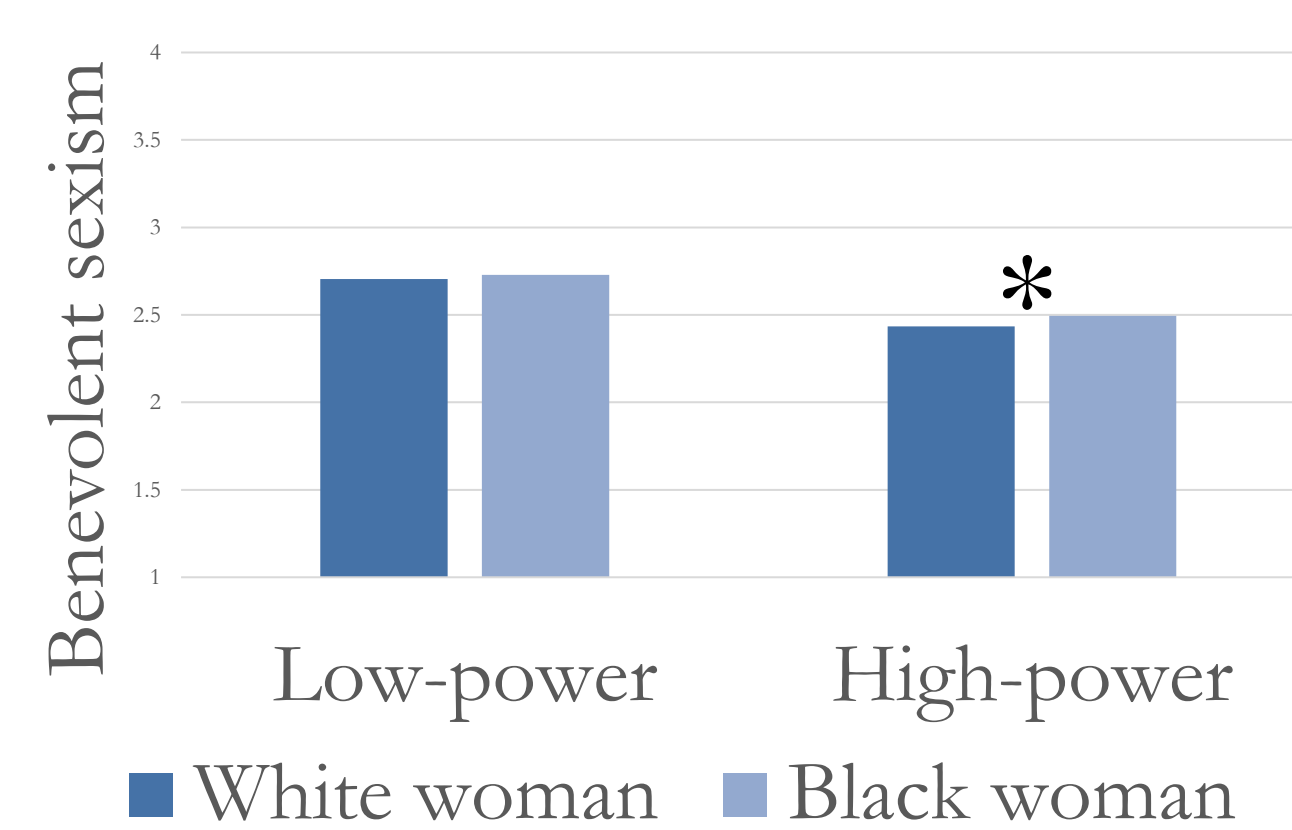
## Measures

- Bem's Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974)
  - Masculinity: e.g., assertive, independent
  - Femininity: e.g., sensitive, compassionate
  - Items rated on 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely) scales.
- Ambivalent sexism (Rollero et al., 2014)
  - Hostile sexism: e.g., "Women like Ebony seek to gain power by getting control over men."
  - Benevolent sexism: e.g., "Women like Emily should be cherished and protected by men"
  - Items rated on 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scales.
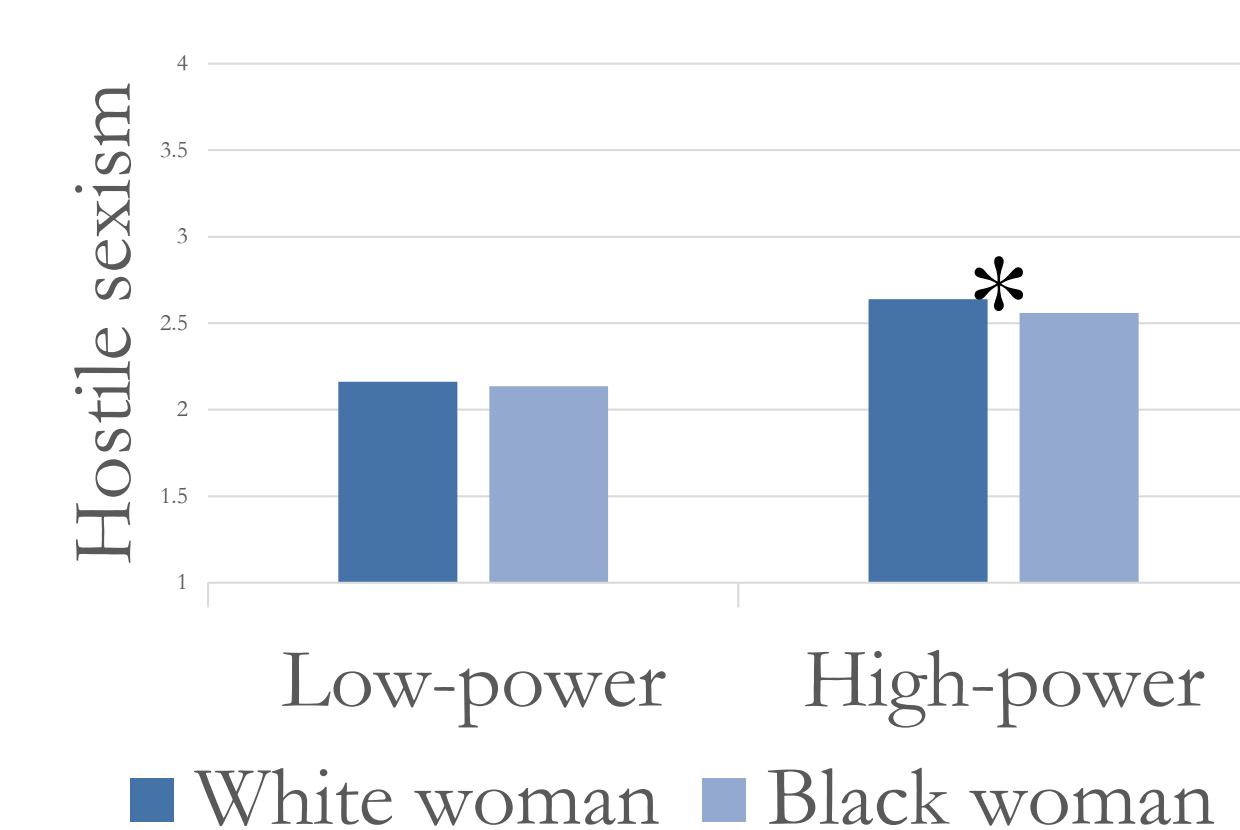- Hiring desirability

Masculinity — Low-power / High-power * — White woman / Black woman
$F(1, 511) = 32.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .060$.

Femininity — Low-power / High-power * — White woman / Black woman
$F(1, 511) = 5.95$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .012$.

Benevolent sexism — Low-power / High-power * — White woman / Black woman
$F(1, 511) = 5.37$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$

Hostile sexism — Low-power / High-power * — White woman / Black woman
$F(1, 511) = 8.43$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .016$
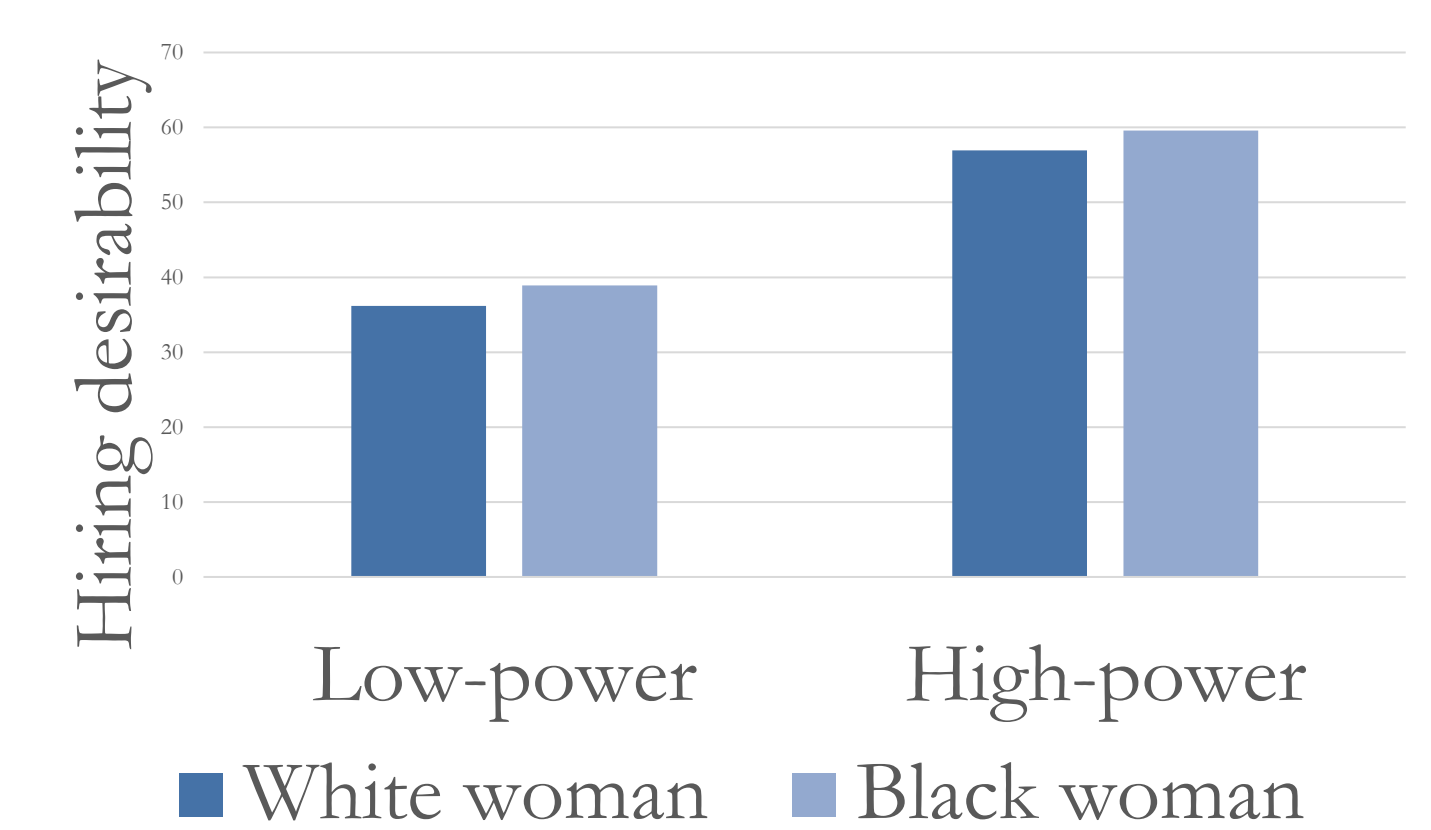
Hiring desirability — Low-power / High-power — White woman / Black woman
$F(1, 510) = .019$, $p = .890$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

### Path Analysis diagram (left)

Perceived Masculinity (M1)
Hostile Sexism (M2) — $b = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$
Woman's Race (White-Black) (X)
Hiring Desirability (Y)
$b = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$
$b = 0.04$, $p = 0.045$
$b = 1.96$, $p = 0.102$
$b = -9.19$, $p < 0.001$
*Total Effect* = -2.72, $p < 0.001$
*Direct Effect* = -2.22, $p < 0.001$

### Path Analysis I:
High Power Poses → Masculinity → **Hostile Sexism** → Hiring Desirability

**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]

### Path Analysis II:
High Power Poses → Femininity → **Benevolent Sexism** → Hiring Desirability

**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]

### Path Analysis diagram (right)

Perceived Femininity (M1)
Benevolent Sexism (M2) — $b = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$
Woman's Race (White-Black) (X)
Hiring Desirability (Y)
$b = -0.07$, $p < 0.001$
$b = -0.05$, $p = 0.0007$
$b = 2.03$, $p = 0.087$
$b = 12.29$, $p < 0.001$
*Total Effect* = -2.72, $p < 0.001$
*Direct Effect* = -1.84, $p < 0.001$
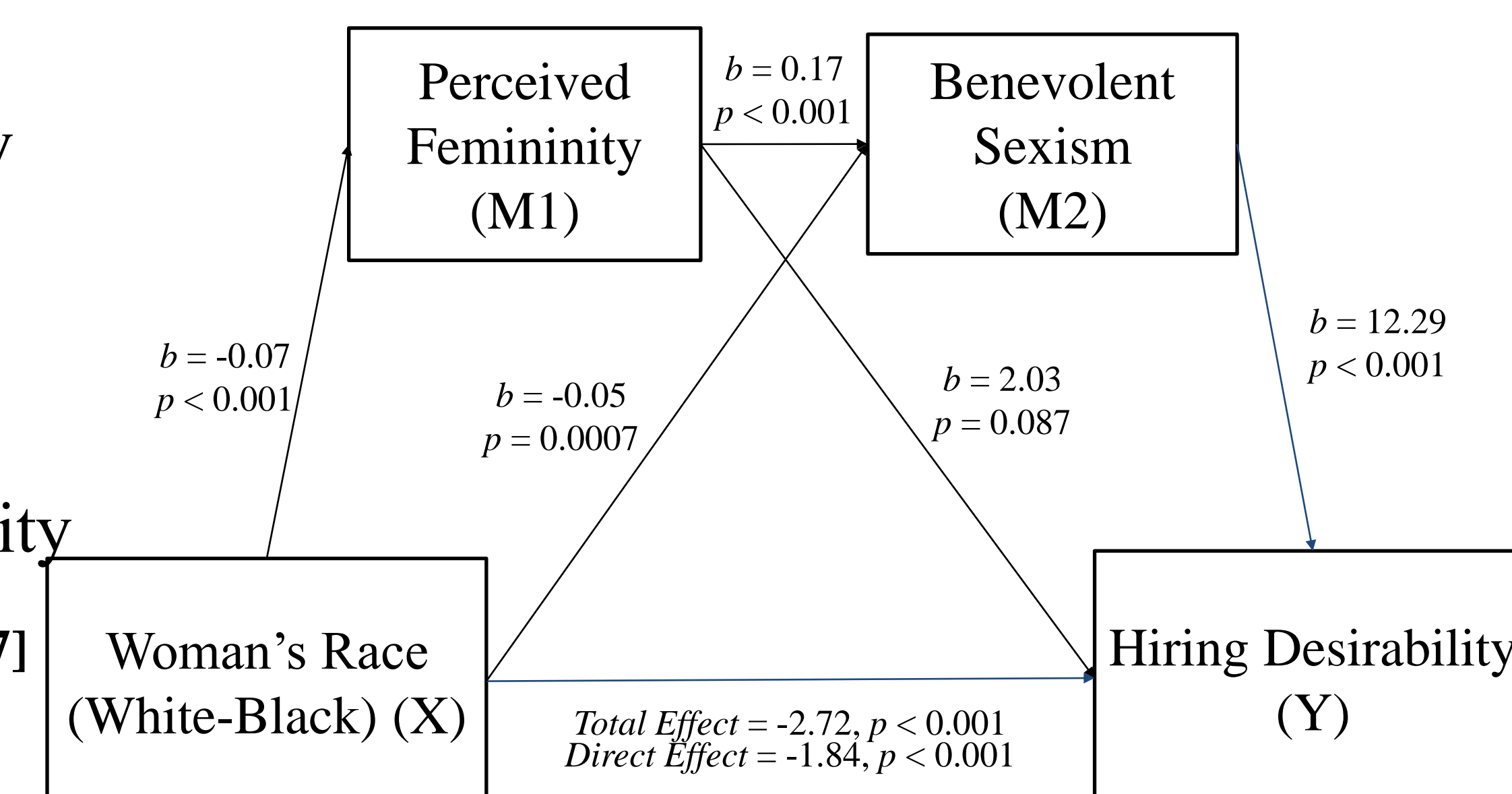
## Scientific Implications

- Race and gender interact to influence others' perception of women in different bodily displays (Crenshaw, 1989).
- Contextual variables affect gesture processing (Müller et al., 2014; Holler & Levinson, 2019), so the context of a gesturer's identity deserves more attention.

## Practical Implications

- Advice about expressing power with the body should not ignore race & gender.
- Contextual Bias trainings (e.g., Unconscious Bias training) should consider how the racial identities of women influence the ways they are socially evaluated, in addition to the sexism they are likely to experience.

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