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Empowered to Confront: Power and Confronting Sexism

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

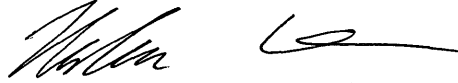
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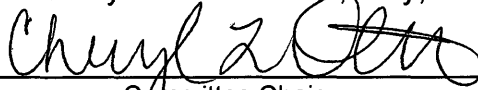
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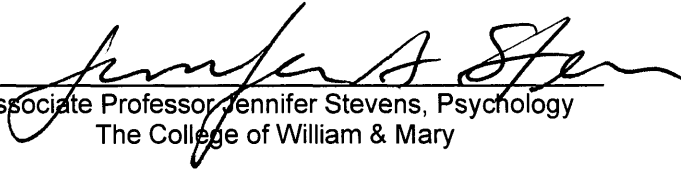
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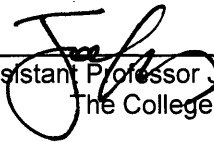


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ABSTRACT

The confrontation of prejudicial remarks leads to multiple benefits including a decrease in the likelihood of future expressions of prejudice, an increase in egalitarian norms, and more positive affect for the confronter. Prejudicial comments such as sexist remarks, however, frequently go unchallenged. Research shows that women, while reporting a desire to confront, have very low rates of confronting sexist acts, in part because they perceive that the potential benefits of confronting do not outweigh the potential costs. The current studies examine a possible moderating variable, power, which may increase the perceived benefits of confronting sexist remarks as well as the assertiveness of confronting. In Study 1 ($n = 138$), we investigated whether priming women to feel powerful shifts the cost-benefit analysis of confronting. Results indicated that women primed by recalling a time when they had power over someone else (i.e., high power prime) associated more benefits with the confrontation of sexism compared to women who were primed to recall a time when someone had power over them (i.e., low power prime). Study 2 ($n = 111$) used an experimentally controlled scenario to test whether embodied power primes (i.e., an expansive body position) led to an increase in the assertiveness of real-world confronting. Results provided evidence that power primes led to greater assertiveness in confronting, with women who took an expansive body position expressing more disagreement with a sexist remark compared to women who held a contractive body position or a control position. Implications for the confronting literature and behavior in the real world are discussed.

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This thesis is dedicated to my Mom. Thank you for your constant support and unconditional love.

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Empowered to Confront: Power and Confronting Sexism

In June 2012 Amy Cuddy, a researcher at the Harvard Business School, gave a TED talk about the effects of “power posing”. A power pose is characterized by the body being in an expansive position, akin to Lynda Carter’s Wonder Woman, leg stance wide and arms on the hips ready to take charge. In her talk, Cuddy expounds both the physiological and psychological benefits these poses have; for example, expansive body positions lead to decreases in the stress hormone cortisol, and increased sensations of feeling powerful. These benefits subsequently lead individuals to take greater risks in a gambling task, and appear more assertive in interviews (Carney, Cuddy, & Yap, 2010; Cuddy, Wilmuth, & Carney, 2012). The novelty of this research generated significant press about how a simple pose can impact cognitive and behavioral processes. Indeed, Cuddy’s TED is one of the most popular web videos in the series, with over 17 million views.

These studies on power posing dovetail a rise in research on the effects of power and the wide range of psychological processes power affects (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Smith, 2013). For instance, research shows that high power primes (i.e., inducing a state of feeling more powerful) affect everything from social comparison (Johnson & Lammers, 2012) to creativity (Sligte, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2011). Yet, less work has focused on more applied aspects of power; that is, can power motivate

individuals to be assertive and take risks for the betterment of themselves or others?

In this thesis two studies sought to apply the concept of power to an applied situation involving prejudice and discrimination. Specifically, the current research investigated how priming women to feel powerful influenced their judgments and behavior regarding the confrontation of sexism. Below, an overview of the literature on confronting prejudice is provided, reviewing work indicating that confronting leads to numerous positive outcomes yet is an action seldom taken. I then propose how previous research on the effects of priming power, namely evidence suggesting that power shifts cost-benefit analyses, engenders a state of reward sensitivity, and induces one to action, may impact confronting behaviors. Overall, these studies demonstrate that priming power may be a means of overcoming limits usually placed on confronting, such as failing to associate confronting with benefits and placing constraints on ones' actions.

Confronting Prejudice

Sexist comments and behaviors pervade the everyday lives of women, with research demonstrating that women report experiencing explicit incidents of sexism as frequently as once or twice a week (Brinkman & Rickard, 2009; Swim & Becker, 2011; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). While prejudicial remarks may seem innocuous (Wang, Leu & Shoda, 2011), they can have deleterious consequences on mental and physical health, with

research linking experiences of prejudice to higher rates of depression, lower self-esteem, and greater negative emotionality (Cowan & Mettrick, 2002; D'Augelli, 1992; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999). Given the frequency of experienced sexism and the negative effects associated with prejudice, it is important to investigate means of reducing expressions of prejudice.

One means of reducing the frequency of prejudicial comments and remarks is by confronting incidents of prejudice. Confronting, defined as “verbally or nonverbally expressing one’s dissatisfaction with prejudicial and discriminatory treatment to the person who is responsible for the remark or behavior” (Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006, p. 67), has been linked to a reduction in the likelihood that confronted individuals will make future prejudicial remarks (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Mallett & Wagner, 2011). Researchers have found that this reduction occurs due to the confronted individual feeling increased emotions of guilt and negativity (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Fazio & Hilden, 2001), subsequently leading to more self-reflection and ultimately a decrease in the confronted individuals’ prejudicial attitudes. In addition, confronting may bring to light prejudice that might otherwise have gone unnoticed by the confronted individual (Swim & Becker, 2011). Thus, confronting has the potential to both expose incidents of unseen prejudice while also decreasing overall expressions of bigotry.

The positive effects of confronting are not limited solely to the confronted individual. Research has shown that the confronter also gains

benefits from confronting, such that they leave the situation feeling more satisfied (Dickter, 2012), as opposed to feeling guilty due to the lack of confrontation (Shelton et al., 2006). Finally, there are benefits for bystanders and witnesses, with confrontations increasing bystanders' reported social norms of egalitarianism (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994), enhancing the perceived offensiveness of the comment (McClelland & Hunter, 1992), and decreasing self-reported sexist attitudes (Boysen, 2013).

Despite these benefits, research shows that women infrequently confront sexist remarks and/or behaviors. For example, Swim and Hyers (1999) found that only 15% of women directly confronted a man who made a sexist comment. Indeed, one of the most consistent findings across the literature on confronting is the low rate of confronting in real-life scenarios (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Kroeper, Sanchez, & Himmelstein, 2013; Rasinski, Geers, & Czopp, 2013). This is not to say that women do not want to confront or fail to see the behavior as sexist, indicated by research demonstrating differences between the rates of real versus imagined confronting. For example, Woodzicka and LaFrance (2001) found that when reading a scenario where a male job interviewer asks sexist questions (e.g., "do you think it is important for women to wear bras to work?"), women reported that they would directly confront a majority of the time (62%). Yet, when the same situation was recreated in the lab, only 36% of the women confronted, with most of the behavior taking a mild form (e.g., asking the

interviewer why they asked that particular question). Swim and Hyers (1999) found the same pattern, with 81% of women saying they would confront a sexist comment but only 45% actually expressing some type of disapproval in a real-life situation. Thus, evidence indicates that while women recognize and are motivated to confront sexism, they frequently choose not to act.

Failing to confront a sexist comment can also have a number of negative consequences for women. Shelton et al. (2006) found that women who recalled a time when they wanted to confront yet did not expressed greater negative emotionality and higher rumination. A choice to not confront may also further propagate sexism, both at the interpersonal level, by way of not letting the individual know they were being prejudicial (Czopp et al., 2006; Fazio & Hilden, 2001), and at the intrapersonal level. For example, Rasinki et al., (2013) exposed women to a sexist comment and gave them an opportunity to confront. These women were then asked to evaluate the man who made the sexist remark. Results showed that women who did not confront, but said they value confronting acts of prejudice, actually rated the man more positively than those who did confront, in a theorized attempt to reduce the cognitive dissonance associated with not confronting. Thus, by not confronting, women lose the potential benefits from confronting and expose themselves to a variety of intrapersonal costs, particularly when they value non-sexist norms. Because of the actual benefits of confronting as well as the negative consequences of failing to confront, research has explored why women often choose not to

confront sexist comments. This work has focused on the lack of perceived benefits and the perceived negative consequences of confronting.

Researchers and theorists have argued that women engage in a cost-benefit analysis to determine when an individual chooses to confront or not to confront. Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, and Goodwin's (2008) Confronting Prejudiced Responses model (CPR) locates this cost-benefit analysis as the last stage in their model regarding the decision to confront a prejudicial remark. After determining that a prejudicial comment has been made, taking responsibility for acting against the comment, and deciding how to confront, they argue that the final act is to weigh the potential social benefits and costs of confronting. Regarding the costs of confronting, researchers point to the potential negative interpersonal costs. In particular, confronting is often perceived in a negative manner, with women who confront more likely to be perceived as "complainers" (Shelton & Stewart, 2004). There may also be social costs for women who confront such as less positive evaluations from others. For instance, Dodd, Guiliano, Boutell, and Moran (2001) found that women who confronted a man's sexist comment were evaluated as less likable by men who watched the confrontation, compared to women who did not confront. These social costs, particularly the negative evaluation by others, may be particularly salient when women are motivated by a desire to be liked, such as in a job interview setting (Mallett & Melchiori, 2014; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). Research by Good, Moss-Racusin, and Sanchez (2012)

found that how this cost-benefit analysis is weighted partially explain a woman's decision to confront or not to confront. In a large-scale investigation, these researchers assessed women's perceived costs and benefits associated with times they had confronted. In their procedure, they had women recall a time when they confronted sexism, and then asked questions pertaining to whether they believed the confrontation led to social benefits (e.g., a reduction in future prejudice) or social costs (e.g., negative evaluations by others). Using path modeling, they found that women were more likely to confront sexism if they reported greater perceived benefits and were less likely to confront if they perceived higher costs. This cost-benefit analysis is important as it indicates a means of predicting when women will take action against sexism versus when they remain silent.

Research thus far has examined the rates of confronting (Swim & Hyers, 1999), the potential benefits of confronting (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006), and reasons why women choose not to confront (Good et al., 2012). Less research has investigated means of increasing the assertiveness of confronting sexist comments, with only a handful of studies beginning to address this issue. Indeed, assertiveness in confronting is a potentially important variable to assess as research has linked how assertive a confrontation is with the greater communication of egalitarian norms, which subsequently impacts bystanders' judgments of how negative a prejudicial remark is viewed (Dickter, Kittel, & Gyurovski, 2012). (Dickter, Kittel, &

Gyurovski, 2012). In addition, Mallet and Melchiori (2014) found that certain motivations lead to increased assertiveness in confrontations, with women who were motivated to be respected more assertively confronting a sexist interview question than women motivated to be liked. Given our extensive knowledge that confronting is an effective tool to reduce expressions of prejudice but that women frequently do not confront instances of sexism, it is of interest to examine whether we can increase the likelihood and assertiveness of the confrontation of sexist comments. One such strategy may be increasing feelings of power.

Power.

Power represents a core aspect of social dynamics and relationships (Fiske, 1992; Fiske, 1993), defining who does and does not have control over resources and the ability to “modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments,” (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003, p. 265). Indeed, this broad conceptualization of power impacts confronting behavior at both societal and interpersonal levels. At the societal level, since confronting is frequently left to minority individuals for whom prejudicial remarks target (Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio, 2009; Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013), there exists, before a prejudicial remark is even made, an inequality in terms of power (Sidanius, 1993; Pratto, 1996). This difference in societal power often generates a cycle of ignorance, such that majority group members, those who typically hold more power, are less aware

of their biases (McIntosh, 1988) and more likely to automatically and unknowingly stereotype (Fiske, 1993). This subsequently shifts the responsibility to confront to minority group members, as evidenced by reports demonstrating that minority group members have greater vigilance of prejudicial remarks or discrimination (Henley & LaFrance, 1984). Since the ability to recognize prejudice is a crucial first step to confronting (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008), and unequal societal power shifts the burden of recognition to minority group members, there is inherently an inequality in terms of who confronts and who does not confront.

These power differentials may become even more salient at the interpersonal level, particularly when power is unequally distributed in the situation where a prejudicial remark is made. For example, women often report instances where their supervisors or bosses make sexist comments or treat them in a sexist manner (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2010), yet very few take action by way of formal complaint (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995). This inaction is often attributed to power and status differences, with women fearing work related retribution if they confront one who has power over them (Swim et al., 2001).

Social power also is a determinant for when an individual feels it acceptable to violate a social norm (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998), with higher powered individuals more likely to interrupt conversations (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and exhibit rude behavior to insubordinates (Pearson, Andersson, &

Porath, 2000). Since the act of confronting, particularly when done by a minority, can be construed as disrupting social norms (Kaiser, 2006), as evidenced by the negative evaluations given to confronters (Kaiser & Miller, 2004; Dodd et al., 2001), interpersonal power differences may reduce the likelihood that an individual will choose to break social norms by confronting a prejudicial remark. Thus, differences in power, and associated potential for punishment, across both societal and situational contexts, may place limits on when individuals choose to confront, or even recognize, prejudicial remarks or actions.

Power inequalities constrain when individuals choose to confront prejudicial statements, yet does making one feel more powerful lead to more assertive confronting? Literature on the various effects of priming power suggests that power could influence confronting behavior in two primary ways. First, priming power may shift the cost-benefit analysis of confronting so that greater benefits and fewer costs are perceived from acting. Second, power may induce individuals to take action and confront prejudicial comments, particularly when confronting aligns with person values and motivations. In essence, priming power may help to counteract some of the limits power inequalities impose when women choose to confront. These two hypotheses regarding the effects of power are discussed further below.

Research and theory suggests that power shifts cost-benefit analyses such that individuals with high power have greater reward sensitivity,

ultimately leading to greater approach-related processes and behaviors. Keltner et al.'s (2003) approach/inhibition theory of power posits that since power is frequently associated with more positive affect (Langner & Keltner, 2008), powerful individuals are more attune to the potential benefits and rewards in their circumstances and situations. In turn, this reward-focused mindset increases approach related behaviors, while reducing thoughts about potential costs. Experimental evidence broadly supports this theory; for instance, Carney et al., (2010) found that following a power prime, individuals were more likely to take risks in a gambling game, betting more money to potentially earn more money. In addition, high power individuals are more likely to view others in a utilitarian manner, seeing people as a means to meet one's goals (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008). Finally, individuals primed with high power showed less concern for social norms (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and greater focus on goal-related cognitions (Slabu & Guinote, 2010). Important to confronting, this reward-focused mindset shifts the perceived costs and benefits associated with actions (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), leading to the potential for individuals, primed with high power, to see greater benefits and fewer costs from confronting, conditions known to impact whether one chooses to confront (Good et al., 2012).

Evidence from the power literature also suggests that powerful individuals are more likely to take action in accordance with their motivations

and beliefs. For example, Galinsky et al. (2003) found that high power primes induced individuals to act, such that they were more likely to remove an annoying stimulus from their environment, compared to individuals primed with low power. Further, these effects on the power-action relationship seem to be driven by a reduction in cognitions about goal constraints, suggesting that individuals see fewer barriers to their actions (Whitson et al., 2013). In addition, evidence shows that high power individuals are less likely to exhibit conformity, as they show lower change in their attitudes and beliefs following exposure to other opinions (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008) and less social comparison (Johnson & Lammers, 2012). This buffer that power provides against conformity effects may account for why high power individuals see fewer constraints on their actions, since they seem to ignore pressure from social norms (Keltner et al., 2003). The fact that power leads to increased goal-directed behavior, regardless of social consequences, is important to confronting given that targets of prejudicial comments often report wanting to confront (Swim & Hyers, 1999) but cite fear of retribution, such as negative evaluations from others, as a reason for their inaction (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick & Phelan, 2012; Shelton & Stewart, 2004).

The Present Research

The act of confronting represents a social exchange rife with power differentials and potential costs and benefits (Good et al., 2012; Mellet &

Melchiori, 2014). The fact that power primes can dramatically shift cost-benefit analyses (Keltner et al., 2003) and lead individuals to take action in accordance with their motivations and beliefs (Galinsky, et al., 2003) suggests that priming power could influence when an individual chooses to confront prejudicial remarks. Across two studies we tested the hypotheses that priming individuals to feel powerful will lead to associating greater benefits and fewer costs with confronting (Study 1) and ultimately increase the assertiveness of confronting behaviors (Study 2). In line with Keltner et al.'s (2003) approach/inhibition theory on power we believe that women primed with high power will see greater benefits and fewer costs to confronting compared to women primed by a low power manipulation. Study 1 aimed to test this hypothesis by having women recall either a time they had or did not have power over another individual and then remember an instance when they confronted a sexist comment or act. Subsequently, we assessed the degree to which they evaluated the costs and benefits associated with the confrontation. Given research indicating that high power and high power primed individuals see greater benefits and fewer costs associated with taking action (Carney et al., 2010) and have a reward/benefit focused mindset (Keltner et al., 2003), we hypothesize that women primed with high power, compared to women primed with low power, will be more likely to evaluate the confronting scenario in terms of its benefits and less so in terms of potential costs. Understanding this relationship between power and the cost-benefit

analysis of confronting is an important step, as previous research has shown this relationship is a driving force in determining whether a confrontation occurs (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Good et al., 2012).

In Study 2 we tested whether the effects of power translate into stronger and more assertive confrontations of sexist comments. Given research that shows high power leads to more frequent action, particularly when that action aligns with beliefs (Galinsky et al., 2003), we believe that priming power will lead women, specifically those motivated to confront sexism, to express greater disagreement with a sexist comment. In addition, Study 2 utilizes a different power prime (i.e., embodied power primes) and involves a real-life interaction between participants and a confederate, extending the validity of our findings to other power induction techniques and a real world scenario.

Study 1

The aim of Study 1 was to investigate whether high power primes, known to induce a reward/benefit focused mentality (Keltner et al., 2003), affect women's cost-benefit analysis of a recalled confronting scenario. We first primed women to be in either high power or low power states by having women recall a time when they had power over someone (high power prime) or someone had power over them (low power prime). We then had participants write about a time when they confronted a sexist remark or action and asked questions, previous developed by Good et al. (2012), to assess women's perceived costs (i.e., possible retribution or negative evaluation) and

benefits (i.e., reduction in the future likelihood of the confronted making another sexist comment) associated with the confrontation. The potential to shift this cost-benefit analysis using high or low power primes is important given Ashburn et al.'s (2008) CPR model which places the outcome of this decision (e.g., whether it is more costly or more beneficial) as a crucial step to deciding when to confront, and evidence linking women's confronting behavior with perceiving greater benefits in confronting (Good et al., 2012).

Method

Participants

One hundred and thirty-eight women ($M_{age} = 37.7$, $SD = 13.99$, age range = 18-78 years) were recruited online using Amazon's Mechanical Turk website (see Mason & Suri, 2012 for review of this website platform). The majority of the participants identified their race as White ($n = 111$), followed by Hispanic/Latino ($n = 11$), African American ($n = 9$), Asian ($n = 5$), and Other ($n = 8$). All participants received a small monetary payment as compensation. Informed consent was obtained before participants began the experiment via electronic signature. All procedures were approved by the institutional review board.

Materials and Procedure

In order to reduce suspicion for our hypotheses, we informed participants in the consent form that they would be completing two separate

studies. After giving informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to a high or low power condition. For our two conditions we used a previous manipulation of power that has been successful in numerous studies (see Galinsky, et al., 2003; Johnson & Lammers, 2012; Slabu & Guinote, 2010). In the high power condition, participants wrote via an open textbox on Qualtrics (<https://wmsas.qualtrics.com>) about a time when they had power over another person. Specifically, they were instructed to:

Please recall a particular incident in which you had power over another individual or individuals. By power, we mean a situation in which you controlled the ability of another person or person to get something they wanted, or were in a position to evaluate those individuals. Please describe this situation in which you had power – what happened, how you felt, etc.

In the low power condition, participants wrote about a time when someone had power over them:

Please recall a particular incident in which someone had power over you. By power, we mean a situation in which someone had control over your ability to get something you wanted, or was in a position to evaluate you. Please describe this situation in which you did not have power – what happened, how you felt, etc.

To ensure that participants seriously considered the prompt and to encourage the prime of power, participants wrote a minimum of 500 characters,

approximately 100 words. Following the power manipulation participants completed a modified Positive and Negative Affective Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), where they rated emotion words (e.g., happy, upset, etc.) in terms of how they felt in the present moment on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Very slightly or not at all", to 5 = "Extremely"). Included in the filler items we embedded the words "strong" and "powerful", which were highly related to one another ($\alpha = .88$), from which we created a mean score which served as a manipulation check for our power conditions. Overall, the PANAS served two purposes. First, it allowed us to assess the degree to which our power conditions affected feelings of power. Second, it aided in the maintenance of our cover story.

After the power prime and manipulation check, participants were told they would begin the second study. For the second part of the study participants recalled a time when they confronted a sexist act or comment and then asked questions with regards to the participants' cost-benefit analysis of the situation. Participants began by writing about a "specific time when you confronted sexism or stood up for yourself when you were the recipient of sexist comments or actions" with instructions to "Please describe how you felt and what happened". Again, participants wrote a 500 character story describing the scenario. Following participants' recall of a time when they confronted sexism, we assessed participants' perceptions of the costs and

benefits associated with their confrontation and their overall experience with various forms of sexism.

Perceived Costs and Benefits

We used questions from Good et al. (2012) to measure participants' perceived benefits and costs associated with their confrontation. For their study they had moderate internal consistency with regards to their scale items ($\alpha = .68$). For perceived benefits we asked participants: "Did you feel that confronting the sexist person would make a difference?", "Did you think you would stop the person from acting sexist in the future?", and "Did you want to make sure that the person wouldn't act sexist again?". For perceived costs we asked participants: "Did you worry that the sexist person would make fun of you or dislike you if you stood up for yourself?", "Did you worry that other people would make fun of you or dislike you if you stood up for yourself?", "Did you worry about how the sexist person would react (e.g., get angry, upset)?". All items were assessed on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all", 7 = "Very much") with moderate internal consistency for both the perceived benefits and perceived costs ($\alpha = .42$ and $\alpha = .71$, respectively). For both constructs, we created means for the three items, with higher scores indicating greater perceived costs and benefits.

Experience with sexism

Following the questions assessing the benefits and costs associated with confronting, we asked participants to report their experience with various

forms of sexism they encounter in their everyday lives. Again, we used questions previously employed by Good et al. (2012). On a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "Never", 7 = "Everyday") participants responded to questions such as "In the past year, how often have you experienced sexism?", and "How often have you been treated rudely or disrespectfully because of your gender?". For this scale, internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .90$). Again, higher scores indicated more general experience with sexism.

At the end of the questionnaires participants provided demographic information including ethnicity/race, age, and sexual orientation. Finally, all participants read a debrief screen that disclosed the links between the two studies and provided contact information should participants have any questions or concerns.

Results

Participants were excluded from the following analyses if they did not write a story consistent with the prompt ($n = 1$) or wrote that they had never experienced sexism ($n = 8$). Results, however, do not change if we include these participants in the analyses. Thus, a total of one hundred twenty-nine participants remained for analyses ($M_{age} = 37.7$, $SD = 14.0$).

First, we conducted a manipulation check in order to determine if our power manipulation significantly affected ratings of power. For this analysis, we used the mean calculated from the PANAS items "strong" and "powerful", comparing the means across the two condition groups. Results indicated

women in the high power prime condition ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.09$) rated themselves as feeling more powerful than in the low power prime condition ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(127) = 3.48$, $p = .001$. This finding aligns with general trends that priming power, by recalling a time of when one had power over someone or someone had power over them, influences explicit ratings of feeling powerful (Huang, Galinsky, Gruenfeld, 2010).

Based on our hypotheses, we tested whether priming high or low power shifts the perceived costs and benefits attributed to an incident of confronting sexism. Results indicated that when assessing costs, that is concerns associated with being negatively evaluated due to the confrontation, no significant differences emerged between the high power ($M = 3.81$, $SE = .27$) and low power ($M = 3.57$, $SE = .23$) conditions, $t(126) = 0.68$, $p = .501$. In contrast, when assessing the potential benefits of confronting, specifically that the confrontation would engender fewer future sexist remarks, there was a significant difference based on power, with individuals in the high power condition ($M = 4.39$, $SE = .19$) perceiving more benefits to confronting than individuals primed with low power ($M = 3.80$, $SE = .17$), $t(126) = 2.24$, $p = .027$. These results emerged even though both groups of women expressed equal levels of overall experience with sexism, $t(123) = -.64$, $p = .523$.

Discussion

In Study 1 participants were first primed with either high or low power by recalling and writing about a time when they had power over someone

(high power) or someone else had power over them (low power). Participants then recalled an instance when they confronted sexism and answered questions regarding how beneficial or costly they viewed the confrontation. In partial support of our hypothesis, results indicated that women, primed to feel powerful, were more likely to attribute greater benefits (i.e., belief that the confronting would reduce the likelihood of future prejudicial statements) to the recalled confronting scenario, compared to women primed to feel low power. This result aligns with previous research on power whereby individuals primed with high power, or who are in high power positions, are more likely to construe situations and individuals in terms of what benefits can be derived for them (Gruenfeld, et al., 2008). In addition, these findings map onto the approach/inhibition theory of power (Keltner, et al., 2003) with high power associated with greater reward sensitivity, subsequently increasing approach related behaviors. Importantly, previous research found that this cost-benefits analysis of confronting predicts confronting behavior, such that women who see greater benefits to confronting are more likely to confront sexism behavior (Good et al., 2012).

Contrary to our initial hypothesis we did not see an effect of power on perceived costs, as there was no significant difference between high and low power prime conditions in terms of the costs associated with confronting sexism. Evidence from power literature would seem to indicate that such a relationship should exist, with more reward focused individuals assessing few

costs associated with their actions (Keltner et al., 2003). Unfortunately, it may be the case that women, no matter how powerful they feel, associate confronting with potential costs, a hypothesis supported by the numerous studies indicating women are more negatively evaluated if they confront (Kaiser, 2006; Rasinki et al., 2013; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). While a sober interpretation, we hesitate to speculate on a non-significant result and suggest that future research should investigate this discrepancy.

While Study 1 suggests that power influences the cost-benefit analysis of confronting, particularly in terms of the perceived benefits, there are a few key limitations. First, our study lacked a control condition, focusing only on a high and low power manipulation. Based on previous research which used only a high and low power prime and no control group, (see Boksem, Smolders, & De Cremer, 2009; Slabu & Guinote, 2010; Whitson et al., 2013) as well as constraints on time and resources we chose to also not include a control group. Due to this lack of a baseline we were unable to determine whether high power primed women saw greater benefits to confronting compared to a baseline or whether women, primed with low power, saw fewer benefits. Second, the ordering of our studies may have led women to recall particular instances of confronting, subsequently influencing the cost-benefit analysis. For instance, women in the high power prime condition may have recalled a time when they confronted sexism in a stronger manner, potentially seeing greater benefits in their confrontation. Lastly, Study

1 relied on recall, which may be influenced by a number of factors related to memory bias (Wheeler & Reis, 1991). Furthermore, previous research shows highly divergent rates of confronting when comparing real versus imaged scenarios (Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). Thus, it is important to investigate how power primes operate when women are faced with a real-life confronting scenario. We address some of these concerns in Study 2, namely by utilizing a control condition as well as assessing confronting in a controlled-laboratory experiment.

Study 2

Results from Study 1 indicated that priming power leads women to see greater benefits to confronting sexism. In Study 2 we assess whether high power leads to increased confronting behavior following sexist remarks in a real-life scenario. In order to test this, we created an experimentally-controlled scenario employing an online communication methodology. This format allowed us to ensure that all participants saw the same sexist remark, delivered in a uniform manner, and that all participants had an equal opportunity to respond to the comment. Specifically we employed methods borrowed and adapted from Kroper et al., (2014), whereby participants chatted, via an instant messaging system, with a confederate who makes a sexist comment.

In addition, for Study 2, instead of using a power recall prime we manipulated power using embodied cognition power primes. Theories of

embodied cognition suggest that the motor system influences our cognitions and subsequent behavior (Glenberg, Havas, Becker, & Rinck, 2005).

Previous research suggests that embodied cognition can prime power through different physical body positions, with expansive body positions leading to increased subjective sensations of power, perceptions of confidence, and risk-taking behavior; while contractive body positions reduce sensations of power, and lead to less risk-taking behavior (Carney et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2011). Thus, expansive body positions act as embodied power primes invoking power within the individual, leading to the broad effects related to power, and activating the approach/inhibition framework (Keltner et al., 2003). By using an embodied power prime for both high (i.e., expansive) and low (i.e., contractive body position) we tested a different method of inducing power, extending our understanding of how power influences confronting. To the author's knowledge, this is the first time embodied cognition power primes have been investigated in terms of confronting prejudice. Lastly, we introduced a control condition to see how confronting behaviors differ from baseline levels of power, and to test whether the effects of power are driven more by high or low power primes. This addition affords us a better understanding of the exact directionality of our effects which we did not assess in Study 1 and also allows us to test participants' unprimed reactions to sexist comments.

In Study 2 we investigated whether high power primes engender a stronger confrontation of sexist comments in a real-world confronting scenario. Building upon the results from Study 1, we hypothesized that women primed with high power via an expansive body positions will more intensely confront (i.e., express greater disagreement and less agreement) a sexist comment compared to women in a control or low power prime (i.e., contractive body position) condition.

Method

Participants

One hundred eleven female undergraduates ($M_{age} = 20.4$, $SD = 4.30$) at a medium-sized liberal arts college participated in this study for partial credit in their Introduction to Psychology class or for monetary payment (\$10). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants and all procedures were approved by the institution.

Materials and Procedure

Upon arriving to the lab participants were informed that they would be interacting with another participant in a study examining online communication and decision-making. After waiting three minutes, the female experimenter informed the participant that she had received an e-mail saying the other participant was delayed. At this point, participants were asked to complete a separate five-minute study investigating the effects of ergonomic designs on physiological and emotional outcomes. This procedure was used to convince

participants they were participating in two separate experiments so they would not suspect that both sessions were connected.

For the first part, participants were randomly assigned to sit in one of three conditions, as used by Carney et al. (2010). All participants were directed to a chair and equipped with an arm blood pressure cuff to ostensibly measure blood pressure; this was done to uphold the cover story. In the control condition, participants were instructed to sit normally in the chair. In the expansive (high power) and the contractive (low power) sitting positions, participants were shown the pictures from the Carney et al. (2010) study, with the expansive position characterized by a wide sitting stance and the contractive position depicted as withdrawn and closed in (see Figure 2 for images of the positions). Participants sat in the respective position for five minutes. After this time period, the experimenter measured and recorded participants' blood pressure. Participants then completed the Positive and Negative Affective Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988), where they rated various emotional words on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Very slightly or not at all", to 5 = "Extremely") in which the term "powerful" and "strong" was included.

Following the embodied prime, participants were taken to another area in the lab and told their partner for the original study had arrived. A packet informed participants that they and their partner would read a series of scenarios and then discuss the scenario via Skype's instant messenger program (a program that allows exchanges of written messages in real-time).

For each scenario, participants first read brief demographic information about two individuals (e.g., hobbies, age, academics) and then made decisions about which individual should perform one of two tasks. Participants were told they were randomly selected to respond to their partner following his/her judgment related to the task such that they would agree or disagree following their partner's decision and offer a reason for their decision. The participants were always "randomly assigned" to the condition in which they responded to their partner (i.e., the confederate) in order to allow them a chance to respond to the sexist comment. An example of the filler scenarios is a situation in which a man (Alex) and a woman (Sarah) had to be assigned tasks of "writing a class paper" and "making a class presentation". The participants' "partner" was in fact a confederate and this manipulation was used so that she could type the same scripted responses to all participants. For the scenario of interest, based on Dodd et al., (2001), participants were told to assign a man (Ryan) and a woman (Lauren) to the tasks of "setting up the tent" and "preparing the meal". In response to this scenario, the confederate typed, *"Lauren should take care of the cooking because she is a woman"*. The participant then typed their response, after which the conversation ended.

Participants' responses to the sexist comment were saved and independently coded by two research assistants (RAs) who rated the degree to which the participant confronted on a five-point scale with the following anchors: 1="she made a similar comment, endorsing what the person said",

3="she did nothing, ignored the comment", 5="she verbally reprimanded the person by telling them that they were wrong or that they were offended". In addition, the RAs rated the degree to which the participants' comments seemed to express disagreement (1=not at all disagreed, 7=very strongly disagreed) with the sexist comment. Inter-rater reliability was high between the two coders($\alpha > .88$).

Results and Discussion

Participants' data were removed from analyses for those who suspected that they were not speaking with a real participant ($n = 7$) and for sessions in which the experimenter made an error ($n = 5$). Therefore, the analyses below were conducted with 99 female ($M_{age} = 20.7$, $SD = 4.82$) participants.

A manipulation check was conducted to test whether the combined score on the PANAS for the items "Powerful" and "Strong" ($\alpha = .81$) differed based on the power prime condition. Results showed that women in the expansive (high-power) body position felt more powerful ($M = 1.91$) compared to the contractive (low-power) body position ($M = 1.52$), although this difference was not statistically significant $t(53) = -1.59$, $p = .118$. This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating that expansive body positions do not strongly influence explicit ratings of power but do still impact behavior (Huang et al., 2011).

To test whether power primes increased rates of confronting we first ran a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examining the overall effect of position (i.e., expansive, contractive, control) on coded confronting scores. The results from this ANOVA indicated that although women primed with expansive body positions scored higher ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.21$) than both control ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.22$) and contractive ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.11$) body positions, this effect was not significant, $F(2,96) = .788$, $p = .458$, $\eta^2 = .016$.

Since our main interest was to examine whether a high power prime would lead women to more assertively confront by showing more disagreement with a sexist comment, we chose to run additional analyses investigating only women who confronted. Since power induces action in accordance with one's motivations and beliefs (Galinsky et al., 2003; Whitson et al., 2006), women who express agreement with a sexist comment would have no reason to confront, placing them at odds with our stated hypothesis. Thus, we used the coded confront scores to examine only women who confronted, that is women who scored at least a 3 or higher on the coded confront score. Thus, we eliminated women who agreed with the comment and took as our baseline women who chose to ignore the sexist remark. This left a total of 65 participants.

A one-way ANOVA for disagreement scores indicated a significant difference between conditions, $F(2,62) = 3.854$, $p = .026$, $\eta^2 = .111$. Women in the high power prime condition showed more disagreement ($M = 6.02$, SE

= .26) compared to women in the low power prime condition ($M = 5.16$, $SE = .25$) and control condition ($M = 5.20$, $SE = .26$). In order to test differences between conditions we ran Tukey post-hoc tests. Results showed that the high power prime condition was significantly greater than the low power prime condition ($p < .05$) and marginally significant compared to the control condition ($p = .06$). These results indicate that women, following an expansive / high power position, showed more disagreement in their response to the sexist comment compared to contractive / low power position and control body position.

These results indicate that for women who did not express agreement with sexist remarks, power influenced the assertiveness with which these women confronted. Specifically, women primed with an expansive body position (high power prime) expressed greater disagreement with a sexist remark, compared to women who held a contractive (low power prime) or normal sitting (control) position. These results show promise, particularly in conjunction with findings from Study 1, that power can positively impact women's confronting of sexism.

General Discussion

Previous research has demonstrated that the act of confronting is an effective means of alleviating and reducing the negative consequences and future use of prejudicial comments (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter, 2012; Shelton et al., 2006). Yet, confronting remains an infrequently employed

tactic, with individuals citing numerous reasons for their inaction, such as fear of being negatively evaluated and avoidance of being labelled a complainer or someone who overacting (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dodd et al., 2001; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). All of these reasons place constraints on ones' willingness to act, with individuals assessing whether their potential gains from confronting (i.e., a reduction of the confronted individuals likelihood of future prejudicial remarks) are greater than their potential losses (i.e., being negatively evaluated) (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Good et al., 2012). In the two studies presented here, we investigated whether priming women with power influenced their perceptions of this cost-benefit analysis as well as their actual confronting behavior. Results demonstrated that compared to a low power prime (and a control in Study 2), women primed with high power were more likely to associate confronting with perceived benefits and more assertively confront a sexist remark.

In Study 1, women who were primed with high power, by recalling a time when they had power over another individual, perceived that greater benefits came from an instance when they confronted sexism (i.e., the confrontation would lead to reduced future prejudicial acts for the confronted), compared to women primed with low power. Thus, a high power prime shifted the cost-benefit analysis of confronting, such that greater benefits were associated with the act of confronting. This finding aligns with research on power such that feeling powerful induces greater reward sensitivity and

activates a mindset whereby situations and interpersonal interactions are construed more in terms of their potential benefits rather than their potential costs (Chen, et al., 2001; Gruenfeld et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003). Given the importance of the cost-benefit analysis in decisions to confront sexism (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008) and evidence linking perceived benefits with confronting sexism (Good et al, 2012), being able to shift, through the use of power primes, how beneficial a confrontation is viewed represents an important step in understanding how power may ultimately increase confronting behavior.

For Study 2 we extended findings from Study 1 to assess whether high power primes lead to more assertive confronting behaviors in a real-world situation. Since power induces action (Galinsky et al., 2003; Huang et al., 2011) and leads to a greater assessment of benefits for confronting (Study 1), we reasoned that feeling powerful would increase the assertiveness of a woman's confrontation of sexism. Results from Study 2 demonstrated that women primed with an expansive body position known to increase sensations of power (Carney et al., 2010) were more likely to express disagreement with a sexist comment, compared to women who held a normal sitting position and a contractive body position (i.e., low power prime). Interestingly, results also showed no significant differences between the low power prime and control conditions, indicating that the effect of more assertive confrontations was mainly driven by the high power prime. These findings suggest that power

influences real-life confronting behavior, increasing the strength and assertiveness by which women confront sexist remarks.

These studies are the first to explore how power primes impact women's decision processes to confront and actual confronting behavior. Overall, these findings show promise for how priming power may be used in a beneficial manner. Indeed, confronting may be a particularly suitable domain to explore the effects of power given the inherent power differentials associated with minority/majority groups (Fiske, 1993; Jost & Ross, 1999) and the cost-benefit analyses inherent to decisions of when or when not to confront (Good et al., 2012). Our results indicate that power may uniquely contribute to confronting behavior through two mechanisms, increasing the perceived benefits of confronting and empowering women to act against sexism.

While the primary goal of confronting is to reduce expressions of prejudice (Kaiser, 2006) additional benefits exist for all parties involved (i.e., confronter, confronted, and bystanders) such as, increasing the confronters' sense of empowerment (Shelton & Stewart, 2004) and promoting the confronted and bystanders' awareness of prejudice (Blanchard et al., 1994). Thus, in order to gain these benefits, it is important to understanding factors integral to confronting while also determining means of increasing confronting behavior. Ultimately, this research may lead to the development of interventions that can be used in diversity trainings, such that minorities may learn ways to empower their decisions to confront prejudicial acts in a safe

and effective manner. Whether priming power can affect perceptions of the benefits of confronting and actual confronting behaviors in other situations, such as a sexual minority group member confronting a heterosexist comment, is a fruitful area of research.

A novel aspect of Study 2 is the use of embodied power primes. While not the primary focus on this work, the use of expansive and contractive body positions to prime power links our understanding of cognitive processes to a theoretical framework based on evolutionary systems (Semin & Smith, 2008). Instead of simply demonstrating the effect that power increases the strength of confronting, our use of expansive body positions points to specific bodily processes - increased testosterone and reduced cortisol (Carney et al., 2010) – that helps to explain our finding. For instance, researchers have found that higher testosterone is linked with increased risk-taking (Stanton, Liening, & Schultheiss, 2011) and higher traits of social dominance (Booth, Granger, Mazur, & Kivlighana, 2006). Thus, expansive body positions may increase testosterone, leading women to take the “riskier” option of confronting sexism. Unfortunately our findings can only go so far in understanding these processes since we did not directly measure physiological reactions to our expansive body positions (although previous research has demonstrated the proposed physiological effects; Carney et al., 2010). Future research would be well served by investigating and measuring the interrelations between embodied power primes, confronting, and physiological reactions.

These studies also contribute to a nascent literature focused on understanding power in more applied contexts, particularly as a means to mitigate negative prejudicial and discriminatory effects. For instance, Van Loo and Rydell (2013) showed that following a high power prime, women showed reduced effects for stereotype threat on math performance. In addition, research from our lab has shown that priming women with stereotypically male body positions (e.g., a stereotypic wide legged sitting stance) reduces the effects of stereotype threat (Nicolas, Alt, Chaney, & Dickter, *in prep*). While this work is distinctly disassociated from power, it does speak to the influence body positions and embodied cognition can have on gendered effects. In conjunction with the present studies, the groundwork has been laid to understand how power primes and embodied cognition may influence and ultimately work to reduce negative effects associated with sexism.

Limitations & Future Directions

We recognize potential limitations to both studies. As discussed previously, findings from Study 1 must be qualified by potential uninvestigated order effects, particularly the placement of our high/low power prime before the recall of the confronting scenario. Such ordering could potentially influence the kind of sexist confronting scenario participants recalled. One means to ameliorate this issue, or at least test for differences, would be to code the stories participants wrote for dimensions such as power and

assertiveness. If no differences are found then we can likely trust our data more, in that power influenced the assessment of benefits.

A main limitation to Study 2 is that we chose to exclude women who did not confront the sexist comment, which led to a fairly sizable reduction in participants (approximately 35%). For our study, we hypothesized that power would increase the assertiveness of a confrontation as higher power leads to greater action and a focus on benefits associated with confronting (Study 1). In the analyses for Study 2 we chose to exclude women who initially expressed agreement with the comment because power should theoretically work in the reverse direction for these women. For instance, since power increases action in accordance with one's goals and motivations ((Fischer, Fischer, Englich, Aydin, & Frey, 2011; Slabu & Guinote, 2010;), a woman who did not view the comment in Study 2 to be sexist and/or is motivated to affirm sexist comments (e.g., perhaps to seem more likable; Kaiser & Miller, 2001), would by extension not show a tendency to confront. Given that our specific focus was on the assertiveness of confronting, examining women's affirmation of sexist remarks would only serve to work against our hypotheses. Again, our hypotheses specifically focused on whether power influenced the assertiveness of confronting due to previous research linking assertive confrontations (e.g., those that express more disagreement) with larger increases in egalitarian norms (Dickter et al., 2012). Still, investigating women who express agreement with sexist comments is an important direction for

future research as power, for women not motivated to confront sexism, may actually work to sustain sexist comments since there is greater affirmation of the sexism remark.

The use of an online interaction in Study 2, as opposed to a face-to-face interpersonal exchange, may have impacted the assertiveness of confronting because participants were slightly removed from the immediacy of the environment (Shelton & Stewart, 2004). Recently, confronting research has shifted to the use of an online instant message exchange paradigm due mainly to the strong experimental control it affords, such that all participants read the same sexist comment and have the same opportunity to confront (Kroper et al., 2014). Still, there may be important differences between confronting via an online interaction versus a face-to-face confrontation. Future research should compare these differences between methods.

Finally, given the results from the current research, it would be interesting and fruitful to test whether the relationship between perceived benefits of confronting (Study 1) mediates our findings on power and confronting from Study 2. While Good et al. (2012) showed that women were more likely to report confronting if they saw greater perceived benefits, it is important to test this notion directly in a laboratory controlled experiment. In addition, other variables beyond simply those measured in Study 1 may also be included in a cost-benefit analysis of confronting. Future research should try assessing the potentially different benefits (e.g., feeling satisfied after the

confrontation) and costs (e.g., losing access to particular resources the confronted controls) associated with confronting to see if power differentially affects various benefits and costs.

Another potentially interesting future direction is to investigate how the effects of high power primes operate in terms of majority group members' decisions to confront prejudicial remarks. Research on the evaluation and perception of confronters has shown that group membership impacts how negatively a confronter is evaluated. For example, Gulker et al. (2013) showed that when a White individual confronted another White person who made a racist comment, the confronter was evaluated more positively compared to a Black individual who confronted the same prejudicial comment. Given that majority group members also report similar levels of unease and reluctance to confront as minority group members, again associated with potential negative costs associated with confronting (Czopp, et al., 2006; Kroeper et al., (2014), it would be of interest to investigate whether power primes can also influence majority group members' confrontation of prejudicial comments, particularly since confrontations by majority group members may be more persuasive than those by minority group members (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

Conclusion

Broadly, this research follows a call to action whereby psychologists develop novel solutions to social issues of oppression, prejudice and

discrimination by utilizing psychological principles and findings (Cohen, 2011). In the studies presented here we applied research findings on power, both from traditional power recall primes and embodied cognition power primes, to confronting research. In Study 1 we found that power influence women's cognitions about confronting, such that high power primes lead to greater perceived benefits associated with confronting sexism. Given that women's decisions to confront are deeply influenced by perceived costs and benefits (Good et al., 2012), it is valuable to investigate means of shifting this analysis to associate greater benefits with confronting.

Results from Study 2 indicated that high power primes lead to more assertive confrontations of sexism, highlighting how power may induce action in accordance with one's beliefs (Galinsky et al., 2003) and applying this principle to a novel domain, confronting behaviors. As previous research shows, women frequently choose not to confront sexist comments citing greater costs and action inhibitory reasons (e.g., fear of negative evaluation) even though they evaluate the sexist comment negatively (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Overall, the research presented here shows great promise for how power primes may be used as a means of empowering women to perceive greater benefits to confronting and ultimately take more assertive action against sexism.

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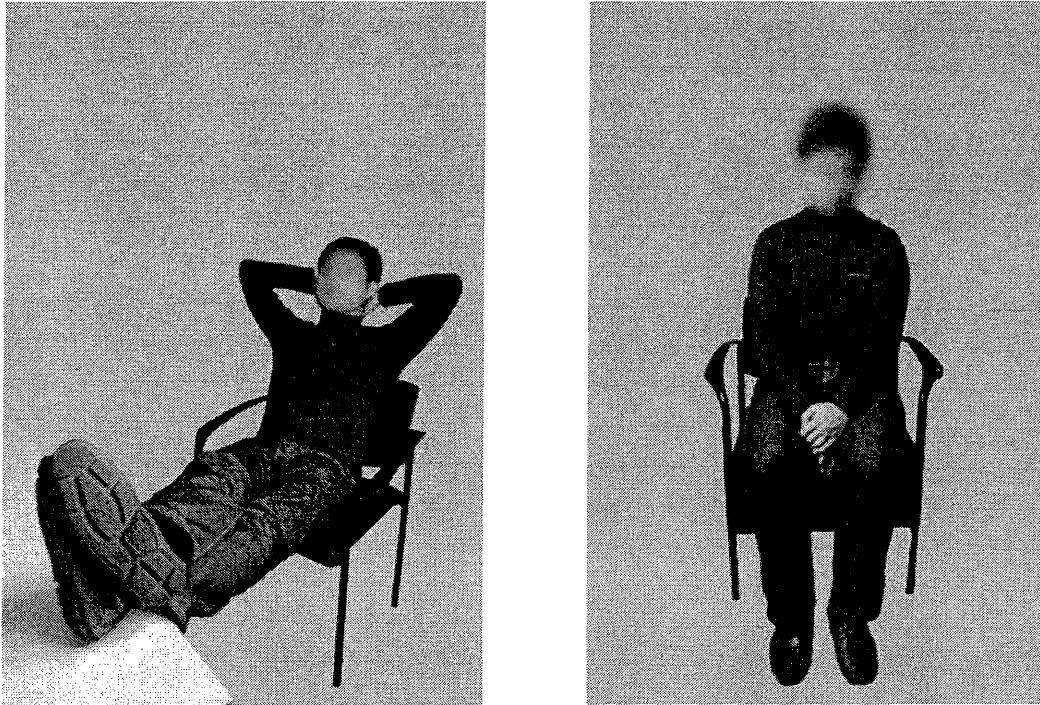


Figure 1. Images of the embodied power primes used in Study 2, high power pose (left) and low power pose (right) (images from Carney, et al., 2010).

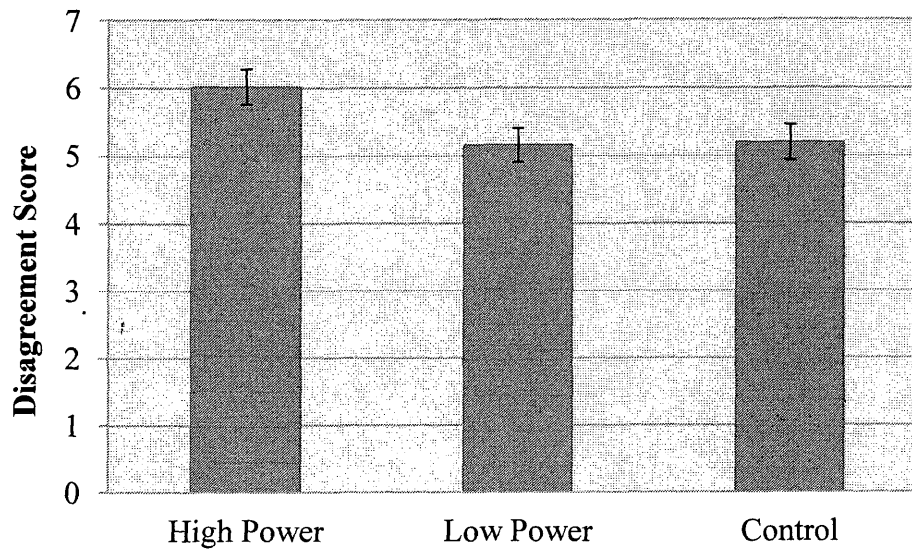


Figure 2. Coded disagreement scores by power prime condition (high, low, and control).