Racial Differences in Women's Role-Taking Accuracy: How Status Matters

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Abstract: Role-taking is the process of mentally and affectively placing the self in the position of another, understanding the world from the other's perspective. Role-taking serves an expressive function within interpersonal interaction, supporting others to pursue instrumental tasks that are recognized, valued, and rewarded. In the present work, we compare role-taking accuracy between white women and black women across status-varying interactional arrangements. Data for this study come from a series of two laboratory experiments. Experiment 1 establishes racial differences in white and black women's role-taking accuracy, showing that women of color are significantly more attuned to others within social encounters. Experiment 2 implements an intervention to undermine racial disparities in role-taking accuracy, showing that expressive labors equalize when black women are empowered within the social structure. Findings highlight the entwinement of status structures with interpersonal processes while demonstrating the efficacy and value of structural reforms.

Keywords: race; status; inequality; role-taking; empathy; emotional labor

$\mathbb{R}$OLE-TAKING is the process of mentally and affectively putting the self in the position of another, perceiving the world from the other's perspective (Davis and Love 2017; Mead 1934; Schwalbe 1988). It is a foundational construct in sociological social psychology and a building block of selfhood, interpersonal interaction, and community social life. Role-taking is also effortful. It involves cognitive and emotional attention, and behavioral adjustment, in light of situational meanings and interpersonal social cues. Although the systematic measurement of role-taking is relatively recent, early findings show patterned variations in role-taking accuracy that fall along status lines. Most notably, a series of laboratory experiments show that women are significantly and substantially more accurate role-takers than men, but that gender effects dissipate when women are placed in high status positions (Love and Davis 2014). This means that the social cliché about "women's intuition" does not reflect an intrinsic or essential gendered characteristic, but is in fact a product of women's perpetually low status position within the social structure. Moreover, it indicates that the effects of status markers are not immutable, but subject to change.

In the present work, we build on these findings by examining racial differences in women's role-taking accuracy, comparing role-taking accuracy between white women and black women through a two-part laboratory study. This work bolsters a burgeoning research program at the intersection of role-taking and status while attending to the ways race inflects intragender relations. We thus work to clarify the status dimensions of role-taking, identify their manifestation through axes of inequality, and test a mechanism of intervention.

Understanding and intervening in status-differentiated role-taking processes is a critical task. Role-taking is a form of expressive labor within interpersonal interaction. Expressive labors are those that tend to others' emotions, support their identity performances, and facilitate interactive ease (Hochschild 1983, Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill 1977). Such work facilitates social comfort and connection, freeing others to complete instrumental tasks that are recognized, valued, and rewarded (Cottingham, Erickson, and Diefendorff 2015; Gerber 2009, Lively 2013). All else held constant, people with less status within the social structure engage in more expressive labor, and people with higher status engage in less, reflecting and reinforcing conditions of inequality (Clay-Warner and Robinson 2011; Ridgeway 2019). The share of expressive labor concentrates, in particular, among women of color as compared with other groups (Buckingham 2018; Cottingham, Johnson, and Erickson 2018; DeCuir-Gunby, Long-Mitchell, and Grant 2009; Evans 2013; Sloan, Evenson Newhouse and Thompson 2013). As a fundamental social process, role-taking is a key channel through which these structural inequalities materialize at the micro level.

We proceed with a series of two experiments. Experiment 1 ($N = 80$) tests for variation in white women's and black women's role-taking accuracy. Experiment 2 ($N = 160$) tests an intervention aimed at undermining racial disparities by manipulating the underlying causal variable: status. Results from the combined experiments demonstrate significant differences between white and black women's role-taking accuracy, which dissipate when interaction structures are intentionally rearranged. Findings highlight the plasticity of social structures and opportunities for reform.

Literature

Role-Taking

The concept of role-taking originates with George Herbert Mead (1934), who theorized it as a hallmark of selfhood and community life. Role-taking entails taking the self as both subject and object, understanding one's own position within the social structure, and understanding others' positions in turn. Role-taking incorporates communicative, affective, and cognitive elements as interaction partners present, receive, read, and interpret social cues (Schwalbe 1988).

Role-taking is a distinctly structural construct. Rather than approaching each interaction and each individual as singular and unique, people engage each other as occupants of structurally related social roles with preset meanings and behavioral expectations attached (Mead 1934). To sustain rituals of interaction, social subjects must recognize shared situational meanings, including definitions of self and other within the interaction setting (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000). In this way, role-taking hinges on the infusion of socio-structural arrangements into microprocesses of interpersonal encounters.

Although it is fundamentally social, role-taking envelopes two related psychological processes: perspective taking and empathy (Davis and Love 2017). Perspective taking is the cognitive process of recognizing others' thoughts and feelings

(Chandler 1973; Flavell 1992; Piaget 2002), and empathy pertains to shared feeling, being moved by others' emotions (Davis 2018; Decety and Jackson 2004; Hoffman 2001; Mehrabian and Epstein 1972). Role-taking is thus conceptualized as a structural process incorporating cognitive and affective dimensions. This definition has been formalized as follows (Davis and Love 2017):

> Role-taking is the practice of placing the self in another's or others' positions. This includes discerning what others think and how they feel (perspective taking) and sharing in others' affective states (empathy) (P. 167).

This definition of role-taking, which we rely on in the present work, incorporates three key assumptions: role-taking is *effectual, variable, and malleable* (Davis and Love 2017). These assumptions indicate that role-taking has an effect on micro-interactions and broader social structures; role-taking varies between persons; and role-taking aptitude is not fixed, but subject to shifts in structural circumstances and/or interpersonal interventions. To this latter point, we follow Schwalbe (1988) in referring to role-taking as a *propensity*, rather than an *ability*. All persons have the *ability* to role-take but vary in their inclination to do so.[1] The structural nature of role-taking makes it ideal for studies of status inequalities, while its cognitive, affective, and interactive elements situate status processes at the micro level (Love and Davis 2014; Schwalbe 1988).

Role-taking is multifaceted and can be measured as *range, depth,* and/or *accuracy* (Schwalbe 1988). *Range* is the capacity to role-take with a multiplicity of others, *depth* refers to holistic engagement with the entirety of another's worldview, and *accuracy* refers to recognition of others' thoughts and feelings, along with behavioral prediction within a concrete situation. Behavioral prediction is a skill of necessity for those who are relatively dependent within the existing social order, connecting role-taking accuracy to structural hierarchies of status (Schwalbe 1988). We therefore focus our study on role-taking accuracy as a behavioral measure, tied to status, for which prediction entails both emotion and cognition (Love and Davis 2014; Schwalbe 1988).

Role-Taking and Status

Role-taking is associated with a range of prosocial outcomes. Taking the role of the other strengthens social cohesion, reduces stereotypes, increases helping behavior, and supports positive out-group evaluations (Bailenson 2018; Hooper et al. 2015; Kalyanaraman et al. 2010; Rosenberg, Baughman and Bailenson 2013; Shott 1979; Stryker 1957). Role-taking is thus a crucial element of societal maintenance, and its dereliction poses threats to the interaction order. Role-taking is also a lot of work and therefore a motivated practice. Attending to others' thoughts and feelings requires cognitive energy and risks emotional fatigue (Zaki 2014). Hence, role-taking is a propensity, rather than an ability (Schwalbe 1988).

Accurate role-taking is a necessity for low status persons who rely on, and lend support to, higher status interaction partners (Gerber 2009; Ridgeway 2014; Schmid Mast and Latu 2016; Dietze and Knowles 2021). For those with high status,

the need and expectation to accurately role-take is less pressing. Status refers to one's hierarchical location within the social structure. As conceived in status characteristics and expectation states (SCES) theory, status position is tied to esteem and performance expectations, favoring those at the top of status hierarchies (and penalizing those below) (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, Jr. 1972; Berger et al. 1977).

Status is a function of specific and diffuse traits. *Specific* status characteristics are those tied to particular skillsets (e.g., athleticism, mathematical expertise), and *diffuse* status characteristics are tied to omnipresent identity markers (e.g., race, class, gender) (Berger et al. 1977; Berger et al. 2018; Correll and Ridgeway 2006). SCES theory assumes that people use all status information such that the combination of an individual's status traits combine to mitigate or compound positive and negative effects (Berger and Fişek 2006; Harkness 2016; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). Status processes result in observable indicators of power and prestige. High status persons talk more, have greater influence, and exert dominance in task group settings. High status also empowers instrumental behaviors within task groups, whereas low status engenders the enactment of expressive, supportive functions (Gerber 2009; Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill 1977). These status processes reflect and reinforce existing social structures (Berger et al. 1972; Berger et al. 1977; Berger et al. 2018, Correll and Ridgeway 2006; Ridgeway 2019).

Both gender and race are diffuse status characteristics, privileging men and white people, respectively. In laboratory studies, women and people of color exert less influence in task groups and are perceived as less competent than those with higher status traits (Goar and Sell 2005; Ridgeway 1993; Savage, Dippong, and Melamed 2020). These patterns have long manifested in studies of interpersonal sensitivity, a broad category that encompasses several role-taking–related variables. Research shows that women consistently score higher than men on interpersonal accuracy measures (Hall 1978; Hall, Gunnery, and Horgan 2016; Ickes, Gesn, and Graham 2000; Rosenthal et al. 1974; Rosip and Hall 2004); wives self-report as better role-takers than their husbands (Cast 2004; Stets and Cast 2007; Thomas 1972); and men show increased sensitivity toward others when employed in feminized occupations (e.g., nurse, teacher) (Rosenthal et al. 1974). Similar results ensue for racial differences, with African Americans empathizing and perspective taking more actively than white people, whereas white people systematically underestimate and mischaracterize painful experiences of minority racial groups (Avenanti, Sirigu, and Aglioti 2010; Chiao and Mathur 2010; Gitter, Black, and Mostofsky 1972; Holoien et al. 2015; Trawalter, Hoffman, and Waytz 2012).

The relationship between role-taking and status was first formalized in a gender-based study, which we described in the introductory section. The study showed that women are significantly and substantially more accurate role-takers than men. However, when women were authorized into high status positions within a task group, gender effects dissolved (Love and Davis 2014). This status-equalizing intervention represents an adjustment to the interaction situation that disrupts the status process. It is founded on the "burden of proof" assumption in SCES theory, which indicates that identity markers shape interaction in line with status hierarchies *unless status traits are shown irrelevant* (Berger et al. 1977). Thus, by default, status operates through sustained momentum that reproduces privilege

and power. However, status hierarchies are not set in stone, but subject to situational circumstances (Cohen and Roper 1972; Goar and Sell 2005; Manago, Sell, and Goar 2018; Riordan and Ruggiero 1980).

Our two-part research design in the present study replicates and builds on Love and Davis (2014) to examine role-taking variation between white women and black women. Given the intersecting nature of status characteristics, the capacity for structural intervention, and the malleability of role-taking propensity (Davis and Love 2017; Love and Davis 2014; Schwalbe 1988), our experimental design both documents and works to destabilize racial disparities in women's role-taking accuracy in the context of intragender interactions.

Experiments

The purpose of the present work is to better understand role-taking processes at the intersection of race and gender. We thus conducted two experiments in which we compared role-taking accuracy between white women and black women and intervened to equalize role-taking through a modest status manipulation. In line with renewed calls for scientific protocols of replication and incremental advancement (Open Science Collaboration 2015; Munafò et al. 2017; Webster and Sell 2014), our research design follows procedures from prior tests of gender, status, and role-taking accuracy (Love and Davis 2014), extending these findings to race as a related but distinct status variable. The original study on which our procedures are based included both men and women. The present study includes women only. Prior studies have established that women role-take more actively and accurately than men, exerting greater expressive effort within interpersonal interaction. We therefore focus exclusively on women in this study to understand how racial identity inflects expressive gendered processes.

Experiment 1

In Experiment 1 we test for racial differences in role-taking accuracy between white women and black women. We test this with 40 same-race dyads (80 participants) who vary in their history of interaction. Experiment 1 is driven by the following hypothesis, derived from studies of micro-interaction, role-taking, and race–gender inequality in expressive tasks.

> Hypothesis 1: All else held constant, black women will role-take more accurately than white women.

If our hypothesis is supported it will indicate that race acts as a predictor of role-taking variation, even among a population with relatively high role-taking propensity (i.e., women). If our hypothesis is not supported, it will instigate further investigation into the relationship between race and gender in role-taking taking processes.

Participants. Participants for Experiment 1 are 80 individual women, paired into 40 dyads, broken into four conditions. Sample size follows power analysis from Love and Davis (2014). Participants were recruited from undergraduate courses at

Table 1: Experiment 1 conditions

		N
a	Black Friends	20
b	Black Strangers	20
c	White Friends	20
d	White Strangers	20

a large public university in the southern United States. At the time of recruitment, participants completed an interest form that asked a series of demographic questions, including age, year in school, racial identity, and gender identity. Participants were informed that they would receive payment for participation ($15 to $20). A researcher contacted potential participants via phone and randomly assigned each participant to either the "Friend" or "Stranger" condition. In the "Friend" condition, participants were asked to bring a same-race friend to the laboratory with them. In the "Stranger" condition, participants came to the laboratory alone and were randomly paired with a same-race partner. This resulted in 10 dyads in each of four conditions: Black Friends, Black Strangers, White Friends, White Strangers (see Table 1). We include history of interaction (i.e., "Friends" and "Strangers") to account for accuracy advantages that come with friendship history (see Beckes, Coan, and Hasselmo 2013; Colvin, Vogt, and Ickes 1997; Ford and Aberdein 2015; Meyer et al. 2015).

Procedures. To avoid confirmation bias, the research assistants who ran the studies were naive to hypotheses. Upon arrival at the laboratory, a research assistant introduced participants to each other if they were strangers. No introduction was required for participants in the Friend condition. The researcher brought participants into a common room, explained the instructions for the study, and obtained signed informed consent. Participants learned that they would make $15 automatically, with the possibility of a $5 bonus based on their task performance during the study. In fact, all participants earned the full $20 for participation. The "bonus" was used to motivate task focus. Participants were then separated into individual cubicles.

Once in their cubicles, participants began the *Roommate Arbitration Task,* a protocol developed and validated for the study of status and role-taking (Love and Davis 2014). In the Roommate Arbitration Task, participants view two separate videos of roommates having a disagreement. Participants answer a series of opinion questions about the videos and then predict their partners' responses. The roommates in the videos are actors, but the problems they discuss are derived from surveys and pretests with undergraduate students, optimizing the relatability of the video content for a university-based participant pool.

Participants in this study watched two videos, one in which two men act out a series of disagreements (e.g., dirty dishes, monopolizing the television, loud music) and another in which two women act out a series of disagreements (e.g., pet ownership, sharing chores, visitors). All participants watched both videos. Directly following each video, participants answered a series of 15 questions (total of 30 questions for both videos) that asked which issues are most important, which

roommate is more at fault, and whether they believe the roommates should continue living together. After giving their own responses, participants were asked to predict how their partner responded to the exact same questionnaire. Participants were reminded that they were eligible for a $5 bonus if they accurately predicted their partner's responses. After participants completed the questionnaire from their partner's perspective, a researcher debriefed participants and paid both of them $20 for their time.

Variables. Experiment 1 has two independent variables and one dependent variable. The independent variables are race (black/white) and condition (Friend/Stranger). Race is indicated by participant self-identification at the time of recruitment, and condition was randomly assigned, with Friends coming to the laboratory together and Strangers meeting at the laboratory for the first time. Within the Friend condition, we controlled for variation in the length of participants' interaction history by asking how long they had known each other, measured in months.

The dependent variable is role-taking accuracy, conceptualized as the accuracy with which persons predict others' behaviors. We assume that accurately predicting others' behaviors entails both cognitive and affective processes (Love and Davis 2014, Schwalbe 1988) and is thus a valid empirical indicator of role-taking as a holistic construct (Davis and Love 2017). We operationalize role-taking accuracy as the distance between a participant's 30 predictions about their partner's responses and their partner's actual responses. Each of the 30 items allows six Likert-type answer choices, anchored by importance/nonimportance and agreement/disagreement, as relevant. Accuracy is determined by summing the numerical absolute distance between the participant's prediction and their partner's actual answer on all items, dividing that number by the total possible numeric distance, and subtracting the resultant proportion from 1, producing a score between 0 and 1. This represents a continuum of role-taking accuracy where a score of 0 indicates no correct predictions, and scores trending toward zero indicate increasingly inaccurate predictions, whereas scores trending toward 1 indicate increasingly accurate predictions, and a score of 1 indicates perfect prediction. Thus, higher scores represent greater role-taking accuracy, and lower scores represent less accurate role-taking. In equation form, $1 - (d/150) =$ role-taking score, where d is total absolute distance between predicted and actual responses summed across all 30 items.

Results. Results from Experiment 1 are displayed in Table 2 and indicate support for our hypothesis that black women will role-take more accurately than white women. The overall mean role-taking accuracy score for all participants in the study is 0.823 with a standard deviation of 0.074. The mean role-taking accuracy score for black women is 0.839, and the mean for white women is 0.807. Friends were more accurate than Strangers with mean role-taking accuracy scores of 0.842 and 0.803, respectively. Within race, Strangers and Friends show similar variation. In order from least to most accurate the conditions rank as follows: White Strangers (0.789), Black Strangers (0.818), White Friends (0.824), Black Friends (0.860).

Race, friendship status, and the interaction between race and friendship status were entered into an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether these differences in means were statistically significant and whether a significant interaction occurs between race and friendship status. The results of the ANOVA, displayed in

Table 2: Experiment 1 mean role-taking accuracy score

Category	N	Mean (SD)
Overall Mean	80	0.8226 (0.07)
Friends	40	0.8420 (0.07)
Strangers	40	0.8032 (0.08)
White	40	0.8065 (0.07)
Black	40	0.8387 (0.08)
White Strangers	20	0.7888 (0.07)
Black Strangers	20	0.8176 (0.08)
White Friends	20	0.8242 (0.06)
Black Friends	20	0.8598 (0.07)

Table 3, show that the model is significant with an F of 3.373 and an alpha probability level of 0.02. The effect of race is significant ($F = 4.11$, $p = 0.05$), as is the effect of friendship status ($F = 5.96$, $p = 0.02$). Race and friendship do not interact in a statistically significant way ($F = 0.046$, $p = 0.83$). Although role-taking accuracy is higher for Friends and for black participants, being Black Friends or White Friends does not affect role-taking accuracy. Particularly notable is the finding that Black Strangers ($\bar{x} = 0.818$, $\sigma = 0.08$) and White Friends ($\bar{x} = 0.824$, $\sigma = 0.06$) have mean role-taking accuracy scores that are statistically equivalent to one another. These findings replicate existing studies of role-taking and gender, extend them to include race effects, and reflect prevailing standards by which women of color perform disproportionate expressive labor in the course of interpersonal encounters.

Experiment 2

Experiment 1 shows that black women role-take more accurately than white women, demonstrating the pervasion of racialized status inequalities at the micro level. The next step is to test whether this race effect can be undermined through changes to the

Table 3: Experiment 1 analysis of variance, role-taking accuracy by friendship status, race, and race composition of the dyad

Source	DF	MS	F	Pr>F
Model	3	0.017	3.373	0.02
Error	76	0.005		
Corrected Total	79			

Source	DF	MS	F	Pr>F
Friendship status	1	0.030	5.964	0.02
Race	1	0.021	4.110	0.05
Race*friendship status	1	0.000	0.046	0.83

Note: The reference categories for friendship status and race are Strangers and black participants, respectively. DF, degrees of freedom; MS, mean square; F, F statistic; Pr>F, p value associated with F statistic.

Table 4: Experiment 2 conditions

	Supervisor	Employee
a	Black	Black
b	Black	White
c	White	Black
d	White	White

interaction structure. We thus implemented a modest intervention to explore how structural adjustments can result in more evenly distributed role-taking outcomes between white and black women. We did so through a two-stage experiment. In the first stage, we constructed intentional status differences in mixed- and same-race groups. In the second stage, participants engaged in the Roommate Arbitration Task, producing role-taking accuracy scores. We predict that the status intervention will reduce racial discrepancies in white and black women's role-taking accuracy. This is formalized in Hypothesis 2.

> Hypothesis 2: All else held constant, women assigned to low status positions within a task group will role-take more accurately than women assigned to high status positions, regardless of race.

If our hypothesis is supported, it will indicate that adjustments to the interaction structure can promote racial parity in women's role-taking accuracy. Namely, putting women of color in high status roles will reduce existing disparities in expressive labor. If our hypothesis is not supported, it will instigate exploration into more aggressive intervention strategies to overcome ingrained race–gender inequalities.

Experiment 2 has eight total conditions, which vary by racial identity of participants (black/white), assigned status position (high status/low status), and racial composition of the group (mixed/same) (see Table 4). We instantiate status in stage 1 of the experiment by legitimating participants into supervisory and subordinate roles in a manufactured grocery store setting. The design includes four types of two-person groups: (a) a Black Supervisor with a Black Employee, (b) a Black Supervisor with a White Employee, (c) a White Supervisor with a Black Employee, and (d) a White Supervisor with a White Employee.

Participants. One hundred sixty participants were recruited from large undergraduate classes at the same university, in the same manner, as Experiment 1. Although sampling procedures were the same, Experiment 1 and Experiment 2 rely on entirely separate samples to maintain participants' naivety to study procedures and hypotheses. When a researcher called to schedule participants, the researcher asked participants about their work history. This question was used to legitimate status structures at a later point in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to either same-race or mixed-race dyads and to either a supervisory or subordinate position within the stage 1 task group. Continuing to focus on racialized gender patterns, participation was limited to women. All participants were "strangers" and had no history of interaction. Each of the eight conditions had 10 dyads/20

participants, comprising 80 total dyads/160 participants. As with Experiment 1, sample size was determined based on calculations from Love and Davis (2014).

Procedures. After arriving at the laboratory, a research assistant told participants that they would be partaking in two short, separate, experimental studies. In reality, participants were led through two parts of the same experiment (stage 1 and stage 2). They were told that the first experiment required them to work together on a collaborative task, and the second was independent and computer-based. Participants signed informed consent sheets and were introduced to the procedures for stage 1.

In stage 1 we used existing procedures for legitimating status in laboratory experiments (Johnson 1994). Participants engaged in a fictitious grocery store setting for 30 minutes. One participant was assigned the position of "Supervisor," and the other participant was assigned the position of "Employee." Although these designations were random, the researcher told participants that their assigned positions were determined by employment history, as reported at the time of scheduling. Those assigned to "Supervisor" were given a nicely arranged office space where they completed complex decision-making tasks, delegated work to the Employee, evaluated the Employee's work, and were told they would receive higher pay than their subordinate. In contrast, those assigned to the "Employee" position were placed in a large open room (no office), completed mundane repetitive tasks (e.g., coupon sorting), were subject to Supervisor evaluations, and were told their pay would be less than that of their superior.

After 30 minutes of interaction in the grocery store setting, participants engaged in a collaborative task. Participants worked independently and then together to rank the efficacy of several shoplifting reduction strategies. This task lasted approximately 15 minutes. The purpose of this task was to check our status manipulation. Next, participants were reminded that they agreed to participate in two studies. They were ushered into the "second study," which was actually stage 2 of the same experiment. In stage 2, participants completed the Roommate Arbitration Task, as described in Experiment 1. This stage of the study lasted approximately 30 minutes. After the Roommate Arbitration Task, participants were given manipulation checks, debriefed, and paid. Utilizing the same task (Roommate Arbitration Task) allowed for a meaningful comparison of results between Experiment 1 (race effects on women's role-taking accuracy) and Experiment 2 (race effects on women's role-taking accuracy after a status intervention). This helped establish that differences in outcome were a function of experimental manipulations, rather than procedural variation.

Variables. Experiment 2 has two independent variables and one dependent variable. The two independent variables are participant race and assigned status. The dependent variable for Experiment 2 is the role-taking accuracy score, controlling for racial composition of the group. Race was measured as participants' self-identified racial category (black/white). Assigned status was instantiated through position in the grocery store setting, with participants randomly appointed to either Supervisor or Employee (high status/low status). Racial composition was randomly assigned by allocating participants to same-race or mixed-race dyads.

Assignment to either Supervisor or Employee was random. However, the researcher told participants that the assignment was based on the participant's employment history. That is, we attributed assigned status position to merit rather than random chance in order to give the positions legitimacy (Johnson 1994). Providing external legitimacy for assigned status was critical, as people with low ascribed status traits (e.g., women of color) have been shown to resist high status roles unless authorized into these positions (Ridgeway and Berger 1986).

Our main dependent variable is role-taking accuracy. As in Experiment 1, role-taking accuracy was calculated as the proportion of correct predictions each participant made about their partners' responses, with scores ranging from 0 (completely inaccurate) to 1 (perfect accuracy), such that high scores indicate high accuracy and low scores indicate low accuracy.

Manipulation checks. Experiment 2 attempts to undermine racial disparities in women's role-taking accuracy with an assigned status manipulation. The validity of our results relies on the success of this manipulation to convey status within the laboratory setting. We therefore performed manipulation checks to ensure participants understood their assigned positions and that status differences were successfully implemented through the experimental procedures.

To check that participants understood the positions to which they were assigned, the researcher asked participants about their assigned job title and how the assignment was determined. The appropriate response was that their position was based on job history. Three of the original 80 dyads failed this manipulation check by stating that their assignment as Supervisor or Employee was based on some criteria other than work history. We dropped these cases and ran three additional groups to re-establish the 80-dyad/160-participant goal.

We determined whether the status manipulation was effective through the shoplifting rankings task mentioned above. Participants were given explanations of several techniques that retailers use to reduce shoplifting. The participants ranked these techniques in order of effectiveness. After completing the task individually, participants completed the task collaboratively and recorded their combined input into a single ranking. We expect Supervisors to have greater influence on this task than Employees, indicating a successful status instantiation. Influence was calculated as the amount of change in the individual's rankings compared with the group's submitted final rankings. In all groups, the Supervisor's initial rankings were statistically significantly more similar to the group's final rankings than were the Employee's initial rankings, showing disproportionate influence from those assigned to high status positions. This indicates an effective status instantiation.

Results. Table 5 shows mean role-taking accuracy by category. It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, the category of "Supervisor" includes both white and black women assigned to the higher status position. In the same way, the reported means for white and black participants include scores from those assigned to both "Supervisor" and "Employee" status positions. All means include scores from both mixed-race and same-race dyads.

The hypothesis for Experiment 2 is that participants assigned to low status positions within a task group will role-take more accurately than participants placed in high status positions, regardless of race. To test this hypothesis, we conducted

Table 5: Experiment 2 mean role-taking accuracy score

Category	N	Mean (SD)
Overall Mean	160	0.7868 (0.08)
Supervisors	80	0.7753 (0.07)
Employees	80	0.7984 (0.07)
White	80	0.7804 (0.07)
Black	80	0.7933 (0.08)
White Supervisors	40	0.7676 (0.08)
Black Supervisors	40	0.7830 (0.07)
White Employees	40	0.7932 (0.06)
Black Employees	40	0.8036 (0.08)

an ANOVA including all relevant variables. Participant race (black/white) and assigned status (high/low) were the independent variables, with role-taking accuracy score as the dependent variable, controlling for racial composition of the group (mixed/same). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

The *F* statistic value for the overall model is 18.056 with a resulting alpha probability level of less than 0.01. This indicates that the complete model does indeed explain the variation observed in role-taking accuracy. Each predictor variable carries with it its own *F* statistic and alpha probability score. The *F* value for participant race is 1.546 with a resulting alpha probability of 0.22. This indicates that individual race is *not* a statistically significant indicator of role-taking accuracy when controlling for assigned status and the racial composition of the dyad. Additionally, the *F* value for assigned status as Supervisor or Employee is 4.954 with a resulting alpha probability of 0.03. This indicates that assigned status *is* a statistically significant

Table 6: Experiment 2 analysis of variance, role-taking accuracy by status, race, and race composition of the dyad

Source	DF	MS	*F*	Pr>*F*
Model	3	0.077	18.056	<0.01
Error	156	0.004		
Corrected Total	159			

Source	DF	MS	*F*	Pr>*F*
Assigned position	1	0.021	4.954	0.03
Race	1	0.007	1.546	0.22
Same race	1	0.205	47.668	<0.01

Notes: The reference categories for assigned position and race are Employees and black participants, respectively. Racial composition of the group is significant, but we include this as a control variable rather than a predictor. The finding that role-taking accuracy scores are significantly higher for same-race dyads than mixed-race dyads aligns with expectations of intragroup role-taking advantage (Cikara, Bruneau, and Saxe 2011, Zaki and Cikara 2015). DF, degrees of freedom; MS, mean square; *F*, *F* statistic; Pr>*F*, *p* value associated with *F* statistic.

Table 7: Mean role-taking score by Experiment 2 conditions

	Supervisor		Employee	
a	Black	0.8176	Black	0.8598
b	Black	0.7484	White	0.7622
c	White	0.7465	Black	0.7473
d	White	0.7888	White	0.8242

indicator of role-taking accuracy when controlling for participant race and racial composition of the dyad.

We also tested two interaction effects to discern the robustness of status as an explanatory variable. These include the interaction between racial composition of the dyad (mixed/same) and assigned status (high/low), and the interaction between racial composition of the dyad (mixed/same) and race of the individual (black/white). As expected, results from these interaction effects did not reach significance, indicating that the status manipulation drove results across conditions. We do note, however, that the interaction between racial composition and individual race approached significance, trending toward higher role-taking accuracy averages when the dyad was composed of two black women. Although this may rise to significance with a larger sample size, the effect is still substantially reduced from Experiment 1, thus maintaining support for the hypothesis that authorized status position reduces racial differences in women's role-taking accuracy.

Results support Hypothesis 2. A modest manipulation to the status structure undermined racial differences in role-taking accuracy, equalizing this form of expressive labor between white and black women in both same-race and mixed-race groups. See Table 7 for a breakdown of the mean role-taking accuracy scores for each category.

Summary of Combined Experimental Results

In Experiment 1 we established that, as expected, there are racial disparities in role-taking accuracy between white women and black women. Black women participants showed significantly higher role-taking accuracy than white women overall, with black women who were strangers role-taking just as accurately as white women who were friends. This latter finding means that role-taking accuracy among women of color was so disproportionately high that it canceled out the accuracy advantage conveyed through white women's history of interaction.

In Experiment 2, we implemented a status intervention, assigning participants to high and low status positions. We hypothesized that this manipulation would diminish racial differences in women's role-taking accuracy. We tested this hypothesis with same- and mixed-race dyads, operating in status imbalanced groups. Our hypothesis was supported. Women acting in the role of Supervisor were less accurate role-takers than women acting in the role of Employee, regardless of racial identity. Moreover, as shown in the insignificant interaction results, status drove these findings across all conditions.

Together, these findings show that the relationship between race, gender, and role-taking accuracy can be explained by status hierarchies in which women of color endure status disadvantage. However, race-gender inequalities are not immutable. In our second experiment, a modest intervention—assigned status positions, enacted for just 30 minutes, in an artificial setting—had an equalizing result. That is, although race showed a significant and substantial effect on women's role-taking accuracy (Experiment 1), status position emerged as the explanatory variable (Experiment 2). Existing distributions of expressive work, as channeled through role-taking, are thus contingent on the structural arrangements of interaction encounters. These arrangements are subject to change and can be otherwise.

Conclusion

Black women in U.S. society perform disproportionate expressive labor for which there are social, emotional, and material costs (Buckingham 2018; Cottingham et al. 2018; Evans 2013; Williams, Bryant, and Carvell 2019). Expressive labor is largely invisible and uncompensated within conventional reward structures, and its allocation along status lines works to reproduce the existing social order, reflecting intersectional oppressions as they manifest at the micro, interpersonal level (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Collins 2002; Crenshaw 1989; Hooks 2000). Identifying inequalities within interpersonal interaction not only renders these processes observable, but in doing so, makes rectification possible.

In this study, we addressed interactional disparities through the prism of role-taking, measuring racial differences in women's role-taking accuracy via two experiments, motivated by dual goals of revealing and unraveling entrenched inequalities. The significant and substantial differences in role-taking accuracy between white and black women in Experiment 1 indicates that by default, women of color are called upon to exert cognitive and emotional resources that white women can reserve. At the same time, the neutralization of racial disparities in Experiment 2 shows that when empowered by the social structure, black women's interactional burdens are reduced (and white women contribute more). This opens the door for developing interventions that can realign status structures and the inequities they foment.

In terms of remedy, our findings show that role-taking accuracy is related to racial identity markers (Experiment 1) and assigned status position within task groups (Experiment 2). This means that the intersecting effects of race, gender, and other diffuse status traits can be at least partly mitigated through deliberate (re)arrangements of hierarchical structures within institutional and organizational settings. In other words, there are real reasons to increase the presence of black women in leadership positions. This is about more than just fairness and equity, but also about valuing and compensating a meaningful skillset that black women disproportionately possess and enact, while creating conditions that foster active role-taking among socially advantaged groups for whom expressive labors too often remain dormant.

More broadly, this work represents several advances in the study of self in society. Theoretically, findings strengthen the foundations of a burgeoning program in role-

taking research. Role-taking is a building block of selfhood and community social life (Mead 1934; Schwalbe 1988). However, role-taking has remained axiomatic within the sociological literature, only recently receiving systematic attention. Our study replicates existing protocols from work on role-taking and gender, extends the analysis to race, and supports the theoretical tenet that role-taking is status-driven. This study also establishes role-taking as a basic mechanism by which axes of oppression can over-burden, and under-reward, women of color, adding to the empirical evidence of intersectional disadvantage while identifying avenues for redress.

Testing the findings from this study in institutional and organizational settings is a pressing imperative moving forward. It is encouraging that a modest intervention equalized role-taking accuracy between white women and black women in our study. However, the larger task is to implement status-equalizing interventions outside of the lab, deconstructing status hierarchies in ways that tangibly (and positively) affect opportunity structures and life chances for structurally disadvantaged groups. Most certainly, the basic principles we identified in the lab will require adjustments in the field. Identifying and implementing those adjustments represents a crucial and critical project.

Notes

1 This assumption applies to all neurotypical adults. The scope of this assumption does not extend to those with neuroatypicalities, such as those on the autism spectrum or those clinically diagnosed with developmental disorders.

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