

RESEARCH REPORT

Race and Reactions to Women's Expressions of Anger at Work: Examining the Effects of the "Angry Black Woman" Stereotype

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Across two studies ($n = 555$), we examine the detrimental effects of the "angry black woman" stereotype in the workplace. Drawing on parallel-constraint-satisfaction theory, we argue that observers will be particularly sensitive to expressions of anger by black women due to widely held stereotypes. In Study 1, we examine a three-way interaction among anger, race, and gender, and find that observers are more likely to make internal attributions for expressions of anger when an individual is a black woman, which then leads to worse performance evaluations and assessments of leadership capability. In Study 2, we focus solely on women and expand our initial model by examining stereotype activation as a mechanism linking the effects of anger and race on internal attributions. We replicated findings from Study 1 and found support for stereotype activation as an underlying mechanism. We believe our work contributes to research on race, gender, and leadership, and highlights an overlooked stereotype in the management literature. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: anger, race, gender, stereotype, attribution

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While black women constitute nearly 7% of the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), they continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions (Smith et al., 2019), with no black female CEOs in the Fortune 500 (Fortune, 2019). In an effort to better understand potential causes of underrepresentation, researchers have investigated whether there may be barriers preventing black women from progressing up the corporate ladder, such as limited access to social networking and fewer mentoring opportunities (Beckwith et al., 2016). However, the majority of research up to this point has focused on barriers common to both black men and black women (e.g., tokenism, Sackett et al., 1991). We know less about potential barriers that are unique to the experiences of black women.

In an effort to begin filling this gap within the literature, we investigate the implications of the "angry black woman" stereotype, which depicts black females as aggressive and hostile in their interactions with others (Walley-Jean, 2009). Using parallel-constraint-satisfaction theory (PCST; Kunda & Thagard, 1996),

we argue that observers' interpretations of expressions of anger by black women at work will activate the "angry black woman" stereotype. Subsequently, observers will attribute the anger of black women to internal factors, which are then expected to negatively influence perceptions of her performance and leadership capabilities. As anger is an emotion commonly expressed and experienced at work (Geddes & Stickney, 2011), the angry black woman stereotype has the potential to negatively impact black women's employment status and career progress. Understanding the barriers that black women face in the workplace is a complex issue, and we present the angry black woman stereotype as one factor among many that can negatively impact their career. We focus specifically on internal attributions and stereotype activation as the mechanisms that explain the effects of the angry black woman stereotype on important downstream workplace outcomes (e.g., performance evaluations).

To more fully understand the role of the angry black woman stereotype in the workplace, we draw on PCST, which asserts that when forming an impression of an individual, people consider (a) any common stereotypes, and (b) any individuating information, such as observed behavior (Read et al., 1997). Both stereotypes and individuating information are evaluated in parallel and constrain one another to affect impressions formed about others. According to PCST, stereotypes influence the interpretation of observed behavior so that it aligns with our expectations.

We believe our work makes several contributions. First, we contribute to research on emotion in the workplace by showing how expressions of emotion are evaluated differently depending on demographics. Past research has shown that people react more negatively when women express anger compared to men, due to

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different role expectations for women (Hercus, 1999; Lewis, 2000). Our work shows that this may not be equally true for all women, and people have heightened sensitivity to expressions of anger by black women. Second, we add to the literature on race and its effects in organizations. Past work has mainly focused on how the experience of black individuals differs from that of white individuals (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Our work suggests that it may not always be appropriate to group all black employees together as the experiences of black women may be different from the experiences of black men. In our study, we find that black men are not penalized for expressing anger at work, only black women. Third, we add to research examining the effects of gender on leadership emergence in organizations and a potential glass ceiling effect (Badura et al., 2018; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). While all women may face hurdles when trying to advance up the corporate ladder, our work suggests that there may be unique hurdles for black women as they try to navigate the corporate landscape. Finally, a common theme throughout our contributions is the concept of intersectionality, which focuses on examining the effects of membership in two or more demographic categories, such as gender and race (Crenshaw, 1990; Hall et al., 2019). We shed light on the intersection between being black and being female and show how stereotype activation and changes in internal attributions are unique to this specific category of women.

PCST and the Angry Black Woman Stereotype

According to PCST, observed behavior that is open to ambiguous interpretation is likely to be affected by the presence of stereotypes, which constrain how we interpret an event until that interpretation is consistent with our stereotypes (Kunda & Thagard, 1996). For example, an elbow nudge is an ambiguous behavior that can be interpreted as a forceful shove or jovial push. Studies have shown that an elbow nudge by a black man is more likely to be interpreted as a forceful shove, which aligns with the stereotype of an angry and physically aggressive black male, while an elbow nudge by a white man is more likely to be interpreted as a jovial push (Blair et al., 2004; Sagar & Schofield, 1980). One important interpretation made by observers is the causal mechanisms of behavior, such as internal versus external (Martinko, 1995). Behavior that is interpreted as internally caused is attributed to something about the *person*, such as his/her personality. Observers could conclude that expressed anger at work stems from heightened levels of trait anger. On the other hand, behavior that is interpreted as externally caused is attributed to something about the *situation*, such as the environment (Russell, 1982). For instance, observers could conclude that anger expressed by others at work is a result of being treated unjustly. In sum, internally caused behavior is viewed as an indicator of disposition, while externally caused behavior is viewed as an indicator of environmental factors (e.g., luck; Yew Wong & Acur, 2010). Stereotypes are seen as dispositional characteristics that are attributed to certain groups and prompt internal attributions (Wilder et al., 1996).

One stereotype is that of the angry black woman, which has also been referred to as the “matriarch” or “sapphire” stereotype, and depicts a verbally aggressive, unfeminine black female who continuously emasculates her black male partner (Salerno et al., 2017; Walley-Jean, 2009). The stereotype is rooted in the institution of slavery and oversimplifies the image of the black woman who refused to conform to the era’s expectations of being a hard-working

and submissive slave (White, 1999); an image that has subsequently been reinforced in the media (Cheers, 2017; Childs, 2005). Television shows often include a token black woman who is expected to entertain the audience with her irrational anger and hostility (Tyree, 2011).

There is also empirical evidence for the existence of this stereotype. For instance, black female students at a predominantly white university reported experiencing “micro-aggressions,” or subtle slights (e.g., insensitive comments) from other students, and were cognizant of the existence of the angry black woman stereotype (Lewis et al., 2016). Rasinski and Czopp (2010) found that when viewing a debate on college scholarships, university students rated black female speakers as ruder than white female speakers, even when the content of the message was the same. Donovan (2011) provided participants the opportunity to select 5 out of 92 traits that best characterized black women and white women. Some of the most frequently chosen traits for black women were those associated with the angry black woman stereotype (e.g., “loud,” “tough,” “strong”) compared to white women (e.g., “sensitive,” “independent,” “family-oriented”). In a qualitative study, Smith et al. (2019) interviewed 59 senior-level black female managers and executives in a variety of different industries. The interviewees frequently mentioned the angry black woman stereotype and some explained how it negatively affected their job.

As PCST asserts that interpretations of behavior are largely constrained by the stereotypes we hold (Kunda & Thagard, 1996), it follows that if a black woman expresses anger, observers are likely influenced by the angry black woman stereotype. They are likely to attribute the anger to internal causes, assuming that the anger is a reflection of her disposition. Because observers do not hold the same stereotype for white women or for men, expressions of anger are less likely to be attributed to internal causes for white women or men. As trait anger is not regarded as a desirable characteristic in the workplace (Kant et al., 2013), we expect these internal attributions to have detrimental consequences for black women. It is important to note that while the stereotype of the angry black man does exist, it tends to portray angry black men as *physically* aggressive (Shapiro et al., 2009). The angry black man stereotype does not include the sort of “sassiness” or “emasculatation” that is characteristic of the angry black woman stereotype (Carpenter, 2012). The type of anger we examine is non-physical, which tends to be much more common than physical anger at work (e.g., hitting someone). As such, we believe that non-physical expressions of anger will activate stereotypes specific to black women. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1. There will be a three-way interaction among anger, race, and gender on perceptions of internal causality. Specifically, perceptions of internal causality will be highest when a black female employee expresses anger.

We then argue that when observers attribute the cause of anger to internal dispositions, subsequent evaluations of the employee are likely to be negative. Because trait anger is not particularly desirable, in part because of its links to abusive leadership (Kant et al., 2013) and deviant behavior (Restubog et al., 2010), we consider two important outcomes likely to be harmed. First, we examine performance evaluations, which serve as a basis for personnel decisions in

organizations (Greenhaus et al., 1990) and determine career progression (Cianci et al., 2010). Second, we examine assessments of leadership capability, which researchers argue is a vital ingredient for succeeding and progressing within an organization (Pierce & Newstrom, 2000). We expect that internal attributions ascribed to a black woman's expressions of anger will lead to these negative reactions.

Hypothesis 2. Expressions of anger will negatively affect (a) performance evaluations and (b) assessments of leadership capability through perceptions of internal causality when an employee is female and black.

Study 1 Method

Participants and Procedure

We conducted an experiment using a sample of 302 undergraduate business students enrolled in business management courses at a large university in the southwestern United States. The study received institutional review board approval under protocol #DM2015 ("Crying in the Organization") from the University of Arizona. They participated in the study in exchange for course credit. The average age was 21.25 years ($SE = .18$) and 47% were female. The sample was 56.6% White Non-Hispanic, 21.5% Hispanic, 12.3% Asian, 4% African-American/Black, and 5.6% other.

Participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 8 conditions in a 2 (employee display of anger: yes, no) $\times$ 2 (employee race: black, white) $\times$ 2 (employee gender: male, female) between-subjects factorial design. The "no anger display" conditions are also referred to as "neutral." Participants watched a video recording of a performance feedback session. They were instructed to imagine that they were the direct supervisor and that afterwards they would be asked questions about the employee who received the feedback. Before watching the video, participants read a copy of the CV for a grocery store manager named Jordan. Jordan was described as a "resourceful grocery store manager with great experience in directing and managing store staff." Participants were then asked to watch a video of Jordan receiving performance feedback from his/her direct supervisor, who was always a white male (see also Motro & Ellis, 2017).

Manipulations and Measures

Anger, Race, Gender

Four actors/actresses, all university students in their early twenties, auditioned and were selected to play the role of an employee named Jordan. There was one black female actress, one white female actress, one black male actor, and one white male actor. Each actor/actress played the role for both the anger display and neutral display videos. The eight videos, each approximately 5 min long, were filmed and edited by a professional videographer (participants were only allowed to watch the clip once). The direct supervisor, a white male, sat across the table from Jordan. Only a small part of the back of the supervisor's head was visible so that participants never saw his face.

The script in all eight videos was identical and began with a short introduction in which the supervisor explained the performance

evaluation process. After offering Jordan the chance to judge his/her own performance, the direct supervisor told Jordan that his/her performance as general manager has been "unsatisfactory" and stressed that he/she had "not achieved the goals that upper management had set for him/her." In the anger display conditions, Jordan's tone began to increase, and he/she shouted and yelled at the supervisor. Nonverbal behavior changed as well. Jordan would furrow his/her brow, bang fists down on the table, throw hands up in outrage, and shift frequently in the seat. In the neutral conditions, Jordan made the exact same statements but kept his/her tone even and gestures minimal.¹

Manipulation Checks

To verify that participants watched the video, they answered a set of four questions: "Was Jordan male or female?" (99.7% answered correctly), "What race was Jordan?" (possible answers included African-American/Black, White Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian, or other; 96% answered correctly), "Was the direct supervisor male or female?" (99.7% answered correctly), and "How intense was Jordan's anger?" on a scale from (1) *not intense at all* to (7) *very intense*. The average response in the anger conditions ($M = 6.12$, $SD = .82$) was significantly higher than the average response in the neutral conditions ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 283) = 273.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .491$.

Perceptions of Internal Causality

Participants completed a three-item locus of causality scale from Russell (1982). Participants were asked to think about the degree to which Jordan's reaction to the performance feedback was internal. Scale reliability ($\alpha = .68$) was consistent with previous research (Donovan & Williams, 2003; Ellis et al., 2006).

Performance Evaluation

Participants completed a three-item evaluation scale regarding the degree to which Jordan's performance was positive ($\alpha = .77$; Heilman & Chen, 2005).

Assessment of Leadership Capability

Participants completed a four-item scale used in Rosette et al. (2008) based on capabilities required for effective leadership (i.e., intelligence, competence, confidence, competitiveness; $\alpha = .74$).

Study 1 Results

See Tables 1 and 2 for means, SD s, and correlations. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) supported a three-factor solution. The model wherein items loaded separately on perceptions of internal causality, performance evaluation, and leadership capability fit the data well, $\chi^2(32) = 53.81$, $p = .009$, CFI = .97, SRMR = .04, and provided the best fit to the data (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a three-way interaction among anger, race, and gender on perceptions of internal causality, such that perceptions of internal causality would be highest when a black female employee expresses anger. To test Hypothesis 1, we

¹ Videos are available upon request from the first author.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Study 1 Variables by Condition

Employee anger	Anger				Neutral			
	Black		White		Black		White	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Perceptions of internal causality	7.44 (1.29)	6.24 (1.53)	6.87 (1.43)	6.86 (2.02)	6.84 (1.43)	6.45 (1.98)	7.24 (1.55)	6.61 (1.58)
Performance evaluations	2.05 (0.90)	2.67 (1.20)	2.12 (0.77)	2.31 (0.92)	2.28 (0.87)	2.61 (0.95)	2.17 (0.93)	2.24 (0.77)
Leadership capabilities	3.82 (1.31)	4.18 (1.19)	3.57 (1.20)	3.15 (1.29)	3.99 (1.23)	4.19 (1.14)	3.90 (1.43)	3.80 (1.04)

Note. $N = 302$. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Perceptions of internal causality were measured on a scale from 1–9. All other variables were measured on a scale from 1–7.

Table 2
Correlations Among Study 1 Variables and Experimental Conditions

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Employee anger	0.50	0.50	—							
2. Employee race	0.51	0.50	.00	—						
3. Employee gender	0.62	0.49	.01	.00	—					
4. Perceptions of causality	6.89	1.60	.03	-.03	.17**	—				
5. Performance evaluations	2.27	0.92	-.04	.08	-.16**	-.38**	—			
6. Leadership capabilities	3.83	1.27	-.11	.15*	.00	-.26**	.44**	—		
7. Participant gender	0.47	0.50	-.05	.01	.06	-.07	-.01	.06	—	
8. Participant race	0.29	0.45	-.02	-.56**	-.06	-.02	-.05	-.14*	-.09	—

Note. $N = 302$. Employee anger was coded as 0 = neutral, 1 = anger. Employee race was coded as 0 = white, 1 = black. Employee gender was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Participant gender was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Participant race was coded as 0 = not the same race as the employee in the video, 1 = the same race as the employee in the video. Perceptions of internal causality were measured on a scale from 1 to 9. All other variables were measured on a scale from 1 to 7.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

performed a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) on perceptions of internal causality. The three-way interaction approached significance, $F(1, 294) = 3.72$, $p = .055$, $\eta^2 = .01$.² See Figure 1 for a graph of the interaction. To further explore the interaction, we conducted a set of pairwise comparisons. When the employee expressed anger, perceptions of internal causality were marginally higher when the employee was a black female compared to when she was a white female, $F(1, 294) = 3.15$, $p = .077$, $\eta^2 = .01$. When the employee was black, perceptions of internal causality were significantly higher when she was an angry female compared to when she was an angry male, $F(1, 294) = 10.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. When the employee was female, perceptions of internal causality were marginally higher when she was angry and black compared to when she was neutral and black, $F(1, 294) = 3.55$, $p = .060$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Taken together, these results provide partial support for Hypothesis 1.³

Hypothesis 2 proposed moderated mediation (see Bauer et al., 2006; Hayes, 2009, 2015, 2018) and stated that expressions of anger will negatively affect (a) performance evaluations and (b) assessments of leadership capability through perceptions of internal causality when the employee was female and black. To test Hypothesis 2, we used Mplus Version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). We employed a Monte Carlo approach using 10,000 bootstrap samples to create 95% confidence intervals (CIs) in estimating the effects.

In our model, we entered expressions of anger as the independent variable, with employee race as the primary moderator, and employee gender as the secondary moderator. We entered perceptions of internal causality as the mediator and each outcome as dependent

variables (performance evaluations and assessments of leadership capability). The indices of moderated mediation and conditional indirect effects were significant (see Table 4). For both outcome variables, the index of moderated mediation was significant when the employee was female, but not when the employee was male. Further examination among female employees indicated that the indirect effects of anger were not significant when she was white, but were significant when she was black. These results support Hypotheses 2a and 2b and indicate that anger negatively affects performance evaluations and assessments of leadership capability due to heightened internal attributions when expressed by a black woman.⁴

² Based on social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), it is possible that black participants evaluate angry black women differently than non-black participants (e.g., white, Hispanic). To examine this possibility, we performed a three-way ANOVA among employee display of anger (yes vs. no), employee race (black vs. white), and participant race (black vs. not black). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 294) = .34$, ns . However, it is also important to note that only 4% of our sample identified as black. We also analyzed the three-way interaction while controlling for participants' perceptions of Jordan's attractiveness, participant gender, and whether the participant's race matched the race of the actor/actress in the video to account for potential in-group gender and race biases (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Wharton, 1992). When controlling for these variables, the three-way interaction term was significant, $F(1, 291) = 3.94$, $p = .048$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

³ We note that although angry white men were perceived as higher in internal causality than angry black men, the difference was not statistically significant, MD (mean difference) = .62, $SE = .42$, $p = .139$.

⁴ We also ran the analysis while controlling for participants' perceptions of Jordan's attractiveness, participant gender, and whether the participant's race matched the race of the actor/actress in the video. The results remained the same.

Table 3
Fit Statistics for Nested Models for Study 1

Model	χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	SRMR
3 factor	$\chi^2 (32) = 53.81^*$		.97	.04
2 factor	$\chi^2 (34) = 162.92^{**}$	$\Delta\chi^2 (2) = 109.11^{**}$	.84	.07
1 factor	$\chi^2 (35) = 251.54^{**}$	$\Delta\chi^2 (3) = 197.73^{**}$	.73	.10

Note. $N = 302$. 3 factor = all items loaded onto separate perceptions of internal causality, performance evaluation, and leadership capability assessment factors. 2 factor = items for performance evaluation and leadership capability assessment were combined into one factor. CFI = comparative fit index. SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual.

* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Study 1 Discussion

The results from Study 1 provide initial support for the proposed effects of race and gender on the interpretation of expressed anger in the workplace. However, there are certain limitations that we sought to address with a second study. First, we wanted to replicate our findings in a different context, with stimulus materials that avoid visual confounds between conditions (e.g., attractiveness). Second, we wanted to test our model using a sample of working adults. Third, we wanted to expand our understanding of the mediating mechanisms by including stereotype activation. Finally, we note that because we did not find any stereotype effects for men in Study 1, we focus solely on women in Study 2.

Study 2

According to our previous arguments, when forming an impression of an individual, people consider whether the behavior aligns with stereotypical expectations. In the context of expressing anger at work, the angry black woman stereotype is likely to influence impression formation because when a specific behavior conforms to a well-known societal stereotype, the stereotype becomes "activated" (i.e., becomes more accessible in the mind; *Wheeler & Petty, 2001*). This activation will likely constrain the interpretation of

the observed behavior and prompt internal attributions (*Wilder et al., 1996*). As a result, we argue that stereotype activation drives the effects of race and anger on internal attributions and subsequent evaluations:

Hypothesis 3. Expressions of anger will negatively affect (a) performance evaluations and (b) assessments of leadership capability sequentially through stereotype activation and perceptions of internal causality when a female employee is black.

Study 2 Method

Participants and Procedure

Study 2 was conducted using a sample of 253 participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. The study received institutional review board approval under protocol #DM2015 ("Crying in the Organization") from the University of Arizona. The average age was 36.16 years ($SE = .67$) and 45% female. The sample was 68.8% White Non-Hispanic, 7.5% Hispanic, 11.5% Asian, 9.5% African-American/Black, and 2.7% other. With regard to employment status, 73.1% of participants were full-time employees, 7.1% were part-time employees, 12.3% were self-employed, and 7.5% were not employed at the time. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (employee display of anger: yes, no) $\times$ 2 (employee race: black, white) between-subjects factorial design. As in Study 1, the "no anger display" conditions are referred to as "neutral."

We told participants that we were interested in the topic of leadership, and that they should imagine they were a sales representative at a marketing company called "Insight Marketing." The participants were told to imagine that one day on the job another employee at Insight Marketing came to their desk to speak with them, and that they would be listening to an audio recording of this other employee. Participants were not told in advance what the topic of the conversation would be. Participants were then provided more detail about the employee, including name, gender, and race. Before listening to the audio clip, participants read through the employee's CV. Following the audio clip, participants completed manipulation check questions and measures of stereotype activation and internal

Figure 1
Interaction Among Expressions of Anger, Employee Gender, and Employee Race on Perceptions of Internal Causality in Study 1

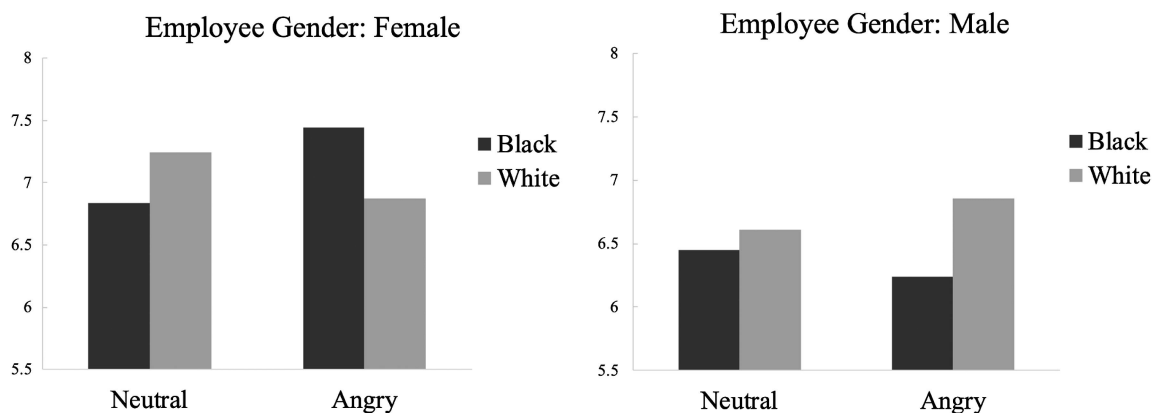


Table 4*Moderated Mediation Analysis: Effects of Anger, Race, and Gender Through Perceptions of Internal Causality Among Study 1 Variables*

	DV = Performance evaluation		DV = Leadership capability	
	Coefficient	CI	Coefficient	CI
Index of moderated mediation				
Male	.10 (.15)	[−.20, .39]	.09 (.14)	[−.18, .39]
Female	−.21* (.10)	[−.43, −.04]	−.20* (.09)	[−.42, −.04]
Conditional indirect effects				
White male	−.06 (.11)	[−.26, .17]	−.05 (.10)	[−.26, .15]
Black male	.05 (.10)	[−.16, .25]	.04 (.10)	[−.14, .24]
White female	.08 (.07)	[−.05, .22]	.07 (.06)	[−.04, .21]
Black female	−.13* (.07)	[−.27, −.02]	−.12 [†] (.06)	[−.27, −.02]

Note. $N = 302$. Coefficients presented are unstandardized estimates. SEs are in parentheses. $CI = 95\%$ confidence interval.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

causality. Participants also provided (a) performance evaluations and (b) assessments of leadership capability (outcomes were counterbalanced).

Manipulations and Measures⁵

Race

To manipulate race, the employee was given either a traditionally black or white name. The black employee's name was "Lakeisha Wilson," while the white employee's name was "Claire Wilson" (Pharr, 1993). The voice recording in the white race condition was a white, non-Hispanic female, and the voice recording in the black race condition was a black female.

Anger

Each audio recording lasted less than 1 min (participants listened to the clip once). The script was identical across all conditions. In the script, Claire/Lakeisha told participants that she had seen them come into work late and that she had spoken many times about them being paid to come into work at a certain time and to leave at a certain time. She emphasized that it was not professional to come in late. Furthermore, she stated that she did not care what the excuse was (e.g., traffic, bad weather) and that the next time this happened there would need to be a serious discussion about their future. In the anger condition, Lakeisha/Claire's tone was stern and hostile. She raised her voice throughout the clip and sounded both annoyed and indignant about the participant's tardiness. In the neutral condition, Lakeisha/Claire's tone was calm and did not decrease or increase.⁶

Manipulation Checks

Following the audio recording, participants answered a set of questions, including "Was Lakeisha/Claire male or female?" (99.6% answered correctly), "What race was Lakeisha/Claire?" (possible answers included African-American/Black or White Non-Hispanic; 97.6% answered correctly), and "What did Lakeisha/Claire talk about?" (possible answers included "football game last night," "showing up on time," "cell phone usage at work," "sales performance from last quarter"; 100% answered correctly). Participants were then asked how angry Lakeisha/Claire got on a scale from (1) *not at all angry* to (7) *extremely angry*. The average response in the

anger conditions ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.03$) was significantly higher than the average response in the neutral conditions ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.58$), $F(1, 251) = 146.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .360$.

Stereotype Activation

We assessed stereotype activation with a modified version of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence et al., 1974). We identified four traits stereotypically associated with black individuals as a whole: "loud," "aggressive," "hostile," "violent" (Smith, 1991; Wheeler & Fiske, 2005). To measure stereotype activation, participants rated the extent to which black women exhibit these four traits ($\alpha = .89$).

Perceptions of Internal Causality

Participants completed the same three-item locus of causality scale described in Study 1 ($\alpha = .89$).

Performance Evaluation

Participants answered the three-item performance evaluation measure described in Study 1 ($\alpha = .94$).

Assessment of Leadership Capability

Participants completed a seven-item measure used in Agle et al. (2006) capturing important leadership skills (e.g., being worthy of trust and respect; $\alpha = .94$).⁷

Study 2 Results

See Tables 5 and 6 for means, SDs , and correlations for Study 2. A CFA supported a four-factor solution. The model wherein items loaded separately on stereotype activation, perceptions of internal causality, performance evaluation, and leadership capability fit the

⁵ See the Supplemental Materials for all scale items.

⁶ Audio clips are available upon request from the first author.

⁷ We also ran a condition that manipulated employee status in the organization (high status employee vs. low status employee). There were no significant effects. Methods and results are available in the supplemental materials.

Table 5
Means and Standard Deviations for Study 2 Variables by Condition

Employee anger	Anger		Neutral	
	Black	White	Black	White
Perceptions of internal causality	4.94 (2.36)	4.32 (2.42)	2.71 (1.82)	4.04 (2.18)
Stereotype activation	4.62 (1.25)	3.77 (1.48)	3.51 (1.48)	3.76 (1.40)
Performance evaluations	4.75 (1.62)	5.36 (1.52)	5.74 (1.16)	5.67 (1.10)
Leadership capabilities	3.84 (1.90)	4.49 (1.87)	5.36 (1.47)	5.13 (1.66)

Note. $N = 253$. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Perceptions of internal causality were measured on a scale from 1–9. All other variables were measured on a scale from 1–7.

data well, $\chi^2(71) = 119.07$, $p < .001$, CFI = .98, SRMR = .05, and provided the best fit to the data (see Table 7).

Hypothesis 3 proposed moderated sequential mediation and stated that expressions of anger will negatively affect (a) performance evaluations and (b) assessments of leadership capability sequentially through stereotype activation and perceptions of internal causality when the female employee is black. Similar to Study 1, we followed recommended procedures to employ a Monte Carlo approach and created 95% confidence intervals (CIs) by using 10,000 bootstrap samples to estimate effects (Bauer et al., 2006).

To test our model, we entered expressions of anger as the independent variable, with employee race as the moderator. We entered stereotype activation as the first mediator, perceptions of internal causality as the second mediator and each of the outcomes as dependent variables (performance evaluations and assessments of leadership capability). The indices of moderated mediation were significant (see Table 8). Further examination indicated that the indirect effects were not significant when the employee was white but were significant for each outcome variable when she was black, as indicated by the fact that the 95% confidence intervals did not include zero. This supports Hypotheses 3a and 3b.⁸

General Discussion

Given the particularly glaring underrepresentation of black women in leadership positions (e.g., Holder et al., 2015), it is important to determine whether their experiences at work expose them to unique barriers that limit career progression. We examined the angry black woman stereotype and argued that it can affect how others react to expressions of anger by black women at work. Across two studies, we found support for our hypotheses that participants will attribute a black woman's anger to internal factors due to stereotype activation, which then leads to lower performance evaluations and poorer assessments of leadership capabilities.

First, we add to research on emotion in the workplace. Past studies have shown that we interpret expressions of emotion differently based on demographic characteristics. For example, males who cry are punished by observers for engaging in role incongruous behavior, while females who cry elicit no such response (Motro & Ellis, 2017). These differences extend to expressions of anger, as studies have shown that people react more negatively when women express anger compared to men, due to different role expectations for women (Hercus, 1999; Lewis, 2000). Our work is significant in that it additionally shows that not all women are treated the same when it comes to expressions of anger. While white women may have their expressions of anger excused through external

attributions, stereotypes make it more likely that black women will elicit internal attributions for expressions of anger, which can then prompt more negative reactions from observers. As a result, while the strategic expression of anger can be valuable in certain contexts such as negotiations (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002), this may not be the case for black women.

Second, our work contributes to research on race in organizations. Being black in the workplace often leads to bias in one form or another (see Jones et al., 2016). For example, black job seekers are expected to negotiate less than white job seekers and receive lower starting salaries if this expectation is violated (Hernandez et al., 2019). However, our work suggests that black women may experience unique hurdles that black men do not face because they carry with them unique stereotypes that affect how they are treated in the workplace. When expressing anger, black men receive similar reactions to white men. Black women, on the other hand, receive markedly different reactions from white women. In sum, merely examining differences based on race hinders our understanding of the experiences of black employees in organizations and future research should consider how and why being black *and* female matters.

Third, we add to research examining the effects of gender on leadership emergence in organizations. Considerable attention has been given to understanding barriers preventing women from being given leadership roles (e.g., Badura et al., 2018; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Leadership emergence tends to depend upon the degree to which an individual is perceived by others as a capable leader (Judge et al., 2002), and research examining gender and leadership emergence has most commonly considered how gender role expectations play an important role in understanding barriers women face (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Koenig et al., 2011). This work provides important insights into barriers that women face in general, but it is also critical to understand difficulties faced by specific categories of women (i.e., not all women are treated the same). We highlight a distinct challenge black women face because of one widely held stereotype and suggest that going beyond broad categorizations (such as gender) is an important consideration when forming a comprehensive understanding of barriers to leadership emergence.

Fourth, our results add to previous work on intersectionality, which suggests that membership in two or more demographic categories can have markedly different effects than membership in one category (Crenshaw, 1990). Our work shows that we can also

⁸ Similar to Study 1, we also ran all Study 2 analyses while controlling for participant gender and whether the participant's race matched the race of the actress. The results remained the same.

Table 6
Correlations Among Study 2 Variables and Experimental Conditions

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Employee anger	0.52	0.50	—							
2. Employee race	0.50	0.50	-.01	—						
3. Internal causality	4.03	2.35	.27**	-.07	—					
4. Stereotype activation	3.92	1.46	.19**	.11	.32**	—				
5. Performance evaluations	5.37	1.42	-.23**	-.10	-.45**	-.21**	—			
6. Leadership capabilities	5.16	1.42	-.20**	-.09	-.57**	-.20**	.76**	—		
7. Participant gender	0.45	0.50	.06	.09	-.06	.02	.03	.08	—	
8. Participant race	0.42	0.49	.04	-.59**	.12	-.07	.02	.02	-.02	—

Note. $N = 253$. Employee anger was coded as 0 = neutral, 1 = anger. Employee race was coded as 0 = white, 1 = black. Participant gender was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Participant race was coded as 0 = not the same race as the employee in the audio clip, 1 = the same race as the employee in the audio clip. Perceptions of internal causality were measured on a scale from 1–9. All other variables were measured on a scale from 1–7.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

better understand the effects of being black in organizations if we also consider whether the individual is female or male. Recent research on intersectionality has demonstrated how discrimination can emerge from simple stereotypes using a threshold model approach (Hester et al., 2020). In line with Hester et al. (2020)'s argument, our results suggest that even though two individuals are similar in many respects, stereotypes can make one individual less likely to reach the threshold for success compared to another individual. Thus, even though a black female and white female share similar characteristics, certain stereotypes (e.g., angry black woman stereotype) can make it more challenging for the black female to reach the threshold for high competence, therefore potentially triggering poor performance evaluations and assessments of leadership capabilities.

Fifth, while past research suggests that PCST may serve as a conceptual backdrop for research on social stereotypes in the workplace (e.g., Evans et al., 2019), our work enhances PCST by incorporating attributions into the existing framework. PCST currently focuses on how stereotypes and individuating information combine to form different impressions. However, "impression" is a broad term, defined as "a cognitive representation of a person" (González-Vallejo et al., 2008, p. 288). Our work identifies attributions as one specific aspect of an impression. In line with PCST, we find that the expression of anger by a black female combined with

the angry black woman stereotype affects our impressions, particularly internal attributions, which then affects our evaluations of them as an employee.

Finally, the results of our research suggest a few practical implications. Prior research has indicated that once individuals are made aware of different biases and stereotypes, they are more likely to recognize them and less likely to succumb to their influence (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2001; Costa et al., 2015). As most people want to hold a positive view of themselves (Mazar et al., 2008), making individuals aware of any potential stereotypes they hold (e.g., through training) could curb discrimination. Thus, it could be fruitful for managers conducting discrimination training to bring attention to the angry black woman stereotype and its harmful consequences.

It is also important for managers to communicate that despite evidence indicating the existence of the stereotype, there is little evidence suggesting that black women actually are angrier than white women. Indeed, Walley-Jean (2009) found that trait anger was not significantly different between 76 black female study participants and a normative sample of 977 women (which included both students and full-time employees). In a study on minority female populations in the United States, Consedine et al. (2012) found that self-reported trait anger was actually lower among African-American females compared to U.S.-born European American females.

Table 7
Fit Statistics for Nested Models for Study 2

Model	χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	SRMR
4 factor	$\chi^2 (71) = 119.07^*$		.98	.05
3 factor	$\chi^2 (74) = 370.93^*$	$\Delta\chi^2 (3) = 251.86^*$	.89	.08
2 factor	$\chi^2 (76) = 803.52^*$	$\Delta\chi^2 (5) = 684.45^*$	.73	.19
1 factor	$\chi^2 (77) = 1,295.56^*$	$\Delta\chi^2 (6) = 1,176.50^*$	.56	.18

Note. $N = 253$. 4 factor = all items loaded onto separate perceptions of internal causality, stereotype activation, performance evaluation, and leadership capability assessment factors. 3 factor = items for perceptions of internal causality and stereotype activation were combined into one factor. 2 factor = items for perceptions of internal causality and stereotype activation were combined into one factor; items for performance evaluation and leadership capability assessment were combined into one factor. CFI = comparative fit index. SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual.

* $p < .001$.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite these implications, we have identified certain limitations associated with our work. First, the results from our first study only showed significant indirect effects. Evidence supporting the influence of race and gender on internal attributions, which in turn significantly affects performance evaluations and leadership capabilities is one key piece to understanding underrepresentation of black women in leadership positions. However, these results suggest that additional variables should be investigated in future research. For example, the results showed significant differences in attractiveness, such that participants found the black actor and actress significantly more attractive than the white actor and actress. While we found support for Hypothesis 1 even when controlling for attractiveness, future work should investigate the effect of attractiveness in understanding observer perceptions during performance

Table 8

Sequential Moderated Mediation Analysis: Effects of Anger and Race Through Stereotype Activation and Perceptions of Internal Causality Among Study 2 Variables

	DV = Performance evaluation		DV = Leadership capability	
	Coefficient	CI	Coefficient	CI
Index of moderated mediation	-.12* (.06)	[-.29, -.04]	-.17* (.08)	[-.38, -.06]
Conditional indirect effects				
White female	-.00 (.03)	[-.06, .06]	-.00 (.04)	[-.08, .08]
Black female	-.12* (.05)	[-.25, -.05]	-.17** (.06)	[-.32, -.07]

Note. $N = 253$. Coefficients presented are unstandardized estimates. *SEs* are in parentheses. CI = 95% confidence interval.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

evaluations. For instance, there could be a “halo effect,” where there is a tendency for a perceiver’s evaluations of the employee in one domain (e.g., attractiveness) to influence ratings of the employee’s qualities in other important domains (e.g., performance evaluations), even when the domains are fundamentally unrelated (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

Second, while we did provide participants with the employee’s resume to increase psychological realism, the videos that we used to manipulate anger were only 5 min long and the audio clips were less than 1 min long. We know that assessments of current behavior are largely determined by our experiences in the past (e.g., Hausknecht et al., 2011) and black women who only demonstrate anger once are less likely to see their behavior attributed to internal causes than black women who demonstrate anger frequently (Kelley, 1967, 1973; Robins et al., 1996). We encourage future research to examine the angry black woman stereotype in real-world contexts, potentially using experience-sampling methodology (Gabriel et al., 2019), where employees could track their interactions with and reactions to angry individuals (while also noting their gender and race). We must also recognize that there would be some significant hurdles in conducting such a study. For example, it may require identification of racially and gender diverse dyads (see Joshi & Knight, 2015).

Finally, we examined non-physical as opposed to physical expressions of anger. While we did so because the stereotype of the angry black woman is associated with yelling and verbal hostility (Walley-Jean, 2009) and physical aggression is less common at work, it is still unclear if our findings would emerge if the employee engaged in acts of physical aggression, which would fall more in line with stereotypes for black men (Welch, 2007). For example, Bobby Knight, the former coach of the Indiana Hoosiers basketball team, is famous for having engaged in physically aggressive acts with team members. Perhaps Mr. Knight’s approach to leadership would have been received differently had he been black rather than white. Thus, future research could explore the stereotype of the “angry black man” (Shapiro et al., 2009), who, according to PCST, could be discriminated against for physical displays of anger in the workplace (e.g., slamming a door shut in an act of frustration; Grégoire et al., 2010).

Conclusion

Black employees have to overcome a myriad of hurdles at work based on the color of their skin. For black women, our research indicates that there may be additional considerations when

identifying biases at work. Anger is an emotion that employees may display in a variety of contexts, often stemming from a perceived injustice. Bolstered by cultural reinforcement, our studies suggest that the angry black woman stereotype can affect how individuals view displays of anger at work. The angry black woman stereotype represents another hurdle for black women, and we urge future research to expand upon our understanding of the effects of perceptions on black women at work.

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