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PERCEIVING WOMEN'S ANGER IN THE WORKPLACE:  
DOES RACIAL ETHNICITY OR OCCUPATIONAL RANK MATTER?

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## ABSTRACT

This study tested the hypothesis that Black and White women would encounter different social censures when they display anger in the workplace. Of additional interest was whether the status of the target would make any difference. Participants listened to an audio clip of a female employee being interviewed about her stress in the workplace and rated this employee on a variety of dimensions based on their impression. A 2 (race of target: Black vs. White) x 2 (emotion: anger vs. neutral) x 2 (status: high vs. low occupational rank) between-subjects design was employed by this study. Main effects of race on agenticism and hostility ratings indicated that regardless of emotion and status, participants perceived Black women as significantly more agentic, more hostile, and less warm and communal than white women. The two-way interaction between target's race and emotion showed that Black women displaying anger were seen as the most agentic among others. Low status Black women were rated as the most agentic and hostile, whereas low status White women were rated as the most warm and communal. I conclude that intersectional approaches are required in order to fully understand gendered racial stereotypes of emotion. The impact of status on emotion associated with women's anger in the workplace is also worth further investigation.

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*“I guess it’s more interesting to imagine this conflicted situation here and a strong woman and a, you know... But that’s been an image that people have tried to paint of me since, you know, the day Barack announced — that I’m some angry black woman.” Michelle Obama (CBS News, 2002)*

During an interview with CBS’s Gayle King (CBS News, January 11, 2012), First Lady Michelle Obama attempted to explain several controversies placed in the New York Times journalist Jodi Kantor’s newly released book, “The Obamas.” Among them, she disclosed her inner feelings about living in the White House and addressed the notion that people have painted her as an “angry black woman” and “a strong woman.” Ms. Obama’s claim that she did not like the image people have tried to paint of her attracted media’s attention, as well as the attention from psychology researchers, like me.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand several issues regarding perceptions of female professionals in the workplace, including the reactions to their emotional expressions (anger in particular), the effects of gendered racial stereotypes on their power development, and the role of intersectional emotion, race, and status in their work relationships.

Emotion scholars suggest that displays of certain emotions, such as anger, can convey more status and perceived competence (Tiedens, 2001; Shields, 2002). The association between anger, an emotion associated with masculinity (Shields, 2005), and competence is found to be salient among male professionals. Tiedens (2001) discovered that male professionals’ expressions of anger resulted in increases in others’ perceptions of the men’s competence and status. However, the same strategy when used by female professionals, did not create equivalent

success, instead angry women were rated as less competent than angry men of the same professional status (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). Thus, anger, as a stereotypical masculine emotion communicating power and independence, seems to decrease rather than increase professional women's competence and status compared to their male counterparts.

In addition to gender-emotion stereotypes, research shows that ethnic minority women face additional barriers to their professional development that White women do not, due to the fact that minority women oftentimes carry the burden of sexism and racism at the same time (Combs, 2003; Holvino & Blake-Beard, 2004). Research on women's leadership also shows that Black women might undergo greater negative stereotypes as a result of "the combined effect of being female and Black" (Sanchez-Hucles, & Davis, 2010, p. 174).

Black women, who are stereotyped as being loud, aggressive, argumentative, quick-tempered, and less feminine (Weitz & Gordon, 1993), are overlooked and under-analyzed in research assessing women's emotional experience in professional contexts. The less examined Black female professionals and the biases against women expressing anger bring forward an urgent need to investigate how different aspects of social identity impact professional women's workplace experience.

The present study tested the hypothesis that Black and White women would encounter different social censures when they display anger in the workplace. Of additional interest was whether the status (occupational rank) of the target (e.g., director vs. clerk) would make any difference. To be specific, I examined 1) whether the perceived competence of Black women

who display anger is different than White women who do; 2) whether perceived agenticism, hostility, warmth, and communality mediate the relationship between anger expression and competence, and whether these mediators function differently for Black versus White women; and 3) whether a different pattern of perceptions of Black versus White female professionals expressing anger would emerge when varying the target's occupational ranks.

Before turning to the question of how emotion, race, and status interact when evaluating women's anger in the workplace, it is helpful to take a brief look at some of the previous findings regarding evaluations of emotions, gendered racial stereotypes, and the impact of status on emotion.

## **Evaluations of Emotions**

### ***Gendered Display Rules***

Emotions can be categorized as either “experienced” or “expressed”, and can be experienced without being expressed (Geer & Shields, 1996). Expressed emotions are impacted by *display rules* (Ekman & Friesen, 1969/1975), defined as “procedures learned early in life for the management of affect displays...prescribing what to do about the display of each affect in different social setting and varying with the social role and demographic characteristics” (Ekman, Sorenson, & Friesen, 1969, p. 87).

Gendered display rules refer to “stereotyped-based expectations that dictate the type and range of emotional expression appropriate for men and women in social relationships” (Ragins & Winkel, 2011, p. 381). Generally, gendered display rules or expectations of

gender-appropriate emotion expressions have reflected the proposition that women express most emotions more than men, and the only two emotions that people believe men express more than women are anger and pride (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). Shields (2002) emphasizes the important position of anger in gender and emotion research by illustrating the paradox in the emotional female/unemotional male stereotype that “while the stereotype of emotionality is female, the stereotype of anger is male” (p. 140).

### ***Emotional Double Binds***

Gendered display rules are powerful and can be potentially damaging both in everyday life and in the workplace. Shields (2005; Shields & Warner, 2008) proposes that women face an emotional double-bind, which leads to situations that they are expected to display two competing forms of emotion at the same time. Specifically, the expectation for women is that “they will be appropriate nurturant, yet also conform to the ‘higher’ standard” (Shields, 2005, p. 11) of “passionate restraint” (Zawadzki, Warner & Shields, 2008).

In response to the double-bind hypothesis, Hutson-Comeaux and Kelly (2002) in one study asked participants to evaluate the social appropriateness and sincerity of men’s and women’s overreactions to female-consistent (happy) and male-consistent (angry) emotional events across different settings (e.g., workplace, intimate relationships). The results provide support for emotional double binds of women (and men), as both genders were negatively evaluated when overreacting to gender-consistent emotional events. Namely, women were rated as less appropriate than men when overreacting to happy events, whereas men’s overreactions to



angry events were judged as less appropriate than women's. In accordance with the views of Shields (2002), I consider the emotional double-bind may leave more detrimental impact on women because on one hand, they are not expected to exhibit anger in most cases; and on the other hand, even at the situation that they are allowed to express happiness, the amount of emotion they can display is still restricted due to social dictates.

The most important point to take from Huston-Comeaux and Kelly (2002)'s study is that among all the scenarios given, "women's overreactions to angry events in work-related situations were actually evaluated as significantly less appropriate than men's" (p. 8). This particular discrepancy, according to Shields (2002), is due to the perceived control (or loss of control) of women, as they see the outward expression of anger as "the result of breakdown of internal control that leads to breakdown of normal social interaction" (p. 160).

### ***Backlash Effects***

In accordance with emotional double binds, violations of prescriptive gender-emotion stereotypes can lead to negative effects on women, often referred to as the "backlash effect" (Rudman & Glick, 1999). For female professionals, displaying a male-typed emotion such as anger is seen as violating feminine prescriptions of communality and niceness (Rudman & Glick, 1999), which would result in lower status ratings compared to male professionals who express anger. Tiedens (2001) observed that anger expressions among men in a professional context created the impression that the expresser was strong and competent. The same strategy when being used by professional women, however, does not produce comparable sources of

power for them. Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) found that both male and female participants rated angry female professionals as less competent than angry male professionals regardless of the actual occupational rank of the target. Therefore, women's expression of anger may not afford the same benefits as men's expression of anger, but also attenuate women's perceived competence and ability in the workplace.

## **Gendered Racial Stereotypes**

### ***Black Women in the Workplace***

As previously stated, Black women, like other women of color, encounter additional forms of discrimination in the work setting that White women do not. Holvino and Blake-Beard (2004) found that "women of color receive lower pay than White men and women as well as men of color," and they must acquire the ability of maintaining a positive self-image when confronted with "micro aggressions" that could hinder their advancement and career development (as cited in Sanchez-Hucles, & Davis, 2010, p. 173).

Considering the strong perceived Blackness/maleness association (Goff, Thomas, & Jackson, 2008), research on gender and stereotypes highlights the fact that Black women might suffer from greater negative stereotypes than women of other races or ethnicities (Sanchez-Hucles, & Davis, 2010), as they are supposed to conform to both female gender roles and Euro-centric norms of femininity. The stereotyping stems from the intersectional gender and racial identities which they term "gendered racism," referring to the situation that many Black women are facing when they are not able to separate the individual effects of each aspect

of their social identities (Blake, 1999). An outcome of this effect is that when a Black woman thinks that she is experiencing discrimination or prejudice, she may become uncertain about which aspect(s) of her identity contributes to the situation and may find it hard for her to come up with an appropriate reaction given her complex identity composite.

In addition to the hurdle of combined sexism and racism, or the “double jeopardy” (Combs, 2003; Thomas, Hacker, & Hoxha, 2011) that regular Black women are confronted with, professional Black women are seen as suffering the “triple jeopardy” due to multiple stereotypes associated with their intersecting gender, race, and status that “they trigger in others”; Black women in leadership roles are expected to “display leadership competence while simultaneously conforming to European American prototypes representing traditional ethnic, racial, and gender behavior”(Sanchez-Hucles, & Davis, 2010). Combs (2003) indicated that gendered racism makes opportunities for Black female leaders very limited, as they are too different from their White female colleagues to benefit from the shared gender and too different from their Black male counterparts to benefit from the shared racial status.

### ***Stereotypes of Angry Black Women***

Research investigating women’s emotional experience in work settings are criticized for overlooking and under-analyzing Black women, who are stereotyped being as loud, aggressive, argumentative, quick-tempered, and less feminine (Weitz & Gordon, 1993). Although perceptions and/or attitudes of professional Black women expressing anger remain unspecified, stereotypical images of angry Black women are not unfamiliar to us.

In most cases, stereotypes about angry Black women are negative. According to Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, and Harrison (2008), there are two prominent stereotypical images characterizing Black women displaying anger: Crazy Black Bitch (CCB) and Sapphire. The CCB refers to an angry Black woman who is crazy, overly aggressive, argumentative, vindictive, unstable, lazy, defensive, and untrusting of others. Possibly seen as more unlikeable than CBB, the Sapphire character refers to an angry Black woman who is loud, overly assertive, talkative, hostile, dramatic, bossy, wisecracking, and full of complaints. One typical characteristics of the Sapphire is “her ability to talk back and responds to people in a stinging and overly assertive tone” (as cited in Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

Aside from the two negative stereotypes presented above, Reynolds-Dobbs et al. (2008) noted that there is another stereotypical image of Black women displaying anger or other assertive emotions, the Superwoman image. Frequently linked with politicians and other influential figures (e.g., Michelle Obama; Oprah Winfrey), the Superwoman is a Black woman who is achieving, articulate, assertive, independent, strong, intelligent, and extremely talented. Despite the fact that the Superwoman image seems like a positive alternative or an upside to the more negative angry Black woman stereotypes, there are several damaging effects of this image on professional Black women’s workplace experience. One major problem within this image is that Superwomen are often portrayed as being competent, not having the same fears and weaknesses as other women. Due to this portrayal, the expectations or standards set up for Superwomen are much higher than their peers, and they will in turn receive harsher criticism or

punishment if they fail to meet the goals. The overly strong image of Superwomen also reduces the amount of potential resources they may obtain when they are seeking help from others. Therefore, the “positive” Superwoman stereotype is oppressive, creating extra burdens for Black women rather than empowering them.

### **The Impact of Status on Emotion**

Status, as a social cue, creates expectations that include expectations about emotions (Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000). Conway, DiFazio, and Mayman (1999) investigated expectancies concerning the emotions experienced and displayed by individuals of differing status. They found that participants viewed low-status relative to high-status people as *experiencing* more but *displaying* less negative emotions, including anger, sadness, and fear. A follow-up study revealed that the perceived discrepancy between experience and display of *anger* reflects people’s beliefs in regards to norms of emotional expressions (Conway et al., 1999). Basically, low-status individuals are in a disadvantageous position that while they are perceived as experiencing greater amount of inner anger than those of higher status, they are expected to withhold rather than freely exhibit the anger.

Tiedens and colleagues investigated expectations about the characteristic emotions of individuals in high- and low-status positions (Tiedens et al., 2000). They found that in negative situations, participants perceived high-status people as more angry than sad, and low-status people as more sad than angry. They also observe that a cognitive process underlying these expectations is a stereotype that associates status with competence. Those of high status are

seen as more competent, and are more likely to be anticipated to express emotions connected with competence, such as pride and confidence.

These dynamics underlying status, power, and emotions led me to examine the role of status in reaction to professional women expressing anger in work settings. The display of anger conveys power and competence among high status people, and people with more status are expected to express anger in negative situations. However, professional women, when deviating from the prescriptive norm of warmth and communality by exhibiting anger, experience *backlash effects*, including decreased liking, and less ascribed status and competence. So, the unspecified link between status, anger, and gender calls for closer inspection.

## METHODS

### **Participants and Design**

Two hundred eighty undergraduate students (127 males, 151 females, and 2 transgenders) from The Pennsylvania State University participated in the study for partial course credit. The mean age of the sample was 19.61 ( $SD = 2.23$ ). The majority of the participants were White (78.2%), with 7.5% Black, 9.6% Asian, and 4.7% other ethnicities.

The study employed a 2 (race of target: Black vs. White) x 2 (emotion: anger vs. neutral) x 2 (occupation: high vs. low rank) between-subjects design.

### **Procedure**

Participants were directed to an online survey website when signing up via the subject pool. After reading through informed consent forms, participants who agreed to take part were given instructions that they were participating in a study on stress in the workplace, and they would be listening to an audio clip of an employee being interviewed about this topic. They would then be asked to rate this employee on a variety of dimensions based on their impressions. Participants were randomly assigned to listen to a high status Black, low status Black, high status White or low status White female target displaying angry or neutral emotion when describing one of two stressful situations in the workplace. After listening to the audio clip, participants completed the measures of dependent variables and demographic questions.

### **Stimulus Materials**

Eight audio clips were made for the purposes of this study, categorized into two scenarios

(one about computer problems and the other one about being interrupted in a meeting, Appendix A). Each clip was approximately 65-sec long.

In each audio clip, both Black and White targets were described as being interviewed about workplace stress. The scripts of each scenario were generally identical. Actresses were instructed to deliver the speech in an angry way in one clip and in a neutral way for the other clip. In order to manipulate status, an additional question was added to the beginning of the interview where the interviewer asks the employee about her *role* in the company. In the high-status condition, the target says, “*I am an accounting director in the company, so I have several staff accountants and interns working for me.*” In the low-status condition, the target replies, “*I am an accounting clerk in the company, so I work under the direction of my supervisor and a couple of senior members in the department.*”

Two actresses (one Black and one White, both doctoral students in psychology) matched for age (mid-20s) and voice clarity, played the role of the interviewee in the audios. In the anger condition, actresses disclosed their experience in an angry manner when answering the interviewer’s question, “*Now, can you tell me about a time when you felt stressed at work? And about how often this happens?*” whereas in the neutral condition, the actresses were instructed to appear calm but not cold. The only difference in terms of the scripts was that in the anger condition, the target labeled her anger both at the beginning and the end of the speech as “*it (the situation) makes me so angry*”. The two actresses recorded the audios together and compared the performance with each other to ensure that they were exhibiting the same level of emotion



(whether angry or neutral) for each scenario.

In order to make sure that the audios were comparable, I conducted a pretest by asking 28 participants to evaluate the audio clips. Participants were randomly assigned to listen to two audios (one from each scenario) of either the angry Black, neutral Black, angry White, or neutral White condition, without being exposed to the status cue. On 7-point Likert scales, participants rated audios from both scenarios both as similarly understandable, imaginable, and realistic. Participants were also asked to indicate both the type (angry or neutral) and the amount of emotion they considered the actress was expressing and to identify the targets' ethnicity. All participants in the angry condition ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) rated the audios as significantly angrier than those of the neutral condition ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ );  $t(26) = 4.18$ ,  $p = .00$ . They also viewed the angry clips as conveying a greater amount of emotion than the neutral ones. Additionally, most participants (86%) correctly identified the ethnicity of the targets. Results also show that participants rated angry clips as similar (amount of emotion conveyed; for the angry Black target,  $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.73$  and for the angry White target,  $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ). Pretesting showed that the audios of both scenarios were comparable, the emotion cues (angry or neutral) across all clips were equivalently salient, and the emotion expressions of both Black and White actresses were similarly intense.

### **Dependent Measures**

**Competence.** The present study used the competence measure from Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002), using the following traits: *intelligent*, *efficient*, *capable*, *competent*, *skillful*, and

*confident* on a 7-point Likert scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Agenticism.** Heilman and Okimoto (2007) used a scale of agenticism, which is comprised of six 9-point bipolar adjective scales: *strong, assertive, tough, bold, active, and dominant*. Another relevant adjective *direct* was added on this list because it was often mentioned when referring to the strong and independent communication styles used by women (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). The present study used these adjectives to measure agenticism on a 7-point scale ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Hostility.** Heilman et al. (2007) used a 9-point bipolar adjective scale to measure interpersonal hostility: *abrasive, pushy, untrustworthy, manipulative, and selfish*. The current study also included *aggressive* and *threatening* as items into this composite because both adjectives were frequently used to describe the negative images of women, the unstable CBB, for example (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). The study adapted the scale to 7-point ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

**Warmth & Communality.** Fiske et al. (2002) used a measure of warmth with the following trait adjectives: *friendly, well-intentioned, trustworthy, warm, good-natured, and sincere*. *Nice* was added to measure the dimension of warmth in addition to the six items listed above. Items measuring communality were *supportive, understanding, caring, sensitive, and likable*, which were adopted from the communality scale of Heilman et al. (2007). Because warm and communal are traits that are correlated to each other and women are often expected to possess both of them to be seen as “feminine”, in this study we combined the 12 adjectives on warmth and communality scales to measure the targets’ perceived femininity. The combined

7-point scale was found to be highly reliable ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

***Demographics.*** Participants were asked to provide demographic information, including gender, age, and ethnicity (Appendix B).

## RESULTS

### Data analyses

Because I used two scenarios in the study, I first compared the four conditions (angry Black, neutral Black, angry White, neutral White) of each scenario, using between-subjects analyses of variance. As there was no difference between scenarios on competence ratings,  $F(1, 276) = 1.12, p = .732$ , and correct identifications of emotions, angry,  $F(1, 276) = 3.11, p = .08$ , neutral,  $F(1, 276) = .26, p = .61$ , I collapsed across scenarios for all subsequent analyses.

For the dependent variables agenticism, hostility, warmth and communality, and competence, I ran separate 2 (race of target: Black vs. White) x 2 (emotion: anger vs. neutral) x 2 (occupational rank: high vs. low) ANOVAs.

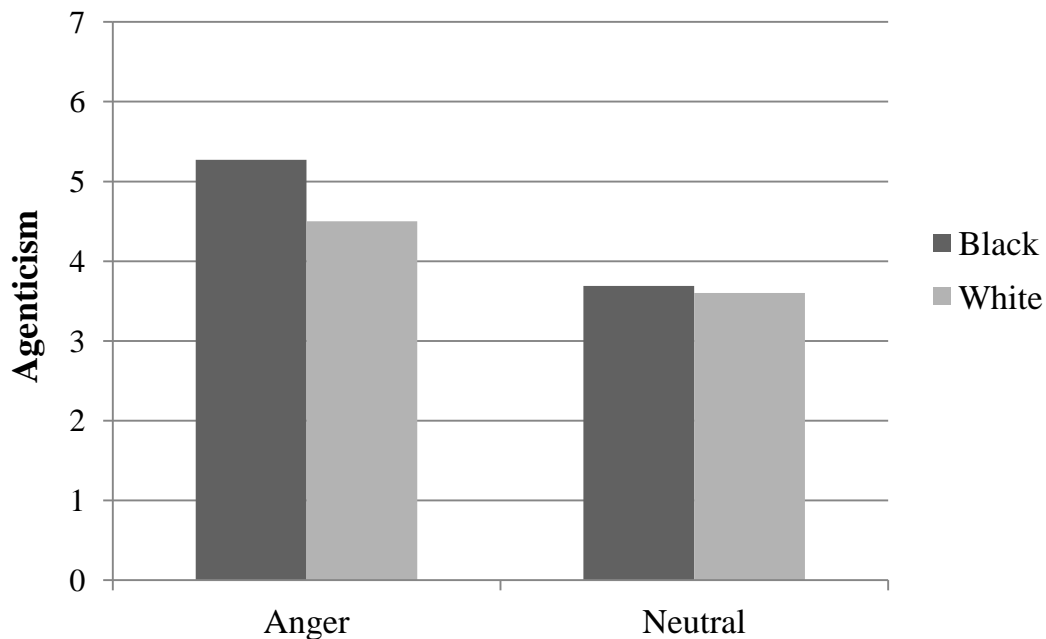
Because studies of gender-emotion stereotypes rarely find meaningful gender of participant differences, we did not expect to see participant gender differences. As anticipated, participant gender (female vs. male) did not moderate any of the effects of the key dependent variables according to the results of a 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (race of target) x 2 (emotion) x 2 (occupational rank) ANOVA, competence,  $F(1, 262) = 1.42, p = .24$ , agenticism,  $F(1, 262) = .37, p = .69$ , hostility,  $F(1, 262) = 1.64, p = .20$ , warmth and communality,  $F(1, 262) = .73, p = .48$ , therefore it is not mentioned in the following analyses.

### Agenticism

The 2 (Black target vs. White target) x 2 (anger vs. neutral) x 2 (high status target vs. low status target) ANOVA conducted on agenticism revealed one main effect of the target's race,

$F(1, 272) = 9.84, p = .00$ , indicating that regardless of status, Black women ( $M = 4.48, SD = .10$ ) were generally perceived as more agentic than White women ( $M = 4.05, SD = .10$ ).

Analyses on agenticism also included two interaction effects. First, there was a two-way interaction between the target's race and emotion expression (*Figure 1*),  $F(1, 272) = 6.11, p = .01$ . This tells us that when taking both race and emotion into account, Black ( $M = 3.69, SD = .13$ ) and White women ( $M = 3.60, SD = .14$ ) in the neutral condition were seen as similarly agentic, whereas in the anger condition, Black women ( $M = 5.27, SD = .14$ ) were rated higher on agenticism than White women ( $M = 4.50, SD = .14$ ).



*Figure 1.* Ratings of *agenticism* for Black and White women in anger and neutral conditions.

The interaction between target's race and status,  $F(1, 272) = 6.40, p = .01$ , shows an opposite pattern for Black and White women (*Figure 2*). For Black targets, low status women

( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) were rated higher in agenticism than high status women ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = .13$ ). For White targets, in contrast, high status women ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) were seen as more agentic than low status women ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = .14$ ).

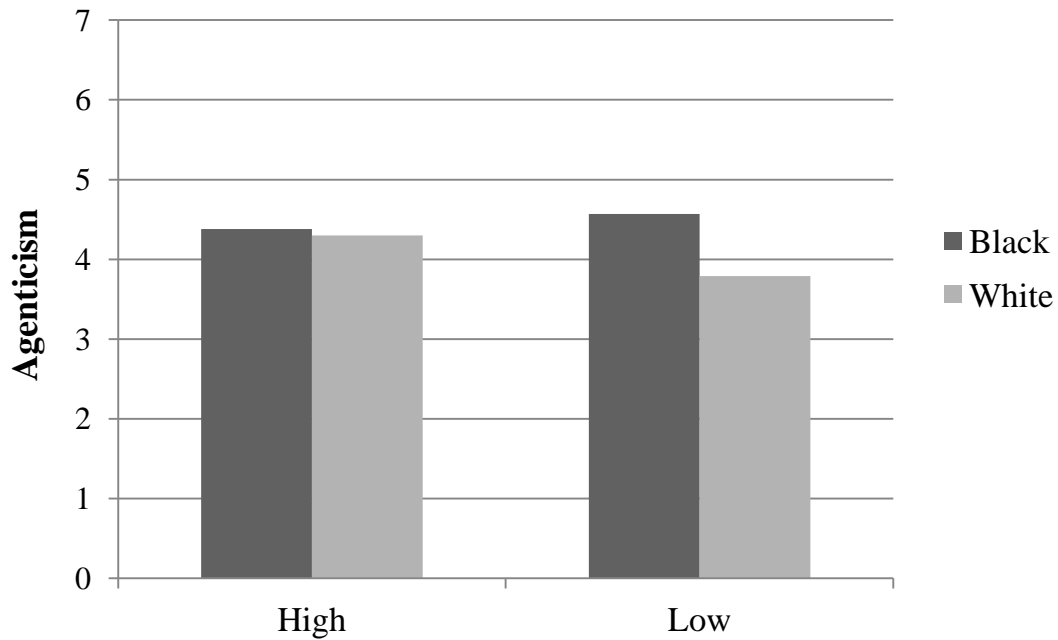


Figure 2. Ratings of *agenticism* for Black and White women in high and low status conditions.

### Hostility

As seen in Figure 3, the three-way ANOVA on hostility ratings revealed a main effect of the target's race,  $F(1, 272) = 4.61$ ,  $p = .03$ , suggesting that Black women ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .10$ ) were rated as more hostile than White women ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .11$ ).

In addition, there was a two-way interaction between target's race and status,  $F(1, 272) = 4.54$ ,  $p = .034$ . For Black targets, low status women ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .15$ ) were seen as more hostile than high status women ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .14$ ). Conversely, for White women, those of

high status ( $M = 3.20, SD = .15$ ) were perceived as more hostile than those of low status ( $M = 2.74, SD = .15$ ).

In all, both the main effect of race and the interaction between race and status mirrored the pattern found for agenticism.

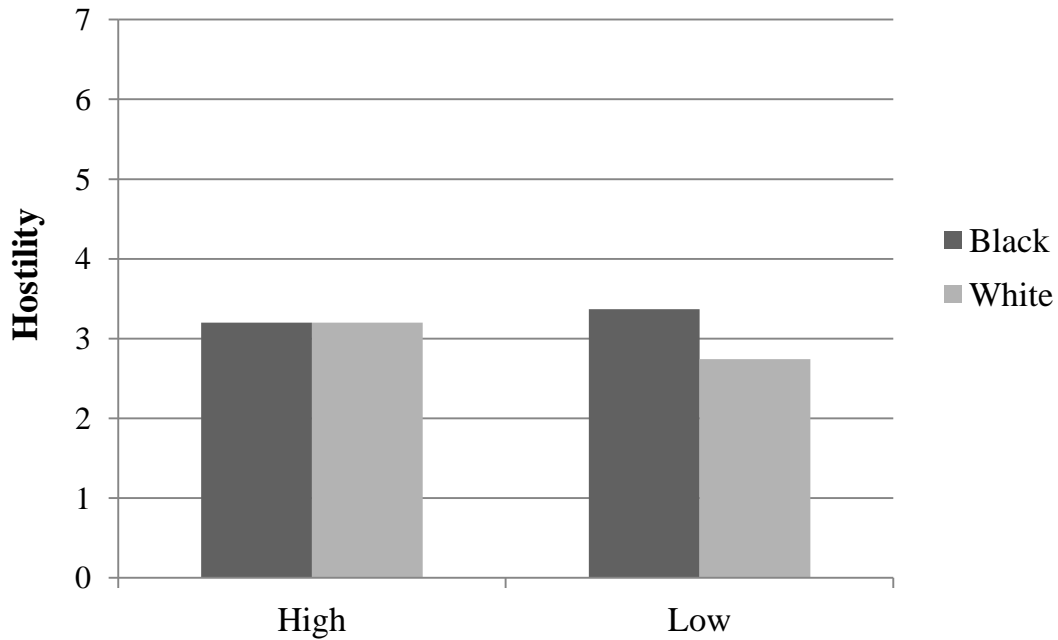


Figure 3. Ratings of *hostility* for Black and White women in high and low status conditions.

### Warmth & Communality

Results showed a marginal main effect of target’s race,  $F(1, 272) = 2.94, p = .09$ , suggesting that White women ( $M = 4.25, SD = .10$ ) were viewed as warmer and more communal than Black women ( $M = 4.01, SD = .10$ ).

There was also a marginal two-way interaction between race and status,  $F(1, 272) = 2.90, p = .09$ . For high status targets, both Black ( $M = 4.06, SD = .13$ ) and White women ( $M = 4.06,$

$SD = .14$ ) were perceived as equally warm and communal, whereas for low status targets, White women ( $M = 4.44, SD = .14$ ) were seen as warmer as well as more communal than their Black counterparts ( $M = 3.97, SD = .14$ ). One notable finding is that among the four groups (race x status), low status White women were rated as the warmest and most communal by the participants.

### **Competence**

The three-way ANOVA conducted on competence did not show any significant main effects or interactions. However, the direction of the means was consistent with findings of agenticism and hostility ratings. Specifically, low status Black women displaying anger ( $M = 4.58, SD = 1.34$ ) were given the lowest competence ratings among all groups ( $GM = 4.86, SD = 1.15$ ).



## DISCUSSION

### **Implications**

Findings of the current study demonstrate that when assessing perceptions women's anger in the workplace, the target's race connects with emotion expressions, and status. Results indicate that low status Black women, regardless of emotion expressions, were rated as more agentic and more hostile than high status Black women, high status White women, and low status White women. The seemingly paradoxical labels of "agentic" and "hostile" low status Black women suggests that the intersectional racial identity and status conferral could be a double-edged sword for Black women. Goff et al. (2008) found that perceivers strongly associated Blackness with masculinity, and Black targets were rated higher on masculinity when perceived as showing more stereotypically Black traits and behaviors. The fact of being Black while displaying emotions stereotypically associated with masculinity (e.g., anger), thus contributes to the increased masculinity which resulted in higher agenticism ratings among Black women, as agentic traits (e.g., assertive, confident) are found to be stereotypically connected with males (Fiske, et al., 2002). However, since low status groups may be perceived to embrace "hostile, exploitative intent that impacts others in society" (Fiske, et al., 2002, p. 896), low status Black women were given more negative evaluations than those of high status.

Furthermore, the comparable ratings of "agenticism" and "hostility" for low status Black women extends findings of the backlash effect. As mentioned previously, because agenticism and communality tend to be conceived of as conflicting and women who act in an agentic

manner are seen as violating feminine stereotypical norms of communality and niceness, female agenticism can lead to decreased likability and perceived lack of social skills (Rudman & Glick, 1999). Nevertheless, past research did not investigate how target's status could affect people's perceptions towards agentic Black women. Results of the present study found that low status Black women, in fact, experience a more severe level of backlash effect than high status Black women as they were perceived as more hostile. Thus, penalties for low status Black women extend from dislike and weakened female-niceness to perceived hostility as a result of the combining effects of the erasure of their womanhood and the possession of low social status.

This study also indicates that women's anger expressions afford more agenticism for both races, and the difference between anger and neutral conditions on agenticism ratings was larger among Black targets than White targets. Consistent with previous findings, women exhibiting anger were rated as more agentic because anger expressions "create the impression that the expresser was strong and competent" (Tiedens, 2001). Besides, given the strong association between "Blackness" and "maleness," as well as the stereotypical male agentic norms, results showing larger difference between anger and neutral conditions on perceived agenticism among Black women are therefore rational and within expectation.

Overall, the current study advances and connects research on emotion, power, stereotyping, and subtle racism and sexism, applying it to workplace concerns. It addresses the urgent need for more intersectional studies to examine how multiple social identities impact treatment in the workplace. Results of the study provide evidence that expressed gendered

racial stereotype and power difference influence evaluations of others' emotion expressions.

The study also informs psychological theories such as backlash effects and stereotype maintenance.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While this study allows us to shed light on issues of women's expressed emotions in the workplace, there are several limitations within the current study that should be noted. First, the use of audio stimulus materials in the study, although it increased the imaginability of the scenarios compared to the use of written vignettes, still lacks the authenticity of actual work settings. Another potential problem concerning the use of audio stimulus is the strength of race and status cues embedded in the clips. Manipulation checks showed that a certain number of participants misidentified the target's race or status. It is possible that those participants were not very concentrated while listening to the clip, considering the survey was conducted online. However, it might also be the fact that the race or status cue was not strong and representative enough to arouse people's attention. Either way, the audio stimulus was considered imperfect and future research should: 1) amplify the race cue inserted in the content, for example, by asking actresses to use stronger racial accents; and 2) emphasize the status cue by adding a few more descriptive sentences pertaining to the target's responsibilities at work.

Moreover, when analyzing the reason of the non-significant effects obtained on competence ratings, the target's occupation should be factored in. In the current study, the target is characterized as either an accounting director (high status) or an accounting clerk (low status)

in the company. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in 2010 the national estimated mean annual wage for accountants and auditors is \$68,960, which is much greater than the mean average of all occupations (\$44,410). Because in the business world, competence of an individual is associated with the payment he or she gets (Kravetz, 1999), it is thus possible that the target's occupation as an accountant overwrites her emotional display, status, and racial ethnicity in terms of the role it plays in perceived competence. Subsequent studies should be cautious when determining the target's occupation, a job that is not hugely linked to high payment would be ideal.

In addition, the participants used in this study are undergraduate students recruited from the psychology subject pool with a mean age of 19.6 years old. The quite young sample poses the question that they are very unlikely to have professional experience that would help ensure that their responses were representative of people in actual work settings. Thus, it is crucial for future studies to test the ideas using a sample of professional people.

Lastly, though the present study provides evidence that workplace contexts do play a role in evaluations of women's anger, competence, and personality traits, we do not know how professional women think of and deal with these perceptions. Two important questions for future research to consider include to what extent women of different racial ethnicities and occupational ranks are aware of their emotions may be judged, and to what extent they may downplay their anger expressions. In that case, conducting focus group research may be a useful direction for future studies to go.

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## Appendix A: Audio Stimulus Scripts

[Interviewer]: Hi. Just to start us off, could you tell me a little bit about yourself, your occupation, and give me an idea of your role in the company?

-- HIGH RANK CONDITION – (Accounting Director)

[Employee]: Okay, sure. My name is Nicole and I work in the accounting department at a large investment firm in Philadelphia. I've been here for two years now and I like working here. I work regular hours - from 9 to 5- and have pretty consistent schedule, which is nice. I'm an accounting director in the company, so I have several staff accountants and interns working for me.

-- LOW RANK CONDITION – (Accounting Clerk)

[Employee]: Okay, sure. My name is Nicole and I work in the accounting department at a large investment firm in Philadelphia. I've been here for two years now and I like working here. I work regular hours - from 9 to 5- and have pretty consistent schedule, which is nice. I'm an accounting clerk in the company, so I work under the direction of my supervisor and a couple of senior members in the department.

[Interviewer]: Okay, thanks. Now, can you tell me about a time when you felt stressed at work? And about how often this happens?

### Scenario #1 – Computer Issues

-- ANGER CONDITION --

[Employee]: Okay, well... I'd have to say that there is one situation that makes me *so* angry. It just happened yesterday – but I guess it has happened to me a lot. The office computers are *always* having issues and need to be updated or “fixed”. This is *really* hard for me because I have these accounting programs that, you know, need to be approved and downloaded by the tech people for me to use them. I need these programs to do my job – but my work is, well, *held up* because of the tech people or because of other computer issues. I *really* shouldn't have to wait so long for someone else to do his or her job! Most of the time, tech support puts me on hold – it well, it makes me so *angry*. As a matter of fact, I am going to talk to the IT supervisor about this tomorrow... So, I would say that's my biggest source of stress at work right now.

-- NEUTRAL CONDITION --

[Employee]: Okay, well... I'd have to say that there is one situation that just happened yesterday – but I guess it has happened to me a lot. The office computers are always having issues and need to be updated or fixed. This is really, hard for me because I have these



accounting programs that, you know, need to be approved and downloaded by the tech people for me to use them. So I need these programs to do my job – but my work is, well, held up because of the tech people or because of other computer issues. I really shouldn't have to wait so long for someone else to do his or her job. Most of the time, tech support puts me on hold – it's a little stressful I guess. There was really not that much I could do... So, I would say that could be a source of stress at work right now.

### Scenario #2 – Meeting Interruption

-- ANGER CONDITION --

[Employee}: Okay, well...I'd have to say that there is one situation that makes me *so* angry. It just happened yesterday. I have a client who seems very hard to satisfy. During the past week, the client called me *several times* in the middle of the day asking a lot about our progress. This wasn't as bad as yesterday – when I was at a department meeting and my phone just started vibrating nonstop. When I saw it was that client calling, I decided to ignore it at first. But after a few minutes, the phone vibrated *again*. This time I started to worry, thinking the client might have some urgent issue. So I had to leave the meeting in front of all my colleagues to pick up the phone which turned out to be a routine question from the client – it made me *so angry!* I mean, I *really* didn't want to act unprofessionally at the meeting, but I also had to deal with this client at the same time. As a matter of fact, I am going to call this client later today and explain when he can call... So I would say that's my biggest source of stress at work right now.

-- NEUTRAL CONDITION –

[Employee}: Okay, well...I'd have to say that there is one situation that just happened yesterday. I have a client who seems very hard to satisfy. During the past week, the client called me several times in the middle of the day asking about our progress. In fact, just yesterday – when I was having a department meeting and my phone started vibrating nonstop. When I saw it was that client calling, I decided to ignore it at first. But after a few minutes, the phone vibrated again. This time I started to worry, thinking the client might have some urgent issue. So I had to leave the meeting in front of all my colleagues to pick up the phone which turned out to be a routine question from the client – it's a little stressful I guess. I mean, I didn't want to act unprofessionally at the meeting, but I also had to deal with this client at the same time. There was really not that much I could do... So, I would say that could be a source of stress at work right now.

## Appendix B: Study Questionnaire

### *Questions about the interview*

1. In the interview, how \_\_\_\_\_ did the employee appear to be?

|       | <i>Not at all</i> |   | <i>Somewhat</i> |   |   | <i>Very</i> |   |
|-------|-------------------|---|-----------------|---|---|-------------|---|
| happy | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| sad   | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| angry | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| calm  | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |

2. In the interview, how \_\_\_\_\_ did the employee appear to be?

|                  | <i>Not at all</i> |   | <i>Somewhat</i> |   |   | <i>Very</i> |   |
|------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------|---|---|-------------|---|
| intelligent      | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| competent        | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| capable          | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| impulsive        | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| confident        | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| skillful         | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| efficient        | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| warm             | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| good-natured     | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| deceitful        | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| sincere          | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| friendly         | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| well-intentioned | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| trustworthy      | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| nice             | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| direct           | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| assertive        | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| bold             | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| active           | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |

3. In the interview, how \_\_\_\_\_ did the employee appear to be?

|            | <i>Not at all</i> |   | <i>Somewhat</i> |   |   | <i>Very</i> |   |
|------------|-------------------|---|-----------------|---|---|-------------|---|
| aggressive | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| tough      | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| strong     | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| abrasive   | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |
| pushy      | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6           | 7 |

|               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| dominant      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| likeable      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| understanding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| caring        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| supportive    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| sensitive     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| threatening   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| manipulative  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| selfish       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

4. Do you have any comments? If so, please indicate them here.

5. What do you think this study was about?

***Demographic Information***

1. What is your gender?

- A. Female
- B. Male
- C. Transgender
- D. N/A

2. What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your ethnicity?

- A. African American / Black
- B. Asian
- C. Caucasian / White
- D. Latino/a
- E. Native American
- F. Pacific Islander
- G. Multiethnic
- H. N/A

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## **EDUCATION**

B.A. in Psychology, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 2008-2012

B.A. in Media Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 2008-2012

Honors in Psychology

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## **HONORS & AWARDS**

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 2012         | Student Marshall, College of Communications, Penn State University |
| 2012         | The Evan Pugh Senior Scholar Award, Penn State University          |
| 2012         | Theory-Based Undergraduate Research Grant, Penn State University   |
| 2008-present | Academic Excellence Scholarship, Penn State University             |
| 2008-present | Dean's List, Penn State University                                 |
| 2011         | Summer Liberal Arts Enrichment Award, Penn State University        |
| 2011         | Inducted into <i>Phi Beta Kappa</i>                                |
| 2011         | The Evan Pugh Junior Scholar Award, Penn State University          |
| 2010         | Schreyer Honors College Summer Grant, Penn State University        |
| 2010         | Inducted into <i>Psi Chi</i>                                       |
| 2010         | The President Sparks Award, Penn State University                  |
| 2009         | Penn State Greater Allegheny Alumni Society Scholarship            |
| 2009         | The President's Freshman Award, Penn State University              |
| 2008 & 2009  | The Chancellor's Award, Penn State University                      |
| 2008 & 2009  | Penn State Greater Allegheny Blue & White Scholarship              |

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCES**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Spring 2012 | <i>Research Assistant</i> , College of Communications, Penn State University<br>Supervisor: S. Shyam Sundar, Ph.D.<br>- Collecting and analyzing physiological data (skin conductance, EEG), coding |
|-------------|---|

qualitative data, administering studies, evaluating usability and analyzing user interactions, report writing on psychophysiological results

- Lab: Media Effects Research Laboratory
- Projects: (1) Psychophysiological Measurement and User Interaction Analysis for Research on Interactive Media (funded by Office of Undergraduate Education); (2) Interactivity and Self-Expression.

Spring  
2011-present

*Research Assistant*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Supervisor: Stephanie A. Shields, Ph.D.

- Collecting and analyzing data, coding qualitative data, designing questionnaires, conducting literature searches, pilot testing materials
- Lab: Interdisciplinary Social Psychology Group

Fall  
2010-present

*Research Assistant*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Supervisor: David A. Rosenbaum, Ph.D.

- Designing experiments, conducting pilot study, administering studies, collecting and analyzing data, coding behavioral data
- Lab: Cognition and Action
- Projects: (1) Walking and Reaching; (2) Rope Pulling; (3) End-State Comfort.

Summer 2011

***Full-time Research Intern***, Department of Psychology, Harvard University  
Supervisor: Daniel T. Gilbert, Ph.D.

- Conducting meta-analysis, planning experiments, administering studies, collecting and analyzing data, conducting literature reviews
- Projects: (1) Meta-analysis on “active learning”; (2) Experiments on “altruism & delayed gratification”; (3) Experiments on “co-experiences”.

Fall 2010

*Research Assistant*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Supervisor: Alysia Y. Blandon, Ph.D.

- Collecting data, transcribing videotapes of Children’s speech/interviews, preparing materials for studies, conducting literature searches
- Lab: Family & Child Development
- Project: STARS (Socialization, Temperament, and Relationships Study)

Summer 2010

***Full-time Research Intern***, The Family Institute at Northwestern University  
Supervisor: Lynne Knobloch-Fedders, Ph.D.

- Entering session codes, running kappas, running frequency, running complex data, scoring sequential data, generating and entering phi data, conducting literature reviews, unitizing transcripts

- Project: Depression, Anxiety, Relationship Distress and Couples
- Recipient of 2010 SHC Summer Grant Award, Penn State University

Spring 2010

*Co-Investigator*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Supervisor: Elizabeth Mazur, Ph.D.

- Performing content analysis, analyzing data, conducting literature reviews, translating materials (Chinese-English), training research assistants
- Project: "What are They Blogging and Blurbing? A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Chinese and American Emerging Adults' Online Social Profiles."

Spring 2010

*Primary Investigator*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Supervisor: Margaret L. Signorella, Ph.D.

- Designing survey/questionnaire, recruiting participants, administering the study, analyzing data, conducting literature reviews
- Independent research project: "Sleep and Academic Life Survey."

Spring 2009

*Research Assistant*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Primary Investigator: Larry Nelson. Supervisor: Margaret L. Signorella, Ph.D.

- Recruiting participants, consenting participants, conducting pilot study
- Independent research project: "Ratings of Personal Characteristics as Related Perceived Accents." (won the poster competition at the Spring 2009 Student Research Conference)

Fall 2008

*Co-Investigator*, Department of Psychology, Penn State University  
Supervisor: Margaret L. Signorella, Ph.D.

- Coding responses, analyzing data, conducting literature reviews
- Project: "The 2008 Presidential Election and Food Security Survey."

## **PUBLICATIONS & MANUSCRIPTS**

**Li, Y.** (2012). *Senior Honors Thesis*: Perceiving women's anger in the workplace: Does racial ethnicity or occupational rank matter? *Supervisor*: Stephanie A. Shields, Ph.D.

Signorella, M. L., Hayes, A. R., & **Li, Y.** (work in progress). The effects of single-sex education: A meta-analytic critique.

Mazur, E., & **Li, Y.** (manuscript in preparation). Identity and self-presentation on social networking websites: A comparison of online profiles of Chinese and American emerging adults.

Li, Y. (2009). Improving immigrant children's academic achievement through ESL classes. *Best of Freshman Writing, 14*. The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

Gong, L., Abate, M., Beckett, J., Ithal, B., Li, Y., Paulson, E., Snyder, S., Zhang, L., & Rosenbaum, D. A. (2012). *Picking up a close bucket at the cost of transporting it a longer distance: A study of walking and reaching*. Symposium presented at the 2012 New England Sequencing and Timing Conference, Amherst, MA, USA, March.

Mazur, E., & Li, Y. (2011). *What are they blogging and blurbing? A cross-cultural comparison of American and Chinese emerging adults' online social profiles*. Poster presented at the 2011 Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, USA, August.

Li, Y. (2010). *Sleep and academic life survey*. Poster presented at the 2010 Penn State Undergraduate Research Exhibition, University Park, PA, USA, April.

Li, Y., & Citriniti, S. (2009). *The 2008 presidential election and attitudes toward food security in the Americas and the Caribbean*. Poster presented at the 2009 Penn State Undergraduate Research Exhibition, University Park, PA, USA, April.

### **OTHER EXPERIENCES**

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 2011-present | <i>Online Counselor, Data Manager</i><br>- "Teen LGBT China" (NGO for the services of LGBT adolescent)    |
| 2009-2011    | <i>Associate Editor</i><br>- "ABSENCE" (Penn State Greater Allegheny Literary & Visual Arts Magazine)     |
| Summer 2008  | <i>Producer Assistant, Editor Intern</i><br>- Educational Channel of Zhejiang TV Station, Hangzhou, China |

### **REFERENCES**

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