Double Jeopardy: Punitive Responses to Black Women Politicians' Anger

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Abstract

How do voters respond when Black women candidates express anger? Using a preregistered survey experiment (N ≈ 5,000) that varied candidate race, gender, and expressions of anger, we test whether Black women are uniquely penalized for displays of anger. We find that when the Black woman candidate expressed anger about racial disparities, support among White respondents dropped by over eight percentage points—with the largest penalty–more than half the vote likelihood scale, coming from racially resentful White men. Even among racially liberal White women, who initially reward non-racialized anger, support collapses once that anger becomes racialized, revealing the fragility of cross-racial gender solidarity. Among Black respondents, intersectionality conscious participants reward the White woman candidate but not the Black woman candidate for racial anger, while Black nationalists reward the Black man candidate and penalize the Black woman candidate for the same expression. Our findings highlight the unique barriers facing Black women candidates in using anger as a political resource.

Introduction

"I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!" In this famous line from the movie, "Network" (1976), news anchor Howard Beale delivers a passionate on-air rant, channeling public frustration into a call to action. The quote endures because it captures the political potential of anger–anger can mobilize citizens, sharpen attention, and signal resolve (Brader 2006; Webster 2020).

Yet anger is also politically risky. Candidates who display anger may be judged as unprofessional, unlikable, or unfit for leadership (Brooks 2013). Crucially, these risks may not always be distributed evenly. Some scholars argue that for women, anger violates gendered expectations of warmth and communality (Eagly & Karau 2002; Rudman & Glick 1999). For Black candidates, anger–especially when expressed about racial injustice–reinforces stereotypes of aggression and fuels perceptions of racial threat (Banks and White 2024). In fact, many observers have long suspected that minority politicians must make a careful effort to not appear too strident or bellicose, so as to avoid losing the support of white voters (Phoenix 2019; Stephens-Dougan, 2020).

Real-world examples illustrate how these constraints operate. Commentators often attributed President Obama's famously restrained demeanor to fears of being cast as the "angry Black man" (CNN 2010; Phoenix 2019). More recently, observers noted that former Vice President Kamala Harris emphasized "joy" during her presidential campaign, in part because anger was perceived to be politically unavailable to her (Blake 2024). These examples highlight how both Black men and Black women may have to navigate the narrow bounds of emotional expression, but leave open whether Black women face distinct electoral consequences when they express anger.

We argue that Black women face a "double bind": as women, penalized for displaying anger, and as Black candidates, penalized more harshly when that anger is racialized. But, to date, research has not explored the nature and extent of this double bind. Existing research has focused on White women and Black men (Jordan Brooks 2013; Banks et al. 2019), often collapsing across race and gender or excluding Black women altogether. Moreover, many studies rely almost exclusively on White respondents, leaving open the question of how Black voters evaluate Black women candidates who express anger.

We address these gaps using a preregistered survey experiment with approximately 5,000 respondents, evenly split between White and Black Americans. Respondents evaluated a hypothetical candidate running for the U.S. Senate, whose race (Black or White), gender (male or female), and emotional expression were experimentally varied. Candidates either expressed no anger, anger about the economy, or anger about racial disparities. This design allows us to identify whether Black women are uniquely penalized for expressing anger, and whether reactions differ across White and Black voters depending on their racial and gender attitudes.

Our findings reveal a consistent double jeopardy for Black women. White respondents high in racial resentment impose the sharpest penalties, reducing support for an angry Black woman by nearly half the vote likelihood scale in the general anger condition and by even more when her anger is racialized. Among Black respondents, support is similarly withheld. Intersectionality conscious participants reward the White woman candidate but not the Black woman candidate for racial anger, while community nationalists reward the Black man candidate and penalize the Black woman candidate for the same expression. In short, this study shows that anger is not a universally available political resource but one that uniquely disadvantages Black women, who face electoral penalties from both White and Black voters when they express it.

Anger as a Conditional Political Resource

Anger is often understood as one of the most politically powerful emotions. Defined as a feeling of belligerence over a perceived slight or injustice, anger mobilizes participation, sharpens attention, and signals resolve and authenticity (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Valentino et al. 2011; Brader 2006). Politicians who display anger can use it strategically to highlight threats and demonstrate leadership (Webster 2020). Moreover, displays of anger can be advantageous for people in leadership positions (Van Kleef and De Dreu, 2010), as reflecting the emotions of their constituency engenders greater approval (Garcia and Stout, 2022).

Yet, despite anger being a political resource, it is not universally regarded as appropriate or effective; emotional expressions are filtered through racial and gendered hierarchies that determine whose anger is seen as legitimate (Phoenix 2019). Previous research indicates that white men frequently benefit from anger displays, which are often interpreted as consistent with strength and leadership (Bickford 2011). In contrast, for women candidates, anger violates gendered expectations. Role congruity theory holds that voters evaluate women through the lens of communal stereotypes–warmth, nurturance, and cooperation–while leadership is associated with agency and assertiveness (Eagly and Karau 2002). Women who display agentic behaviors or emotions such as anger risk backlash for being "unfeminine" or unlikeable (Rudman and Glick 199).

For Black candidates, anger carries different but equally constraining risks. White voters frequently perceive Black politicians as more liberal (Lerman and Sadin 2016) and more beholden to Black interests than their White counterparts. Therefore, expressions of anger,

particularly when directed at racial injustice, reinforce longstanding stereotypes of Black aggression and partiality toward their ingroup (Phoenix 2019; Stephens-Dougan 2020; Banks and White 2024). Black men in particular are often penalized for anger, given its association with aggression and violence (Livington and Pearce 2009). Thus, we expect Black candidates to face sharper penalites than White candidates for expressing anger, especially among racially resentful voters.

Black women candidates stand at the intersection of these expectations. As women, they may be penalized for violating gender norms of warmth and civility, and as Black candidates, for reinforcing racial stereotypes (Carr 2025). Yet their dual marginalization may also render them less prototypical of either group, potentially muting backlash (Sesko and Biernat, 2010). These competing logics make Black women a critical test case for how understanding when and how anger functions as a political resource.

In addition to candidate identity, we expect responses to candidates' anger to vary based on voter identity. Among Black respondents, anger about racial injustice can serve as a cue of authenticity and solidarity, signaling a candidate's commitment to shared concerns (Wamble 2024). Yet, these signals may not be interpreted uniformly. Black respondents high in intersectional consciousness–the belief that Black women's oppression stems from interlocking forces of racism and sexism–maybe especially inclined to reward Black women for expressing anger about racial inequality, seeing it as cultivating solidarity along both race and gender lines (Crowder et al. 2023; Greenwood 2008). By contrast, Black respondents with strong community nationalist orientations–emphasizing Black self-determination and often tied to patriarchal understandings of leadership–may privilege Black men as the authentic bearers of racial grievance (Alexander-Floyd 2003).

We also expect voter gender to shape responses to candidates' anger, especially racialized anger. Gendered socialization influences how men and women perceive emotional expression. Men are often more accepting of anger from other men, viewing it as an appropriate display of strength, while judging women's anger as less legitimate or overly emotional. Women, by contrast may be more sympathetic to anger expressed by women candidates, particularly when it reflects concerns about injustice or inequality (Cassesse and Homan 2018). However, this sympathy is not guaranteed. Women may alo enforce gendered norms that penalize female candidates for violating expectations of warmth and civility (Falk and Kenski 2006). Thus, we anticipate that voter gender in addition to voter race, will condition evaluations of candidates who display anger.

In short, anger is a conditional political resource. For Black women in particular, its effectiveness depends on the expectations that voters bring to their evaluations. These dynamics suggest that White respondents high in racial resentment will penalize Black women most heavily, particularly when their anger is racialized, while both Black and female respondents will exhibit variation in their reactions depending on their orientations toward race and gender.
In sum, we contend that anger is not judged in a vacuum—it is interpreted through expectations about who is "allowed" to express it and under what circumstances.

Hypotheses

Because anger from women violates gendered expectations, and anger from Black candidates often reinforces perceptions of racial grievance, we anticipate that Black women will face especially steep penalties. These penalties should be most pronounced among White voters who harbor higher levels of racial resentment. Among Black voters, anger about racial injustice may

serve as a cue of authenticity and solidarity, but responses are expected to diverge depending on the respondent's orientation toward race and gender.

Therefore, our hypotheses (by race of respondent) are formally stated below:

White Respondents

H1 (Black woman anger penalty):
White respondents will be less likely to support a Black woman candidate when she expresses anger—especially racialized anger—compared to both a neutral (non-angry) condition and to non-racialized anger.

H2 (Racial resentment as moderator):
Among White respondents, higher levels of racial resentment will be associated with lower support for Black candidates who express anger, with the strongest negative effect observed for the Black woman candidate expressing racialized anger.

Black Respondents

H3 (Ingroup emotional reward):
Black respondents will express greater support for Black candidates—relative to White candidates—when they express anger about racial disparities.

H4 (Ideological moderators):
Among Black respondents:

- **H4a:** *Higher **intersectional consciousness** will be associated with increased support for the Black woman candidate expressing racialized anger.*

- **H4b:** *Higher **community nationalism** will be associated with increased support for the Black man candidate expressing racialized anger, but not the Black woman.*

Research Design

We test our theoretical expectations using a preregistered survey experiment conducted in Spring 2021 with approximately 5,000 respondents recruited through Qualtrics, evenly divided between Black and White Americans. The experiment employed a fully crossed 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design varying candidate race (Black/White), gender (man/woman), and emotional expression (no anger, nonracial anger about the economy, or racialized anger about racial

disparities). This design isolates the causal effects of candidate identity and anger type on vote likelihood and trait evaluations, and assesses how these effects are moderated by respondents' racial resentment, intersectional consciousness, community nationalism, and gender.

Respondents first completed questions on demographics, political orientations, and attitudes about race and gender. White participants answered the standard four-item racial resentment scale (Kinder and Sanders 1996), while Black participants completed measures of community nationalism and intersectional consciousness, along with related items on racial and gender attitudes. Participants were then randomly assigned to read a mock news article about a candidate running for the U.S. Senate, in which the candidate's race, gender, and expression of anger were experimentally manipulated. The design replicates and extends Banks and White (2024) by incorporating gender as an additional identity dimension and by examining how reactions to candidate anger vary by respondents' own race and gender.

Our primary dependent variable is vote likelihood, measured on a seven-point scale ("How likely would you be to vote for [candidate]?"), rescaled from 0–1 for analysis. Secondary dependent variables capture stereotype-based trait attributions, including perceptions of competence and qualification, similarly rescaled. The main comparisons evaluate whether White respondents penalize the Black woman candidate who expresses anger, and whether these effects vary by racial resentment and gender (H1–H2). Among Black respondents, we test whether support for Black candidates who express anger, increases with intersectional consciousness (IC) and community nationalism (CN). IC was measured with a single item asking respondents which statement best reflected their view: (1) "Black women have suffered from both sexism within the Black movement and racism within the women's movement," (2) "Black women mostly suffer from the same types of problems as Black men," (3) "Neither," or (4) "Both." Responses were

scaled 0–1, with higher values indicating greater IC. CN was measured as agreement (0–1) with four statements emphasizing Black autonomy and control over economic and political life in predominantly Black communities

Results

We begin by evaluating whether candidates are penalized for expressing anger—and whether such penalties vary by the race and gender of the cadidate, as well as the racial content of their anger. Our first step is to examine the main effects of our treatment conditions on vote likelihood. The first four columns of Table 1 presents linear regression models estimating the likelihood of voting for each candidate type (Black woman, Black man, White woman, White man) across three conditions: Control (no anger), Angry (non-racial), and Angry+Race (racialized anger). This analysis allows us to assess whether candidates are evaluated differently depending on both who they are and nature of what they express anger about.

Vote Likelihood by Experimental Condition and Racial Resentment (White Respondents)

Dependent variable:							

Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man	Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Angry BW	0.02				0.25^{***}			
	(0.03)				(0.08)			
Angry+Race BW	-0.01				0.12			
	(0.03)				(0.08)			
Angry BM		-0.02				-0.04		
		(0.03)				(0.08)		
Angry+Race BM		-0.07^{**}				-0.05		
		(0.03)				(0.08)		
Angry WW			0.03				0.04	
			(0.03)				(0.08)	
Angry+Race WW			0.01				0.10	
			(0.03)				(0.09)	
Angry WM				0.01				0.01
				(0.03)				(0.08)

Angry+Race WM	0.01			-0.08
	(0.03)			(0.08)
Racial Resentment		-0.32***	-0.50***	-0.57***	-0.75***
		(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Angry BW*RR		-0.51***			
		(0.17)			
Angry+Race BW*RR		-0.31*			
		(0.17)			
Angry BM*RR				0.01	
				(0.16)	
Angry+Race BM*RR				-0.05	
				(0.17)	

Angry WW*RR							-0.08	
							(0.18)	
Angry+Race WW*RR							-0.23	
							(0.19)	
Angry WM*RR								0.04
								(0.17)
Angry+Race WM*RR								0.23
								(0.18)
Constant	0.58***	0.61***	0.53***	0.54***	0.72***	0.84***	0.79***	0.84***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Observations	623	592	608	614	623	592	608	614
R^2	0.002	0.01	0.001	0.0002	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.13
Adjusted R^2	-0.001	0.01	-0.002	-0.003	0.11	0.09	0.12	0.12

Table 1. Linear regression models estimating vote likelihood for each candidate (models 1-4) and by racial resentment (models 5-8). White respondents only. Treatment conditions include Angry' and Racialized Anger. Dependent variables represent likelihood of voting for the White Man (WM), Black Man (BM), Black Woman (BW), and White Woman (WW).

Of particular interest to us, is the likely vote for the Black woman candidate, whose results are displayed in Column 1. In the non-anger control condition, her mean vote likelihood is 0.58, significantly higher than that of the White male (0.54) and White female (0.53) candidates ($p < .05$). Although none of the candidates receive overwhelming support—unsurprising in a low-information context—the Black male candidate receives the highest baseline support at 0.61, though this difference is not statistically significant relative to the Black woman ($p = .30$). Overall, White respondents evaluate the Black candidates more favorably than the White candidates in the baseline (no-anger) condition. If all candidates were evaluated equivalently, we would expect no statistically significant differences in vote likelihood.

While we initially thought that the Black woman might be "doubly bound"—penalized for both her race and gender—even in the absence of anger, these results suggest that she is not disadvantaged at baseline. However, it would be premature to conclude that Black women are immune to compounded penalties. Indeed, such penalties may emerge only under certain conditions, such as the expression of anger—particularly when it is racialized—and among racially resentful White voters, which we explore shortly.

The fact that baseline support for Black candidates is relatively high means that any subsequent drop in vote likelihood following the anger treatments should be interpreted as a clear

penalty—not just a low absolute rating, but a decline from an initially favorable position. This relatively high baseline support may reflect the ideological makeup of our sample. The median racial resentment score among White respondents is 0.5, indicating that half the sample falls into the racially liberal category (score < 0.5). Prior research suggests that White Democrats with liberal racial attitudes are increasingly supportive of Black candidates (Mikkelborg 2025), which may account for the elevated baseline evaluations we observe.

More central to this paper, however, is whether Black women candidates are uniquely penalized for expressing anger, and whether the content of that anger matters (H1). To test this, we examine the effects of two treatment conditions—*Angry* and *Angry+Race*. For the Black woman candidate, both treatment coefficients are statistically insignificant and substantively small, suggesting no penalty for expressing anger, racialized or otherwise, among White respondents overall. In contrast, the only candidate to experience a significant decline in support is the Black man: exposure to the *Angry+Race* condition leads to an approximately seven percentage point drop in vote likelihood (p < .05). Notably, this penalty only emerges when the Black man expresses anger about racial disparities, highlighting the conditional nature of voter backlash to racialized emotional expression.

Next, we test H2, which posits that, "*among White respondents, higher levels of racial resentment will predict lower support for Black candidates who express anger, with the strongest negative effect observed for the Black woman candidate expressing racialized anger.*" The latter half of Table 2 (Colums 5-8) presents linear regression models estimating vote likelihood for the four candidate profiles among White respondents, including an interaction term for the treatment conditions with racial resentment, which enables us to test H2. While our initial models in the first half of Table 1 assessed the main effects of anger across candidates among White

respondents, there are strong theoretical reasons to expect that racially resentful Whites will react more negatively to Black candidates expressing anger—particularly when that anger targets racial disparities. Our framework suggests that racially prejudiced Whites perceive such emotional displays as a threat to the racial status quo. This threat may be especially pronounced when it comes from a Black woman, whose expression of racialized anger activates both racial and gender-based stereotypes, compounding the penalty she receives.

Across all models, racial resentment is a strong and consistent negative predictor of vote likelihood. White respondents with higher levels of racial resentment are significantly less likely to support any of the four candidates, with coefficients ranging from -0.32 to -0.75 (all $p < .01$). Notably, this includes even White candidates, suggesting that racial resentment may broadly reflect a resistance to Democratic candidates, regardless of the race of the candidate.[1]

However, the most notable treatment effects appear in the model predicting vote likelihood for the Black woman candidate. In this model, exposure to an angry emotional cue significantly increases support for the candidate ($b = 0.25$, $p < .01$), suggesting that expressing anger—often considered politically risky for women and candidates of color—may, in this instance, enhance candidate appeal. However, this effect is significantly moderated by racial resentment. Among respondents high in racial resentment, the positive impact of the "Angry Black Woman" cue reverses ($b = -0.51$, $p < .01$), and a similar pattern emerges for the "Angry + Race" cue ($b = -0.31$, $p < .10$). These interactions indicate that while emotional expressiveness can enhance electoral support for marginalized candidates, its effectiveness is highly conditional on the racial attitudes of the electorate. For the remaining candidate profiles—White man, Black man, and White woman—there is little evidence that anger cues significantly influence vote likelihood, either directly or through interaction with racial resentment. This suggests that Black women

candidates are *uniquely* penalized for emotional displays of anger among racially resentful Whites.

Subsequently, we estimate the models in which we interact the treatment conditions with racial resentment, separately for White men and White women. These results are displayed in Table 2, with the first four columns of Table 2 presenting the results for White male respondents, and the latter four columns presenting the results for White female respondents. Considering that we are interested in the intersection of race and gender, it only makes sense to examine whether the effects that we see among racially prejudiced Whites are being driven by either men or women. Previous research, for example, has shown that White men are especially receptive to explicit racial cues (Hutchings, Walton, Benjamin 2010), so it it is plausible that racially prejudiced White men are more likely than racially prejudiced White women to penalize a Black woman candidate for an emotional display of anger.

Vote Likelihood by Experimental Condition and Racial Resentment (White Respondents, Subset by Gender)

	Dependent variable:						
Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man	Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Angry BW	0.16				0.44***			
	(0.10)				(0.14)			
Angry+Race BW	0.14				0.18			
	(0.10)				(0.14)			
Angry BM		0.05				-0.20		
		(0.10)				(0.12)		
Angry+Race BM		-0.05				-0.01		

	(0.11)	(0.12)
Angry WW	0.06	-0.06
	(0.11)	(0.14)
Angry+Race WW	0.13	0.04
	(0.11)	(0.14)
Angry WM	-0.01	0.04
	(0.10)	(0.13)
Angry+Race WM	-0.05	-0.37[**]

	(0.10)				(0.16)		
Racial Resentment	-0.47***	-0.56***	-0.69***	-0.73***	0.02	-0.39**	-0.43**	-0.70***
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.20)	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Angry BW*RR	-0.48**				-0.82***			
	(0.23)				(0.28)			
Angry+Race BW*RR	-0.60**				-0.30			
	(0.23)				(0.28)			
Angry BM*RR		-0.16				0.30		

	(0.22)		(0.25)	
Angry+Race BM*RR	-0.06		-0.13	
	(0.25)		(0.25)	
Angry WW*RR		-0.15		0.15
		(0.25)		(0.29)
Angry+Race WW*RR		-0.38		-0.05
		(0.26)		(0.28)
Angry WM*RR		-0.04		0.06

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
				(0.23)				(0.27)
Angry+Race WM*RR				-0.02				0.91^{***}
				(0.23)				(0.34)
Constant	0.81^{***}	0.85^{***}	0.85^{***}	0.87^{***}	0.53^{***}	0.80^{***}	0.71^{***}	0.80^{***}
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Observations	267	253	267	282	354	334	339	329
R^2	0.25	0.16	0.23	0.19	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.23	0.15	0.21	0.18	0.05	0.04	0.02	0.06

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 2. Linear regression models estimating vote likelihood for each candidate interacted with racial resentment for White male respondents (models 1-4), and White

female respondents (models 5-8). Treatment conditions include Angry' and Racialized Anger. Dependent variables represent likelihood of voting for the White Man (WM), Black Man (BM), Black Woman (BW), and White Woman (WW).

We begin by looking at the coefficent for racial resentment across all four candidate types, among White male respondents. The coefficient for racial resentment is substantively large and statistically significant, regardless of the race of the candidate. In fact, among White male respondents, the negative effect of racial resentment on vote likelihood is the largest for the White candidates. Perhaps racially resentful White men perceive White Democratic candidates as"betraying" their presumed shared racial group interests, but this is just speculation on our part.

Of particular interest to us, of course, is whether racially resentful White men are uniquely penalizing the Black woman candidate when she expresses anger. The negative and substantively large coefficients on the interaction terms for racial resentment and the treatment conditions indicate that racially resentful White men are indeed, negatively penalizing the Black woman candidate when she expresses anger. First, the coefficient of -0.48 for the interaction between racial resentment and exposure to the "Angry Black Woman" condition indicates that going from no racial resentment (a racial resentment score of zero) to the maximum level of racial resentment (one), reduces the likelihood of voting for the Black woman by nearly half of one point on a 0 to 1 scale (p < .05). In addition, when we consider the interaction of racial resentment with exposure to the Black woman candidate who is angry about racial injustice, the reduction in likely vote is even greater, with a coefficient of -0.60 (p < .05). Thus, anger about racial disparities is especially off-putting to racially resentful White men. It is also noteworthy that the Black woman candidate is the only candidate for whom racial resentment significantly moderates the effect of the anger treatments. In short, she is uniquely and disproportionately

penalized by racially resentful White men—particularly when her anger is linked to racial disparities.

We now to turn to analyzing the impact of racial resentment among White women respondents (the latter four columns of Table 2), and whether racially resentful White women, similar to their White male counterparts, also uniquely and disproportionately penalize the Black woman candidate. The results indicate that is also the case. However, the results are quite nuanced. When we consider the interaction between racial resentment and the *Black Woman Angry* condition, the coefficient on the interaction term indicates that the Black woman candidate who is angry, receives a steep penalty of -0.82 (p <.01). In other words, moving from a racial resentment score of 0 to a racial resentment score of 1, is associated in a reduction -0.82, which is nearly the entire range of the likely vote scale. Also, of note, however, is that among the White women with racial resentment scores of zero, the angry Black woman candidate is highly rewarded (.44, p < 0.01). In sum, there is a large divergence in the vote preferences of White women who are low in racial resentment from the vote preferences of White women who are high in racial resentment, which perhaps is to be expected. Women at the low end of the racial resentment scale handsomely reward non-racialized anger from the Black woman candidate and women at the high end of the racial resentment scale severely penalize non-racialized anger from the Black woman candidate.

However, will we observe a similar divergence in vote preferences among White women, when the Black woman candidate's anger is about racial disparities? Racially liberal women, if anything should be favorably inclined to vote for a Black woman candidate who is indignant about racial disparities that are negatively affecting the Black community. Conversely, we might expect that White women who are high in racial resentment will penalize

the Black woman candidate in the racialized anger condition. Surprisingly, the pattern of results

indicates that rather than a sharp divergence in the likely vote of White women low in racial

resentment and White women high in racial resentment, the gap between the two groups actually

narrows when exposed to the Black woman candidate in the racialized anger condition.   Among

White women respondents with a racial resentment score of zero, exposure to the *Angry * Race*

Black Woman is statististically indistinguishable from zero (b=0.179, p =.19), while racial

resentment moderates exposure to the Angry * Race Black Woman condition in the opposite

direction (b=-.297, p =0.29). White female respondents who are racially resentful already muster

up so much dislike for the BW as a political candidate that there is little movement left. In short,

there is no sharp divergence between low racial resentment White women and high racial

resentment White women. This pattern suggests that anger about racial disparities disrupts the

boost the Black woman candidate receives from those female voters predisposed to be more

supportive (low racial resentment respondents). Thus reflecting the fragility of gender solidarity

when anger is racialized. This finding also complicates findings from recent work suggesting

that in an era of heightened racial strife in the post-Obama era racially liberal Whites are

showing increased support for Black political figures as part of their desire to combat racism

(Mikkelborg 2025). While our results affirm that racially liberal Whites may indeed be more

supportive of Black candidates at baseline this support appears to be conditional—bounded by

the limits of emotional expression. In particular, racialized anger emerges as a threshold that

some ostensibly supportive voters are unwilling to cross.

A more charitable interpretation of these results is that racially liberal White women may

penalize the Black woman candidate not out of bias, but because they perceive her racialized

anger as politically risky—a sign that she lacks strategic savvy, mainstream appeal, or broader

electability. From this perspective, the vote penalty is not necessarily a rejection of the candidate's message, but a judgment about how it will be received by others. Therefore, we explore whether the vote penalty observed among low racial resentment White women for the Black woman expressing racialized anger might be explained by perceptions of her as less electable. While our survey does not include a direct measure of electability, we asked respondents to indicate whether words such as "competent" and "unqualified," described the candidates, which we use as proxies for perceived electability. Subsequently, we conducted a mediation analysis among White women, focusing on those at the lowest and highest quartiles of racial resentment, to assess whether perceptions of electability help explain the relationship between candidate anger and vote choice. The mediators were perceptions that the candidate was *unqualified* or *competent*.

The results provide limited evidence that these perceptions of electability explain differences in vote likelihood. Among low racial resentment White women, exposure to the Black woman expressing racialized anger slightly increased perceptions that she was *unqualified*, which in turn very modestly reduced their likelihood of voting for her (ACME = –0.022, $p <$ .10) (See Appedidix Table?). However, perceptions of competence did not mediate the effect, and there were no significant direct effects of the treatment on vote likelihood. For high racial-resentment White women, neither mediator was significant. Altogether, these results indicate that while perceptions of being *unqualified* play a minor role in shaping low resentment women's reactions, they do not fully account for why low and high racial resentment White women respond similarly to the Black woman's racialized anger. Rather, the similarity appears to arise from different mechanisms that converge on comparable vote likelihoods: low resentment

women exact an electability penalty, while high resentment women's baseline opposition leaves little room for additional change.

Overall, the results for White respondents indicate that when courting White voters, it is risky for a Black woman candidate to express anger—particularly about race. Among racially resentful White men, a Black woman's expression of racialized anger results in a sharp electoral penalty, reducing her vote likelihood by over half a point on a 0–1 scale ($b = -0.604$, $p < .05$). Even non-racialized anger is punished ($b = -0.478$, $p < .05$), underscoring that emotional expressiveness is politically costly for Black women in the eyes of White men with the highest levels of racial resentment. Among White women, the patterns are more nuanced. Racially liberal White women reward the Black woman candidate when she expresses non-racialized anger ($b = 0.442$, $p < .01$), but this support evaporates when her anger is framed around racial disparities—the interaction with racial resentment shows no statistically significant difference from zero in that condition. In short, solidarity from White women is fragile, and emotional expression—especially when tied to race—can undermine that support.

Black respondents: Counterintuitive influences of intersectional consciousness and community nationalism

Thus far, we have focused on how White respondents react to candidate displays of anger, conditional on the candidate's race and gender. In this section, we turn our attention to Black respondents. Table 3 displays the results of several regression models in which we estimate vote likelihood across the various experimental conditions. Here we test H3, which posits that Black respondents will express greater support for Black candidates, relative to White candidates, when they express anger about racial disparities. Among Black respondents, we find

no evidence that expressions of anger—racialized or otherwise—increase support for Black

candidates. Both the Black man and Black woman candidates receive high baseline vote

likelihoods (0.68 and 0.72, respectively), leaving little room for emotional cues to boost support

further—a pattern consistent with a ceiling effect. By contrast, expressions of racialized anger by

White candidates significantly increase support among Black respondents: vote likelihood rises

for both the White man (b = 0.07, p < .05) and White woman (b = 0.07, p < .05) when their anger

is framed around racial disparities, but of course their baseline vote likelihoods were relatively

low (0.53 and 0.60, respectively). These results suggest that while anger is normatively accepted

or expected from Black candidates, it can function as a signal of allyship when expressed by

White candidates. Thus, the ingroup reward predicted in H3 does not materialize.

Vote Likelihood by Experimental Condition (Black Respondents)

	Dependent variable:		
Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

Angry BW	-0.02	
	(0.03)	
Angry+Race BW	-0.003	
	(0.03)	
Angry BM		0.01
		(0.03)
Angry+Race BM		0.04
		(0.03)

Angry WW	0.01
	(0.03)
Angry+Race WW	0.07**
	(0.03)
Angry WM	-0.02
	(0.03)
Angry+Race WM	0.07**
	(0.03)

Observations	601	624	605	585
R^2	0.001	0.004	0.01	0.02
Adjusted R^2	-0.003	0.0004	0.01	0.01

Note: $^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 3. Linear regression models estimating vote likelihood for each candidate for Black respondents. Treatment conditions include Angry' and Racialized Anger. Dependent variables represent likelihood of voting for the White Man (WM), Black Man (BM), Black Woman (BW), and White Woman (WW).

To better understand variation in support among Black respondents, we next examine whether intersectional consciousness (IC) moderates reactions to candidates' emotional expressions—particularly racialized anger. Intersectional consciousness reflects an awareness that overlapping identities such as race and gender create distinct experiences of oppression. We expected that Black respondents high in IC would be especially supportive of the Black woman candidate when she expressed anger about racial injustice (H4a). However, the results run counter to this expectation. Table 4 presents the results of several regression models in which we estimate vote likelihood as a function of intersectional consciousness (Columns 1-4) and as a function of community nationalism (Columns 5-8).

Vote Likelihood by Experimental Condition as a Function of Intersectional Consciousness and Community Nationalism (Black Respondents)

	Dependent variable:							
	Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man	Black Woman	Black Man	White Woman	White Man
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Angry BW	-0.01				0.03			
	(0.06)				(0.10)			
Angry+Race BW	0.07				0.12			

	(0.06)	(0.10)
Angry BM	-0.01	-0.06
	(0.06)	(0.09)
Angry+Race BM	0.01	-0.11
	(0.06)	(0.09)
Angry WW	-0.06	-0.02
	(0.06)	(0.10)
Angry+Race WW	-0.09	-0.01

						(0.06)		(0.10)

Angry WM						0.04		0.09
						(0.06)		(0.10)

Angry+Race WM						0.07		-0.01
						(0.07)		(0.10)

Intersectional Consciousness	0.22***	0.11*	-0.04	0.14**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)

Angry BW*IC	-0.01

(0.08)

Angry+Race BW*IC   -0.11

(0.08)

Angry BM*IC   0.03

(0.08)

Angry+Race BM*IC   0.06

(0.08)

Angry WW*IC   0.10

(0.08)

Angry+Race WW*IC   0.24***

(0.08)

Angry WM*IC   -0.10

(0.09)

Angry+Race WM*IC   -0.01

(0.09)

Community Nationalism   0.46*** 0.30*** 0.27*** 0.22**

| | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) |

Angry BW*CN -0.06

(0.13)

Angry+Race
BW*CN -0.17

(0.13)

Angry BM*CN 0.11

(0.12)

Angry+Race
BM*CN 0.24[**]

Angry WW*CN	0.02
	(0.13)
Angry+Race WW*CN	0.13
	(0.13)
Angry WM*CN	-0.16
	(0.14)
Angry+Race WM*CN	0.10

(0.13)

Constant	0.57***	0.61***	0.62***	0.44***	0.39***	0.46***	0.40***	0.38***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Observations	601	624	605	585	601	624	605	585
R^2	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.08	0.12	0.07	0.04
Adjusted R^2	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.04

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 4. Linear regression models estimating vote likelihood for each candidate interacted with intersectional consciousness (models 1-4), and community nationalism (models 5-8) for Black respondents. Treatment conditions include Angry' and Racialized Anger. Dependent variables represent likelihood of voting for the White Man (WM), Black Man (BM), Black Woman (BW), and White Woman (WW).

While IC is positively associated with baseline support for Black candidates, it does not significantly amplify vote likelihood in response to either anger condition. Among respondents high in IC, support for the Black woman candidate is already extremely high—0.80 on a 0–1

scale—leaving little room for upward movement. Neither the *Angry* nor *Angry+Race* treatment significantly interacts with IC. Instead, IC appears to sustain consistently high support for the Black woman candidate across anger displays, rather than serving as a moderator of anger displays.

For the Black man candidate, it is also strong, though slightly lower, at 0.71. These levels of support suggest a ceiling effect: those most attuned to intersectional marginalization already view the Black woman (and to a lesser extent, the Black man) as highly qualified and electable, leaving little room for emotional expressions to further boost support. Indeed, the interaction between intersectional consciousness and the *Angry+Race* condition is negative and statistically insignificant, indicating that racialized anger neither enhances nor undermines candidate evaluations among this ideologically aligned subgroup.

Moreover, in the non-racialized anger condition, Black respondents low in IC exhibit lower support for the Black woman candidate than for the White woman candidate. For the White woman candidate, IC significantly moderates responses to racialized anger, such that high-IC respondents are more likely to support her when she expresses anger about racial injustice. A one-unit increase in Black participants' intersectional consciousness results in a 24% increase in support for the WW when she expresses anger about racial injustice ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that racialized emotional expression by a White woman may signal political alignment or allyship to Black respondents high in intersectional awareness. Together, these trends indicate a particularly vexing double bind for the Black woman candidate.

We also examine whether community nationalism moderates support for candidates who express racialized anger (H4b). Community nationalism reflects a strong commitment to racial group uplift, pride, and solidarity, and may shape how Black respondents interpret candidates' emotional displays. Among respondents high in community nationalism, baseline support for the Black man candidate is substantial—0.73—while support for the Black woman is even higher at 0.77. Yet the effects of emotional expression diverge by candidate gender. In the *Angry+Race* condition, Black respondents high in community nationalism are significantly more likely to support the Black man candidate (*b = 0.239, p < .05*), suggesting that racialized anger from a male candidate is read as a form of advocacy on behalf of the group. For the Black woman candidate, however, the interaction is *negative and statistically significant* (*b = –0.17, p <.10*), indicating that community nationalism does not translate into increased support for her when she expresses racialized anger. These results highlight how ingroup solidarity cues are filtered through gendered expectations, with Black men receiving a clearer benefit from expressing racialized anger. This may reflect persistent gendered expectations about who speaks for the racial group and how. In other words, racial solidarity does not appear to extend equally across gender lines, even within the Black electorate. No meaningful shifts are observed for the White woman or White man candidates across any of the conditions, with or without the CN interaction, suggesting that community nationalism has little bearing on how Black respondents evaluate White candidates—regardless of emotional tone.

Electability or Antipathy? Exploring Perceived Candidate Traits

The question remains: what drives these electoral decisions, particularly among Black voters? Extant scholarship indicates that a candidate's perceived electability can play a greater role in voters' decisions than the candidate's ideological proximity to the voter (Simas 2017).

This is especially relevant in light of recent work revealing that Democratic primary voters perceive Black women candidates to be progressive, yet less electable, thus eroding the electoral boost that Black women should receive for their perceived progressiveness. Are our results reflecting a similar calculus, specifically among Black voters? Is their withholding of electoral support for the BW candidate a reflection of their belief that a Black woman who expresses anger about racial injustice cannot win a statewide election? Or is that withholding rooted in negative sentiment toward the BW candidate? While the data do not allow us to provide definitive answers to these questions, we seek generative insight from examining how the treatment conditions affect participants' perceptions of candidate characteristics such as intelligence and likeability.

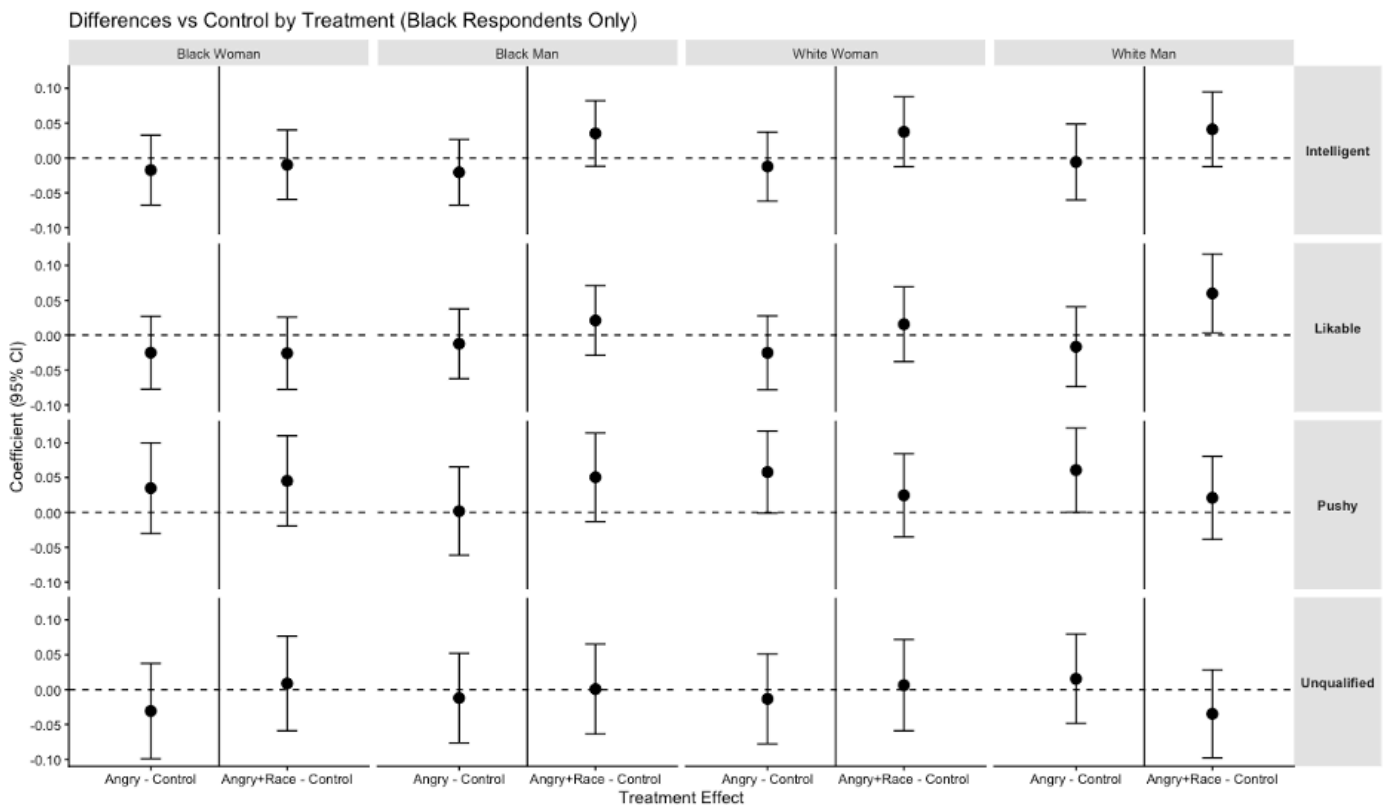Figure 1: Candidate traits for Black and White Candidates (Black Respondents Only)

Figure 1 depicts participants' perceived traits for the candidates, across treatment conditions, candidate race and gender, for Black respondents. The traits examined include intelligent (first row), likable (second row), pushy (third row), and unqualified (fourth row). Figure 2 depicts the same traits, across treatment conditions, candidate race and gender, but for White respondents.

Figure 2: Candidate traits for Black and White Candidates (White Respondents Only)
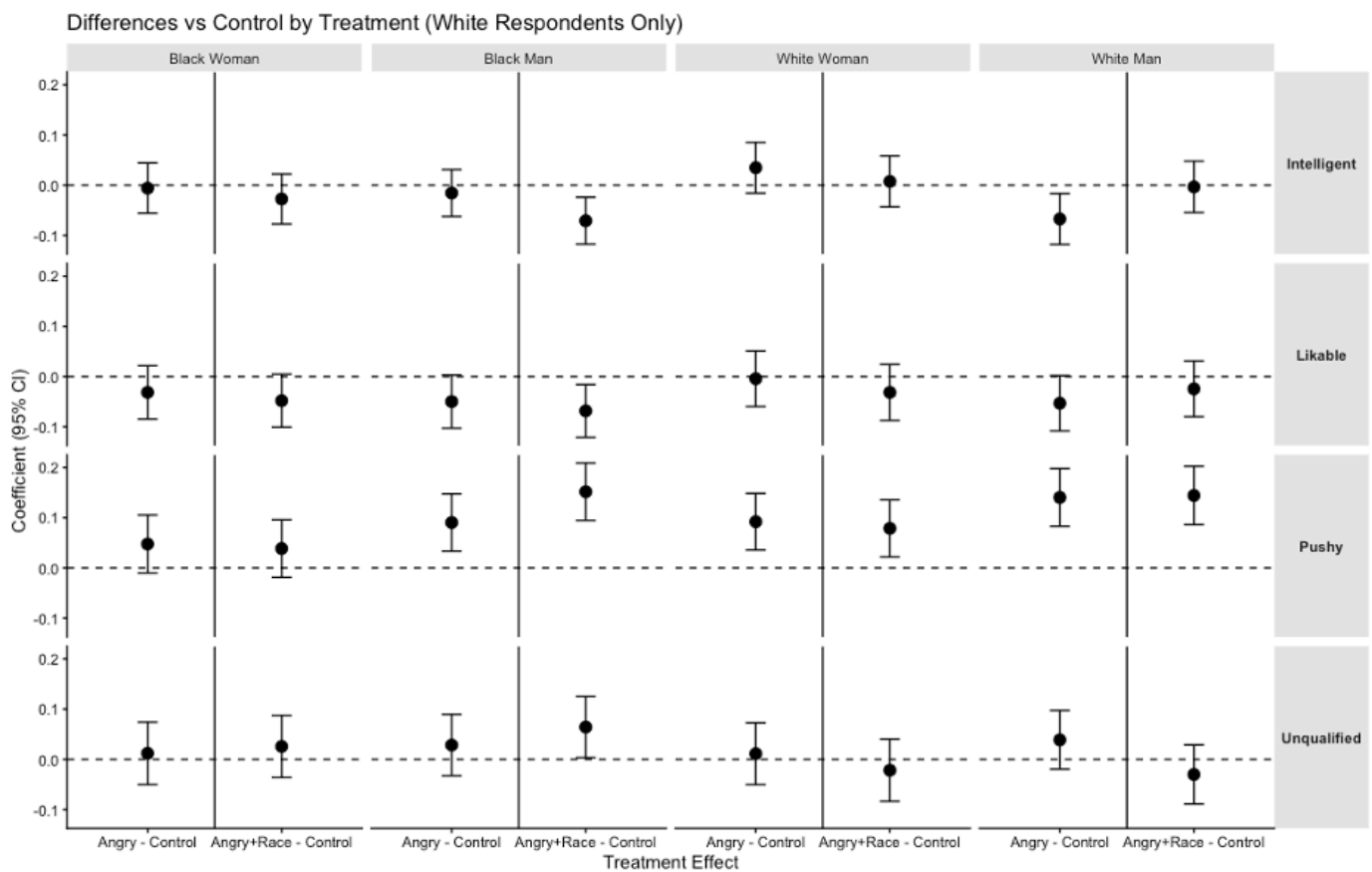
Discussion and Conclusion

This paper contributes to our understanding of how candidate race, gender, and emotional expression—specifically anger—interact to shape voter evaluations in the contemporary U.S. electorate. Building on theories of racialized and gendered emotional expression, we fielded a large-scale experimental survey to assess whether Black women candidates are uniquely penalized for expressing anger, and whether the racial content of that anger further influences voter reactions. Our findings offer a nuanced picture of how intersectional identities and emotional displays of anger are interpreted by racially diverse electorates, and by voters with varying ideological orientations.

Among White respondents, we find that candidate anger does not generate uniform backlash. Instead, the content and source of the anger matter. Notably, Black male candidates are significantly penalized for expressing racialized anger, experiencing a seven point drop in vote likelihood. In contrast, Black women are not penalized overall for expressing anger—racialized or not—suggesting that in the aggregate, they do not face a baseline anger penalty. However, this general null finding masks significant variation by racial attitudes: among racially resentful White voters, Black women who express anger—especially anger about racial injustice—are subject to sharp declines in support and in trait evaluations, including perceived likability and intelligence. These findings affirm our theory that racialized displays of anger activate intersecting stereotypes, particularly among voters inclined to view such expressions as threatening to the racial status quo.

Among White women, we observe a striking divergence based on racial resentment. Racially liberal White women reward the Black woman candidate when she expresses non-racialized

anger, while racially resentful White women severely penalize her. Yet even among racially liberal women, this support proves fragile: once the Black woman's anger becomes racialized, the boost disappears. This erosion of support underscores the fragility of gender-based solidarity in contexts where race is salient.

Turning to Black respondents, our findings defy the prediction that Black candidates would be rewarded for expressing racialized anger (H3). Instead, we find no treatment effects for either the Black woman or Black man candidate—likely a result of ceiling effects, as both candidates enjoy high baseline support. Interestingly, racialized anger does increase support for White candidates, suggesting that Black respondents may interpret such displays as a signal of racial allyship. These effects are not significantly moderated by intersectional consciousness or community nationalism, though both constructs are positively associated with baseline support for Black candidates. High-IC respondents already rate Black candidates very favorably, indicating that racialized anger may be expected rather than uniquely galvanizing.

Taken together, these findings reveal a racially asymmetric emotional double bind. White male candidates remain emotionally unencumbered: their expressions of anger—racialized or not—do not reduce support. By contrast, Black candidates, and especially Black women, must navigate a precarious emotional terrain, where support is contingent on both the identity of the voter and the perceived appropriateness of anger.

In this way, our study pushes beyond simplistic narratives of voter bias to show how intersectional and ideological contexts condition the political costs of anger. For Black women candidates in particular, anger is not universally disqualifying—but neither is it universally safe.

While baseline evaluations may be favorable in some political environments, the expression of racialized anger remains politically risky, particularly among racially resentful White voters.

These findings hold important implications for theories of representation and political behavior. As American politics continues to grapple with questions of race, gender, and authenticity, candidates from marginalized backgrounds must continually calibrate their expressive strategies—not only to convey sincerity, but to avoid triggering racialized and gendered stereotypes. Future research should explore how these dynamics unfold in higher-information contexts, across partisan lines, and in real-world electoral settings, where candidates are increasingly forced to choose between expressing moral outrage and maintaining electoral viability.

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