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**Tell Me How You Really Feel:  
Exploring the Role of Emotions in Black Politics**

For Peer Review Only  
D R A F T  
Review Only

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### Forward: Black Affective Experiences in Politics

What role might emotions play in Black public opinion and political decision-making? Extant literature in political psychology and Black politics provide us with incomplete answers to this question. While political psychology scholars have only recently begun to explore collective emotional experiences in the form of affective polarization, scholars of Black politics have largely relied on cognitive understandings of racial identity (i.e. linked fate) and its implications for policy opinions and political participation. A burgeoning body of literature in Black politics is beginning to fill these voids. This Dialogue section is devoted to understanding how emotions like pride, anger, sadness, and fear shape Black politics. Through the use of cutting edge survey experiments, these articles address the role of emotions in reactions to police killing unarmed individuals, political ambition, and political mobilization via micro-targeting in campaign advertising. This Dialogue section will provide a critical interjection in the field as we aim to understand the political implications of the emotions of Black people who seem to be experiencing increasing levels of trauma on a daily basis.

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3 Ferguson. Sandra Bland. Trayvon Martin. Eric Garner. Emmett Till. LaQuan McDonald.  
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5 Rosa Parks. Tamir Rice. #SayHerName. Jena 6. Renisha McBride. Amadou Diallo. Rodney King.  
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7 Hurricane Katrina. Barack Obama. #BlackLivesMatter. Stacey Abrams. Each of these names,  
8  
9 phrases, events, or movements invokes a broad range of emotions across various communities in  
10  
11 the United States of America. Particularly among Black Americans, collective emotional reactions  
12  
13 (i.e. pride, shame, hope, fear, and or anger) to these incidents seem particularly acute and vocalized,  
14  
15 as the Black individual or individuals associated with these happenings were everything from derided  
16  
17 and murdered to praised and commended. Yet, consistent across all of these occurrences is the  
18  
19 collective political action among the overwhelming majority of Black people that preceded or  
20  
21 followed them: increases in voter registration, record levels of turnout in elections, changes in policy  
22  
23 opinions, demands for changes to legislation, and last but certainly not least, protests. These real  
24  
25 world instances provide the motivation behind the two research questions addressed in this  
26  
27 Dialogue section. First, how and in what ways does one's racial group identity shape how one  
28  
29 experiences emotions? Second, what are the political implications of these Black affective  
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31 experiences?  
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### 36 **Bridging the Gap Between Political Psychology and Black Politics Literature**

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39 Extant literature in political psychology on emotions provides us with incomplete answers to  
40  
41 these questions surrounding the role of affect in Black politics. Although this vast body of research  
42  
43 suggests that emotions like pride, anger anxiety, hope, fear, disgust, and enthusiasm matter in public  
44  
45 opinion and political decision-making, the scholarly focus is on how *individuals* experience them;  
46  
47 predominantly aggregate responses of *white* people (Marcus et al 2000; Albertson and Gadarian 2015;  
48  
49 Groenendyk 2011; Valentino et al. 2011). More often than not, the survey questions utilized in this  
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51 research asks respondents, "Has [insert name of political candidate] because of the kind of person  
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53 he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel  
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3 angry/hopeful/afraid/anxious/proud? Yes or no? How often?” These candidate-centric emotions  
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5 measures are often used to predict some aspect of public opinion or political engagement. A number  
6  
7 of scholars also attempt to manipulate emotions by exposing respondents to various stimuli (i.e.  
8  
9 vignettes and recall and write prompts) designed to invoke emotions like shame, anger, fear, and  
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11 disgust at the individual level (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2010; Panagopoulos 2010; Valentino et  
12  
13 al. 2011; Banks 2014; Banks and Hicks 2016; Kam and Estes 2017). Even these works do not  
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15 provide the literature with a cogent understanding of the full functioning of emotions in politics, as  
16  
17 they do not focus on the experience of emotions of members of groups.  
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21 Groups matter in politics. Whether racial, religious, gender, partisan, or socioeconomic,  
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23 groups provide cues to people about how they should participate in politics and how they should  
24  
25 evaluate policies and candidates (Converse 1964; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Sides N.d.).  
26  
27 Groups and emotions *both* inform how people experience politics. Our current political landscape  
28  
29 confirms this notion: many *women* were *proud* of the candidacy of Hillary Clinton; numerous  
30  
31 *Republicans* are *anxious* about immigration; a great deal of *Black people* are *angry* about police killing  
32  
33 unarmed individuals of color. Only recently have political psychology scholars begun to explore the  
34  
35 concept of group-centric emotions in the context of affective polarization. This research examines  
36  
37 how dislike for individuals in opposite parties might stimulate or constrain attitudes and behavior  
38  
39 (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Webster and Abramowitz 2017). Yet, none of these works focus on  
40  
41 the experience of emotions tied to racial group identity.  
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46 Scholars of Black politics have overwhelmingly relied on cognitive understandings of race  
47  
48 and its implications for politics as opposed to emotions (Miller et al. 1981; Allen, Dawson and  
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50 Brown 1989; Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989; Dawson 1994, 2003; Gay 2004; White 2007;  
51  
52 McClain et al. 2009; Laird 2017). Since Blacks’ life chances were over-determined by race from  
53  
54 Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement, Dawson (1994) argues that during that period it was  
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3 cognitively efficient, since information was costly, to substitute racial group interests as a proxy for  
4 self-interests. Thus, those who study Black public opinion and participation believe that Blacks'  
5 shared history of slavery and discrimination encourages them to evaluate policies and candidates  
6 based on their perceived impact on the racial group rather than the individual (Hutchings and  
7 Valentino 2004). However, this understanding of racial identity and its effect on politics is cognitive;  
8 after all Dawson (1994) did call his theory the Black utility *heuristic*, and as such does not explicitly  
9 account for emotions.  
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19 A burgeoning body of literature examines Black affective experiences in politics. The  
20 pioneers of this quantitative strand of research, White, Philpot, Wylie, and McGowan (2007) and  
21 Philpot, White, Wylie, and McGowan (2010), examine how Blacks and Whites emotionally respond  
22 to various racialized social and political events (i.e. the OJ Simpson Verdict, Hurricane Katrina  
23 aftermath, and Barack Obama winning the 2008 Presidential Election). Harris-Perry (2013) explores  
24 how the vicious stereotypes of Black women stemming from slavery (i.e. the Mammy, Jezebel, and  
25 Sapphire) continue to shape the ways in which Black women view themselves as citizens in  
26 American politics and how they might go about politically organizing. Assessing the presidential  
27 candidacies of Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton, Simien (2015)  
28 argues that voters from marginalized racial and gender groups will take pride in and derive  
29 psychological benefits from their candidacies. Additional research either uses the previously  
30 mentioned candidate-centric emotions questions and aggregates responses of Black respondents to  
31 these questions (Simien 2015; Phoenix 2014), examines the role of enthusiasm in Blacks' vote  
32 intention (Block and Collins 2018), explores the role of emotions in support for community  
33 nationalism (Banks, McKenzie, and White 2018), attempts to assess how Blacks' emotional reactions  
34 to intra-and-intergroup violence shapes their attitudes about punitiveness (Burge and Johnson 2018),  
35 or uses physiological measures to understand how Black people emotionally respond to the police,  
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3 images of the confederate flag, and Donald Trump (Orey N.d.). We aim to contribute to this  
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5 growing body of literature.  
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### 7 **A Look Ahead...**

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10 This Dialogue section is devoted to understanding how emotions like anger, fear, sadness  
11 and pride shape Black policy opinions and political engagement. Using an original survey  
12 experiment, the first paper examines how both Blacks and Whites perceive and emotionally react to  
13 police killing unarmed individuals. Differing from previous research that tends to observe the  
14 aggregate responses of Blacks and Whites to racialized events (Newport 2012; PEW 2013; Phoenix  
15 2015), these scholars vary the race of the victim in the police shooting as well as the perceived  
16 legitimacy of the officer's shooting and find that both Blacks and Whites responses are rather varied,  
17 with Black people experiencing vastly greater amounts of anger than their White counterparts. What  
18 effects might these increased levels of anger have in the political arena? The authors of the second  
19 paper help answer this question by uncovering how Blacks' emotions shape their political ambition.  
20 That is, they attempt to understand the extent to which Blacks' experiences of emotions like anger,  
21 fear, sadness, hope, and pride, influences whether one considers running for office. These scholars  
22 find that anger is the primary emotion shaping Black candidate emergence. How might emotions  
23 shape evaluations of candidates seeking office as well as one's vote intention? The third and final  
24 paper in this Dialogue section examines how Black people emotionally react to campaign  
25 advertisements that target Black voters by using stereotypic appeals. Findings from this study  
26 indicate that anger is the natural affective response when candidates use stereotypic appeals and that  
27 Black candidates are doubly punished, in terms of increased levels of negative evaluations and  
28 decreased levels of mobilization, for using these targeted appeals.  
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52 Black Americans' lived experiences are powerfully sculpted by race. From slavery to present  
53 day, Black people have been and continue to be treated differently simply because of the color of  
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3 their skin (Baldwin 1953; Du Bois 1903; Dyson 2018; Ellison 1952; Giovanni 1968; Marable 2007;  
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5 West 1994; Wright 1940). While many pundits and scholars in political science are attempting to  
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7 make sense of the emotions of White people, this Dialogue section will provide a critical interjection  
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9 in the field as we aim to understand the political implications of the emotions of Black people who  
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11 seem to be experiencing increasing levels of trauma on a daily basis.  
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