legislators are sympathetic supporters of protesters' efforts. They demonstrate their support for protesters' concerns in public statements and by introducing and (co)sponsoring legislation, among other activities. They also are likely to vote in support of protesters' preferences long before and after specific protest events.

Although this research highlights the agency of racial and ethnic minorities who participate in protest, it simultaneously underscores the struggles that minorities must endure to receive even marginally improved representation. Indeed, even as racial and ethnic minorities brave costly protest to increase their representation, they remain underrepresented by US legislatures. ■

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RACE AND SYMBOLIC POLITICS IN THE US CONGRESS

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The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often is invoked to justify political positions only tangentially (and dubiously) linked to issues of justice and civil rights. For example, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway referenced Dr. King in defending President Trump from impeachment by saying, "I don't think it was within Dr. King's vision to have Americans dragged through a process where the president is not going to be removed from office… And I think that anybody who cares about 'and justice for all' on today or any day of the year will appreciate the fact that the President now will have a full-throttle defense on the facts, and everybody should have that." Similarly, on July 13, 2021, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) denounced the teaching of critical race theory in schools by saying, "Critical race theory goes against everything Martin Luther King has ever told us, don't judge us by the color of our skin, and now they're embracing it."

As these examples make clear, politics often is symbolic (Sears 1993; Sinclair-Chapman, 2018). Yet, scant attention has been given to the ways legislators use symbols to engage with and represent their constituents (but see Hill and Hurley 2002). This oversight is particularly problematic when considering the representation of racial and ethnic minorities in general and African Americans in particular. Because African Americans are both a numeric minority and historically underrepresented in government, achieving significant substantive progress in the form of new bills and laws often can be extremely challenging without sympathetic white allies. As a result, alternative forms of politics, from symbolic politics to protest, often are used to make progress on racial issues when traditional legislative avenues remain closed (Gillion 2013, 2016; Tate 1994, 2003).

We can see this importance from Senator Carol Mosely-Braun's pivotal speech against Confederate flag patents to Representative Bobby Rush's iconic donning of a hoodie in response to Trayvon Martin's killing. In our view, understanding Black political representation requires us to investigate the important role of symbolic politics, especially on issues closely tied to race. Our ongoing research contributes to this understanding by providing the most comprehensive analysis conducted to date of race and symbolic rhetoric in the US Congress. We first collected every speech on the floor of the House of Representatives from 1996 to 2014, almost 800,000 in total (Dietrich and Hayes 2022). To examine symbolic politics in the domain of racial issues, we focused on speeches that mentioned civil rights. Although this is not an exhaustive collection of speeches in Congress on racial issues, the issue of civil rights remains central to most African American voters and legislators. Legislation on this issue often is used as a proxy for attention to racial issues by legislative scholars. To identify the use of symbolic rhetoric in these speeches, research assistants hand-coded the 5,545 speeches that mentioned civil rights for symbolic content. We identified every instance in which symbols of the Civil Rights Movement were invoked. These included references to important civil rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Medgar Evers, as well as prominent civil rights actions, such as the March on Washington and Selma. Because references to past sacrifices can be an important influence on African Americans' political attitudes (Wamble 2019) and behaviors (Anoll 2018), we believe these symbolic references should be particularly powerful in shaping how Black voters evaluate representatives.

In our view, understanding Black political representation requires us to investigate the important role of symbolic politics, especially on issues closely tied to race.

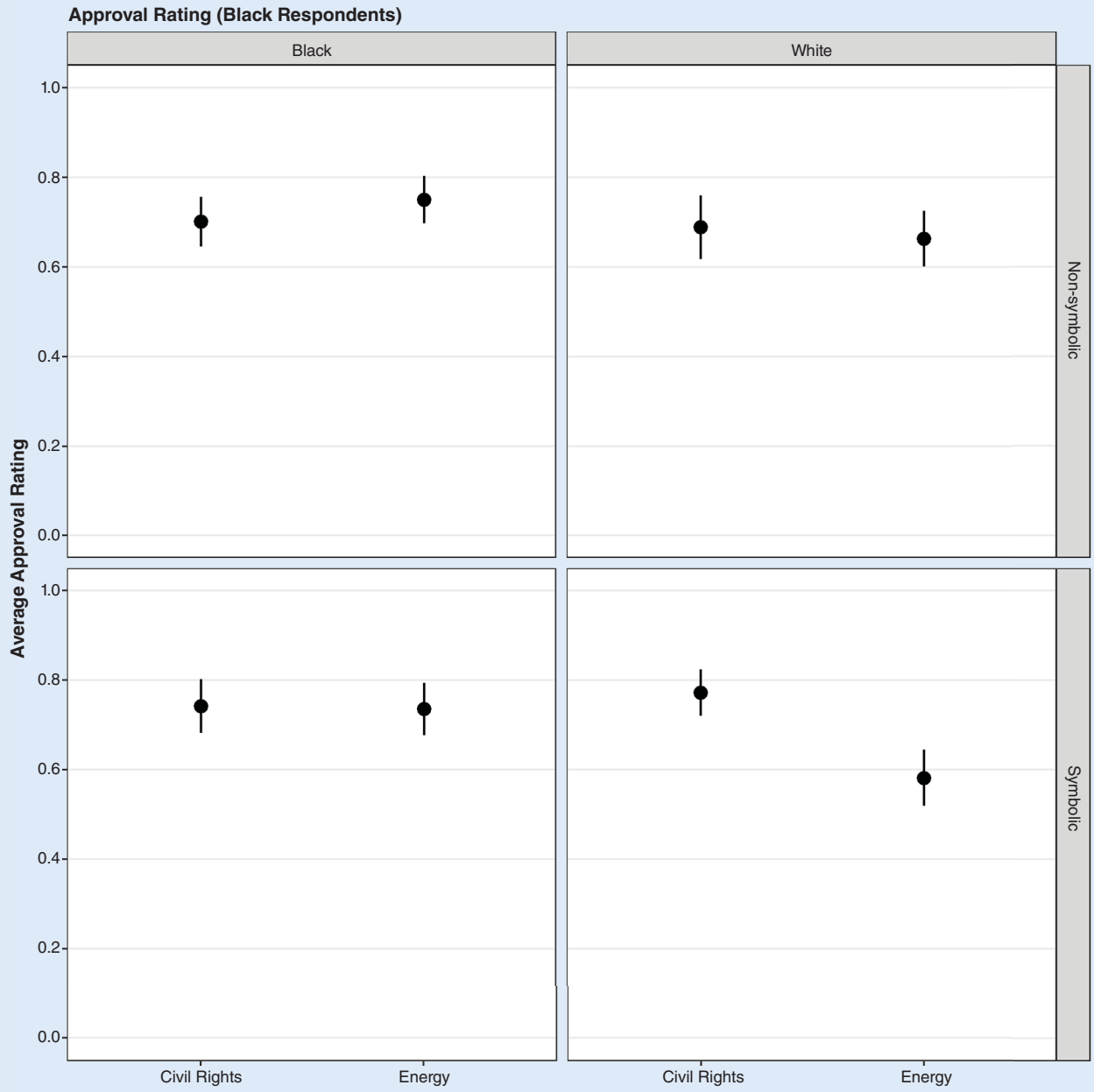
Focusing on these symbols of the struggle for African Americans' civil rights, we found that speeches invoking symbolism play an important role in the behavior of members of Congress. Across the almost 800,000 floor speeches in our data, we found striking racial differences in how often, and how, members of Congress speak about the issue of civil rights. Our data show that Black representatives mention civil rights in about one of 35 speeches.

Although this may appear rare, it is almost 16 times the rate at which white members of Congress mention civil rights (i.e., less than one time in 500 speeches). In addition to discussing civil rights more frequently, African Americans in Congress discuss civil rights in different ways. We found that Black members of Congress are significantly more likely than white members to invoke symbols of the Civil Rights Movement. When discussing civil rights, Black representatives invoke symbolism in about one of every four speeches that directly mention civil rights, compared to about one of every eight civil rights speeches for white members of Congress. Our findings also suggest that white members of Congress are responsive to district characteristics. That is, white members of Congress who represent districts with a higher percentage of Black residents are not only substantially more likely to give speeches about civil rights but also are more likely to invoke symbolism when they do.

Not only do Black and white lawmakers invoke symbols differently; this rhetoric also matters to Black voters. In 2017, we fielded a survey of 500 white and 500 Black respondents drawn from a Qualtrics panel that included a survey experiment asking respondents to evaluate a representative on the basis of his or her floor speech. Respondents read the text of a floor speech and viewed an accompanying image of the purported speaker. Respondents were assigned randomly to read one of four speeches.

Figure 1

Black Respondents Punish and Reward White Representatives for Invoking Symbolism



The choice to invoke symbolism matters.

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The speeches were either about civil rights or renewable energy and differed in whether we edited the speech to remove symbolic references to the Civil Rights Movement. We also selected accompanying images of either a white or a Black representative.

We found that these differences mattered, but only for Black respondents—and primarily when they evaluated white representatives. We found no statistically significant differences in Black respondents' evaluations of a Black representative speaking about civil rights versus renewable energy or when invoking (or not) civil rights symbolism. However, for white representatives, as shown in figure 1, the choice to invoke symbolism matters. Black respondents, on average, provided the most favorable evaluations of white representatives when they gave a speech on civil rights that invoked symbols of the Civil Rights Movement. When those same symbols were used outside of the domain of civil rights, however, white representatives received a significant punishment. That is, Black respondents were significantly more negative in their evaluations of white representatives who (mis-)used civil rights symbolism to advance renewable energy than in any other experimental condition.

In addition to influencing African Americans' evaluation of representatives, our research shows that symbolic references to the civil rights struggle are linked to Black voter turnout. Using an analysis of validated voter turnout from the 2006–2018 Cooperative Election Study, our analyses suggest that increases in the number of symbolic speeches given by a member of Congress during a given session are associated with an increase in Black turnout in the subsequent congressional election. Our model predicts that increasing from the minimum of symbolic speeches in the previous Congress to the maximum in the current Congress is associated with a 65.67-percentage-point increase in Black voter turnout compared to the previous year.

What does this reveal about contemporary politics? We believe that our research shows that whereas most voters might care first about substance, symbolic politics still matters. It is precisely because of the power of symbols that white officials (e.g., Kevin McCarthy and Kellyanne Conway) attempt to invoke the legacies of the civil rights struggle in advocating for their preferred policies. However, our research suggests that such efforts will fall on deaf ears, at least in the Black community. When these symbols are misused, it actually may further erode evaluations of those who misappropriate important symbols of the struggle for their own personal or political gain.

Data Availability Statement

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the *PS: Political Science & Politics* Dataverse at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VOCIQo. ■

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RACISM AND INEQUALITY IN CONGRESS

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Typically, we look at lawmakers and the laws they pass to understand race and racism in the Capitol. This expansive literature provides invaluable insight into how lawmakers' racial identities shape representation and deliberation (Fenno 2003; Grose 2011; Minta 2011); social interactions and the formation of informal groups among them (Hawkesworth 2003; Tyson 2016); and the creation of public policy. These scholarly works have an outward look that investigates how lawmakers use their power to shape the racial world outside of Capitol Hill. However, in my research, I studied congressional staff to understand how racism unfolds within the halls of the Capitol. My current book project, *The Last Plantation*, investigates racial inequality in the congressional workplace by analyzing the career experiences of Black congressional staffers. The title draws on the fact that members of Congress and their staff applied this telling nickname to the legislature to highlight how the institution is exempt from the very policies and principles it is tasked to create and implement (including federal workplace laws).

Congressional staff are known as the invisible force in American lawmaking (Fox and Hammond 1977). They provide critical advice, guidance, and analysis to members of Congress and, without them, much legislative work could not be done. The invisibility of congressional staff also hides deep-seated inequality within the congressional workplace. White staffers are overrepresented in top staff positions in the House (Scott et al. 2018) and Senate (Jones 2015), and they dominate even entry-level positions such as internships (Jones 2020; Jones, Win, and Vera 2021). Moreover, staffers of color primarily work in the offices of the Black, Latino, and Asian lawmakers. Racial stratification and segregation in the congressional workplace in which staffers of color are missing from top staff positions in the offices of white lawmakers and overwhelmingly concentrated in those of color demonstrates a clear and persistent racial hierarchy. These racial dynamics demonstrate how Congress and its workplace is a racialized governing institution.

I use sociological literature on racism and organizations to explain how racism functions in the congressional workplace. Sociologist Victor Ray (2019) argues that racialized organizations (1) enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; (2) legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; (3) credential whiteness; and (4) decouple formal rules from on-the-ground organizational practices. Congress embodies all of these criteria as a workplace