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

and governing institution. The implication of this racialized system is the production of *legislative inequality*, a term I use to describe the unequal distribution of resources and rewards among workers, which influences the creation of public policy and the organization of the American political system. Following is a description of how Congress functions as a racialized governing institution and produces inequality on and off Capitol Hill.

First, racial inequality in the congressional workplace enhances the agency of white staffers to participate in areas of policy making, oversight, and representation—and, similarly, constrains the agency of staffers of color to do the same. I interviewed more than 75 congressional staffers about their job. These data revealed that staffers not only support lawmakers' political enterprises but also guide their political and policy agendas. Senior staff have considerable influence and power, especially in areas in which a lawmaker's agenda is uncrystallized and malleable. Black staffers I interviewed described how they used their position to facilitate inclusive policy making, advocating for communities of color in their district that otherwise might be overlooked and for anti-racist policy solutions in lawmaking. In contrast, in interviews with white staffers, they provided race-neutral job descriptions and rarely discussed communities of color or systemic racism. The underrepresentation of Black staffers and other staffers of color in top staff positions diminishes inclusive policy making in the same way that we have come to understand why descriptive representation among elected officials is important.

staffers help lawmakers do their job. The latter perspective more accurately describes how staffers actively participate in important legislative functions such as representation, deliberation, negotiation, and oversight. Second, these jobs are a form of citizenship because lawmakers often prioritize hiring professionals from their own district.

Third, legislative jobs are representations of political power because staff have incredible influence over the creation of public policy during *and* after their congressional employment. We should consider congressional employment comparable to other types of government employment, similarly asking who obtains these positions and whether they are distributed equitably. Lawmakers' refusal to collect these data and not participate in demographic surveys is problematic and prevents government accountability.

Fourth, the more insidious consequence to this racial arrangement is that congressional employment is an important credential that allows former Hill staffers access to even more influential political and policy-making roles in Washington and beyond. For example, congressional staffers routinely go from Capitol Hill to work in the White House and other Executive Branch offices, the lobbying and consultancy industry on K Street, and the leading think tanks and policy institutes. In addition, congressional employment provides a pipeline to elective office on local, state, and federal levels. To this end, whiteness that is cultivated on Capitol Hill is reproduced throughout the American political system. The recruitment and cultivation of predominantly white

> *[r]acial inequality in the congressional workplace enhances the agency of white staffers to participate in areas of policy making, oversight, and representation—and, similarly, constrains the agency of staffers of color to do the same.*

Second, racial inequality among congressional staff is legitimated by lawmakers practicing the old adage "Do as I say and not as I do" in the management of the congressional workplace. This is most evident in how lawmakers exempted the congressional workplace from the federal workplace law. They argued that Executive Branch agencies, which enforce these provisions, would encroach on legislative prerogatives, thereby constituting a breach in the separation of powers between two co-equal branches of government (Jones 2019). Although Congress applied several federal workplace provisions to itself in the 1995 Congressional Accountability Act, it did not mandate the collection of demographic data about its employees (even though it compels almost all other employers to collect this information). These data are extremely important for scholarly research that investigates and documents lingering racial and gender inequality in American workplaces. However, without these data for the congressional workplace, it is difficult to know who works on Capitol Hill—much less hold Congress accountable for diverse hiring practices.

In 2019, I surveyed more than 100 congressional offices about the interns they hired; more than a third refused to participate, stating that "it was against office policy." Congressional offices operate under the assumption that personnel decisions are private and not relevant for public knowledge. However, these types of management decisions are problematic for five key reasons. First, although staffers work for lawmakers, engendering a typical employee–employer relationship, it is more fitting to say that

political talent in Congress, which then is credentialed and promoted to work in other elite political workplaces, exemplifies Mills' (1997) argument that we should conceive of white supremacy as a political system.

Fifth, accounting for the ways Congress and its workplace are racialized demonstrates how formal rules often are decoupled from on-the-ground practices. This is most evident in how congressional staffers are hired. Formal rules require congressional offices to post official job announcements for vacancies and to forbid racial and gender discrimination. However, the actual hiring process is quite different. Members of Congress aim to hire someone that they can trust, and often this means a job candidate must have a proven work record or someone who can vouch for them. Although senior staffers are required to post job announcements, real hiring is done through social networks. For instance, it is more likely that these staffers have shared the job announcements with their close associates and established a small pool of competitive applicants before the announcement is made public. What happens as a result is that this insular process facilitates "opportunity hoarding" for white staffers in the congressional workplace, effectively shutting out staffers of color from meaningful opportunities simply for not knowing the right people. Hiring is only one example of racialized decoupling in Congress and, as Hawkesworth (2003) demonstrated, racialized decoupling affects the career and daily experiences of members of Congress as well.

Amid a moment of racial reckoning, it is important to study the inner workings of Congress as a racialized governing institution. There is considerable attention given to how Congress will respond to unprecedented protests against police brutality and systemic racism. However, there has been little focus on racial inequality within Congress itself and the far-reaching consequences of racial stratification among congressional staff. In the moment, legislative scholars can play a pivotal role by holding Congress and other legislatures accountable for legislative inequality. ▪

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EVALUATING MUSLIM AMERICAN REPRESENTATION

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There is growing concern about the status of Muslims in the United States today. Anti-Muslim attitudes are pervasive (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009; Oskooii, Dana, and Barreto 2019; Panagopoulos 2006; Williamson 2019) and matter for shaping candidate (Kalkan, Layman, and Green 2018; Lajevardi and Abrajano 2019) and policy support (Dunwoody and McFarland 2018; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018). The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that both anti-Muslim hate crimes and hate groups soared in response to the 2016 presidential campaign: in 2017, anti-Muslim hate groups grew for the third straight year to 114 chapters, and hate crimes increased by at least 19% from the previous year.[1]

Even more troubling for the prospect of Muslim American inclusion is evidence of large-scale negative and explicit rhetoric about Muslims espoused by political elites, indicating perhaps that Muslim political representation is greatly lagging. For example, scholarship has linked the xenophobic rhetoric that was spewed by the most powerful officeholder in the country—former President Trump—with increased anti-Muslim hate crimes across the country (Müller and Schwarz 2018). During the 2016 presidential campaign, politicians on both sides of the aisle frequently reminded the public that Muslims intrinsically differ from other Americans. Republicans called for the wholesale policing of Muslim neighborhoods, advocated for a ban on Muslims from entering the country, proposed a national database of all Muslims in the United States, and espoused the wholesale surveillance of mosques (Lajevardi 2020); Hillary Clinton characterized Muslims' utility as their ability to prevent terrorist attacks (Lajevardi 2020).[2]

In this heightened climate of hostility, Muslims perceived significant societal and institutional discrimination (Dana et al. 2019; Gillum 2018; Lajevardi et al. 2020; Oskooii 2016) and even retreated from visible spaces in response to heightened discrimination (Hobbs and Lajevardi 2019). Notwithstanding their seemingly worsening status, Muslims have remained a relevant group in American politics. Meanwhile, the US Muslim population is growing fast: from 2007 to 2017, it increased from 2.35 million to 3.45 million, and it is estimated to replace Jews as the nation's second largest religious group after Christians by 2040.[3] Although they constitute about 1% of the US population, American Muslims regularly vote; some estimates were that more than 1 million turned out to vote in the 2020 presidential election.[4] In fact, scholarship has pointed to mosque attendance as being an important factor in the political mobilization of Muslim congregants (Barreto and Dana 2010; Calfano 2018; Calfano and Lajevardi 2019; Chouhoud, Dana, and Barreto 2019; Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii 2011; Dana, Wilcox-Archuleta, and Barreto 2017; Jamal 2005; Ocampo, Dana, and Barreto 2018). Moreover, the votes that American Muslims cast appear to matter greatly in US elections because they are concentrated in battleground states such as Michigan, Florida, and Pennsylvania.[5] In Michigan, for example, a state with 270,000 registered Muslim voters, Muslim votes matter a great deal: in 2016, Clinton lost the state by slightly more than 10,000 votes.[6]

Evaluating Muslim American Descriptive and Substantive Representation

Equally important in evaluating the status of groups such as Muslim Americans and their prospects for political incorporation in the United States is understanding how legislators represent them both descriptively and substantively (Collins 2018; Hayes and Hibbing 2017; Ocampo 2018). Political underrepresentation of minority groups yields negative democratic consequences (Mansbridge 1999), such as political alienation (Pantoja and Segura 2003). The negative effects of political underrepresentation are particularly pronounced when groups that are descriptively underrepresented are ignored as constituents (Costa 2017), and research has shown that constituents value descriptive representation independently of substantive representation (Hayes and Hibbing 2017).

Descriptive Representation

In evaluating the communication between members of Congress and federal agencies, scholarship on descriptive representation found that those elected officials who share background characteristics with their voters are more likely to represent their