Blasé Imperialism? Democratic Accountability for Political Inequality in the American Territories and Capital

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Abstract

Over 4.2 million Americans live outside the 50 states, in the nation's capital or in one of six inhabited territories—places overwhelmingly composed by ethnic minorities and lacking the same civil rights as residents of the 50 states. (Residents of DC lack voting representation in Congress, and Americans in the territories further cannot participate in presidential elections.) The result: just 0.2% of white Americans are excluded from national representation in some way, compared to 3.0% of Americans-of-color. We explore public awareness of this inclusion problem and subsequently assess public opinion toward it. Americans are generally aware that the territories and DC are part of the union, although their knowledge about political exclusion is somewhat lower. Large partisan differences exist in support for statehood, but priming democratic norms causes Democrats and Republicans alike to lessen support for the status quo in the most salient cases, DC and Puerto Rico.

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Legitimate governments require consent of the governed (Locke 1967). In representative democracies, consent seems easy enough to assess, at least at first glance: Are elections free and fair (Schmitter and Karl 1991)? But this test regarding electoral procedures ignores a sticking point regarding inclusion: to truly achieve consent of the governed, "every adult subject to a government and its laws must be presumed to be qualified as, and has an unqualified right to be a member of the demos" (Dahl 1989, 127). That is, with few exceptions, adults subject to the social contract must be allowed to participate in representative democracy.

In American politics as of 2021, this is not the case. The nation's capital district—Washington, DC—is home to nearly 700,000 Americans and lacks voting representation in Congress. An additional five territories spread across the globe are home to over 3.5 million Americans; not only do these territories—American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—lack voting representation in Congress, but they are further excluded from the Electoral College and, thus, participation in presidential elections.

Importantly, severe political inequalities across racial lines stem from this lack of inclusion. Only six of the fifty states with full political privileges are majority-minority. By contrast, DC and all five of the inhabited territories are majority-minority. The result: just a tenth of a percent of white citizens lack meaningful representation in the federal government, compared to roughly 3% of Americans of color.

This paper explores the inclusion problem in the United States in depth. First, we provide historical context and use contemporary demographic data to describe the extent of exclusion, arguing that the political inequalities perpetuated along racial and ethnic lines continue the imperialism and institutional racism of the 20th century into the 21st.

Second, we assess public opinion regarding the inclusion problem. Significant ink has been spent exploring the question, "Who counts as an American?" (e.g., Citrin, Reingold

and Green 1990; Schildkraut 2005; Theiss-Morse 2009). Research into this question has generally investigated Americans' perceptions of national identity but, here, we approach the question more literally—who do Americans actually think do count and should count, when it comes to government? With original survey questions fielded on the 2020 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), we explore Americans' awareness of and attitudes toward the exclusion of Washington, DC and the territories from representative democracy.

Ultimately, Americans' beliefs and attitudes about who counts matter because, in American democracy, the people are explicitly named in the Constitution as the final authority (Theiss-Morse 2009, 30). We assert, ultimately, that those who can meaningfully hold government accountable also must at least implicitly consent to the status quo in excluded places. But how implicitly? Is it a matter of a lack of awareness that these places are part of the US and/or excluded from representative government, or is it that Americans in the 50 states actively support exclusion?

We find that citizens are generally aware that the most salient and populated excluded places—Puerto Rico and Washington, DC—are part of the US. However, they hold spottier knowledge of whether Americans in these places (and the other territories) have the same democratic rights and privileges as their own. Our assessment of attitudes is similarly mixed. On the one hand, we find large partisan differences in support for inclusion, with Democrats expressing significantly higher levels of support for statehood and opposition to the status quo compared to independents, and Republicans expressing the lowest levels of support for statehood and the highest levels of support for the status quo. But we also find find reason for optimism: across all partisan groups, respondents show greater support for inclusion in the most salient cases—Puerto Rico and DC—when primed to think about the importance of civil rights in democracy.

The Inclusion Problem in American Representative Democracy

When most Americans think of the nation, geographically, they tend to conjure the "logo map": the outline of the 48 contiguous states, possibly with mental insets for Alaska and Hawaii (Anderson 2006). But this conceptualization—commonplace for over a century (Immerwahr 2019)—omits a significant portion of geography that Americans call home. On the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, for example, 18,833,023 Americans lived outside the mainland—a full 12.6% of people governed by the United States.

That number has since fallen. The Philippines, by far the most populous US territory pre-war, was granted independence in 1946 amid the post-war "Asian Spring" anti-imperialism movements. Alaska and Hawaii were admitted to the Union as states in 1959, over protests of segregationist Southern Democrats (Immerwahr 2019). Colonial subjects in Puerto Rico and Guam gained citizenship, and American Samoans special status as nationals. Nominally, the era of American imperialism has ended.

In reality, this is not the case. 3,556,642 Americans live in territories outside the US mainland and, regardless of their nominal status, lack voting members of Congress and the right to vote in presidential general elections. An additional 700,000+ live in the nation's capital, Washington, DC, which does participate in the Electoral College but lacks meaningful representation in Congress. The result is a significant inclusion problem in American representative democracy, documented in Table 1.

Washington, DC is distinct from the other jurisdictions in Table 1. Its status as a federal district under the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801 places what had previously been parts of Maryland and Virginia squarely under the jurisdiction of the US Congress, with residents in those areas no longer eligible to vote for Members of Congress. The 23rd Amendment to the US Constitution, passed in 1961, has given residents of DC the right

Table 1: Exclusion of DC and the territories from representative democracy

Jurisdiction	Population, June 2019	% nonwhite	Part of US since	Voting member in Congress?	Electoral College?
Washington, DC	705,749	63.2%	1790	No	3 votes
Puerto Rico	3,193,694	99.3%	1898	No	No
Guam	165,718	92.9%	1898	No	No
American Samoa	54,973	98.8%	1899	No	No
US Virgin Islands	88,443	84.3%	1917	No	No
Northern Mariana Islands	53,814	97.5%	1986	No	No
The 50 states	327,462,199	39.6%		3+ each	3+ votes each
Total, U.S.	331,814,684	40.2%			

to participate in presidential elections since the Election of 1964. But further attempts at achieving equality of representation with neighboring states have fallen short.

The endurance of the status quo in the territories dates to the Insular Cases of 1901, in which the Supreme Court narrowly interpreted "the United States" in the Constitution to mean incorporated states and territories only—unincorporated territories lack Constitutional protection. These cases resulted from the massive expansion of the American empire following victory in the Spanish-American War (most notably, the acquisition of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam) and the US' concurrant seizure of key Pacific islands (including the Hawaiian islands and what is now known as American Samoa)—and the subsequent need for clarity on whether those in the colonies were Americans or subjects. Ultimately, Congress incorporated territories with the highest levels of white settlement (Alaska and Hawaii), tentatively slating them for statehood against the opposition of a Southern Democratic minority, while the Court cases left the rest "in a state of ambiguous existence for an indefinite period," according to Chief Justice Fuller (qtd. in Immerwahr 2019).

It is worth noting that the Insular Cases, decided by the same court that resolved *Plessy v. Ferguson*, determine the status of jurisdictions that became part of the US after those cases were decided. For example, the US Virgin Islands, strategically important in World War I, became (and remain) an unincorporated U.S. territory in 1917 following their sale by Denmark. And the Northern Mariana Islands, held in United Nations Trusteeship for decades after World War II, became an unincorporated territory with commonwealth status in 1986—a process initiated by popular referendum among citizens of the islands. Nevertheless, the standing decisions of the Insular Cases mean that the constitutional rights of Americans who live in these places—along with Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa—remain in limbo.

These inclusion problems are not simply a matter of resolving "taxation without representation"; they comprise one of the most significant, albeit overlooked, fronts in the

fight for racial equality in the United States. According to the data in Table 1, 3,522,520 people of color live in the territories, compared to just 52,641 white Americans. None of these citizens receive meaningful representation in federal political institutions. And Washington, DC, a majority-minority jurisdiction, is excluded from meaningful participation in Congress despite its inclusion in presidential elections. The result is that 0.2% of white Americans are excluded from meaningful congressional representation, compared to 3.0% of Americans of color. Similarly, less than one tenth of one percent of white Americans lack the right to participate in presidential elections, but 2.6% of Americans of color do. (See SI X.Y for a fully annotated analysis.)

The exclusion of Washington, DC and Puerto Rico are the most clear-cut cases. Over the past half-decade, both have convened and passed popular referenda on statehood, with 86% of the DC electorate and 53% of the Puerto Rico electorate voting in favor of statehood in 2016 and 2020, respectively. Even if we restrict the analysis to just those living in these clear-cut cases—that is, if we omit American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands from the analysis—a clear racial disparity in representation exists. According to Table 1, 197,925,777 non-Hispanic white people live in the 50 states, with an additional 259,716 in DC and 22,356 in Puerto Rico. 129,536,422 people-of-color live in the 50 states, with an additional 446,033 in DC and 3,171,338 in Puerto Rico. The result? Just 0.14% of white Americans lack meaningful representation in Congress, compared to 2.72% of Americans-of-color. Similarly, a mere 0.01% of white Americans lack the right to vote for president, but 2.38% of Americans-of-color lack representation in the Electoral College.

What allows these inequalities to persist? Ultimately, we assert that the buck stops with the represented polity itself. If the legitimacy of representative democracies flows from consent of the governed, then the legitimacy of the status quo in excluded jurisdictions must also flow from the implicit consent of those who are included and fully represented. Counterfactually, if a critical mass of citizens in the 50 states demanded political equality for

the excluded jurisdictions, Congress would face significantly more pressure to produce acts of admission—as suggested by Hawaii's 1959 admission following a decade of rising support for statehood (McCarthy 2019) or, alternatively, by the lack of action on Puerto Rico's and the Philippines' demands for statehood in the late 19th century in the face of public opposition (Immerwahr 2019, 81-82).

Thus, the question may be rephrased: What precludes support among citizens for the admission of DC, Puerto Rico, and the other excluded juridictions? Two distinct possibilities exist. First, and consistent with much of the civic competence literature (e.g., Converse 1964; 2000; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992), citizens may not actually desire the disenfranchisement of fellow Americans. Instead, according to the *blasé imperialism* hypothesis, they may lack the information necessary to even be aware of the disenfranchisement itself. That is, the territories' and DC's status may fly so far below the radar for most citizens that it simply fails to register most of the time. For example, do citizens even know that Puerto Rico and the other territories are part of the United States? If so, do they know the extent of representational deficiencies? In sum, this hypothesis asserts that citizens in the United States genuinely value democratic equality and would be uncomfortable with the persistent inequalities, if they were to be made salient—but that more local concerns take precedence given citizens' limited attention.

On the other hand, and consistent with a significant body of the race and politics literature in the United States (e.g., Gilens 2009; Jardina 2019; Sears and Kinder 1985), citizens may actively oppose the full inclusion of Washington, DC and Puerto Rico (and the other territories) out of group-centrism or symbolic concerns, as people-of-color compose the majority in each of these places. Indeed, the case of Hawaii 60 years ago supports this possibility—Southern Democrats led the opposition to Hawaiian statehood in the 1950s out of a fear that Hawaiians' status as ethnic minorities would lead them to throw support behind civil rights legislation; only after a majority-white Alaska was admitted first as a

compromise did the Hawaii Admission Act come to the agenda (McCarthy 2019). And although significant time has passed since Hawaii's admission, racial conflict in the United States continues apace and along roughly the same geographic cleavages. Furthermore, research on the question of "who counts" as an American consistently finds that certain types of Americans count more than others: speaking English is crucial for being considered a part of the group (Citrin, Reingold and Green 1990; Schildkraut 2005), and Americans are less willing to support assistance for those who are marginalized from the national group (Theiss-Morse 2009). Imperialism in the United States may not be so blasé after all.

Unfortunately, scholars of American politics have paid scant attention to the exclusion of DC, Puerto Rico, and the other territories. (Although see a handful of academically diverse works on Puerto Rico: Bosque-Pérez and Morera 2006, Lecours and Vézina 2017, Lewis 1955, Polk 1942, Rezvani 2007.) With a renewed focus on not just democratic accountability broadly, but as it specifically pertains to issues of race, ethnicity, immigration, and decolonization, this seems an appropriate time for the field to investigate this specific representational deficiency and to determine the contours of accountability—or lack thereof—for the continued "plight" (Polk 1942) of these places.

Data and Methods

This project has several goals: 1) learn whether Americans in the 50 states recognize that the territories (and DC) are part of the country; 2) assess Americans' knowledge of the lack of meaningful representation in DC and the territories; 3) describe public opinion toward the lack of DC's and the territories' inclusion in the nation's representative democracy, including partisan differences; and, 4) determine whether attitudes toward the inclusion problem are pliable, consistent with a theory of blasé imperialism. To best accomplish all goals in one study, we developed a multi-stage information provision experimental design, conducted on

the 2020 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).[1]

The first stage of the design assesses information (or lack thereof) via two survey screens. The first screen presented respondents with a list of six geographical places and read:

> We would like to better understand what people know about American geography. It is important to us that you do NOT use outside sources like the Internet to search for the correct answer. **Will you answer the following questions without help from outside sources?** (We will show you the correct answers later on.)

Three of the six places were chosen from the six underrepresented US jurisdictions: DC, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The other three places were chosen from a list of four US states and nine independent nations (or jurisdictions within), with the order of all items randomized. (See Table 2 for the lists of places.)

After respondents answered those questions, the second screen of the first stage presented the following instructions:

> Most people who live in the United States get to elect someone who votes on their behalf in Congress, and most get to vote for president. A few places in the United States, however, do not have voting representation in Congress and/or do not get to choose who the president is. The places listed below are all U.S. states, districts, or territories. Please indicate which of these places you believe get elect someone who represents them in Congress, and which you believe get to vote in presidential elections. Check all the boxes that apply. As before, please do not look up these answers; just try your best.

[1] Describe the CCES and its sampling strategy here.

Respondents completed this task for the six jurisdictions facing an inclusion problem and additionally for Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, and Wyoming, all of which have at least 3 voting Members of Congress and participate in the Electoral College.

The second stage of the design assesses attitudes, specifically attitudes once Americans are made aware of the representation (or lack thereof) that DC and the territories receive. After providing all respondents with their "scored" quiz from the second part of the first stage, we asked two general questions about the importance of all Americans being represented and having the right to vote and twelve specific questions about whether DC and each of the territories should become states, keep their status quo, or become sovereign. We randomly assigned the order of the general and specific batteries. Since responding to one of these batteries is liable to affect how people think about and respond to the other, for descriptive analyses, we only consider responses to items that were asked as part of the first battery a respondent saw.

For understanding the roots of attitudes toward inclusion, however, the random order of these two batteries is a feature, not a bug. If Americans tend toward blasé imperialism—that is, if the status quo persists out of ignorance or a lack of salience, rather than outright opposition to inclusion—then we ought to observe respondents' provided opinions differ significantly with battery order. Those who are asked about their general support for democratic norms of inclusion should demonstrate less support for the status quo out of a need for consistency and deference to norms (e.g., Schuman, Kalton and Ludwig 1983), if these opinions are relatively labile. By contrast, if Americans have hardened attitudes against (or in support of) the inclusion of DC, Puerto Rico, and the other territories, then we should fail to see any differences across these conditions.

Results: Americans' Knowledge of Underrepresentation in DC and the Territories

To distinguish potential blasé imperialism from active opposition to inclusion, we begin by investigating what Americans know about the boundaries of the nation and the representation that various places receive. We first asked respondents whether they believed the places in Table 2 were part of the United States or not. As the results suggest, Americans tend to recognize that the excluded jurisdictions are part of the nation, especially in the most salient cases: 96.7% of respondents recognized that Washington, DC was part of the United States, as did 82.4% of respondents when asked about Puerto Rico. Knowledge of the less salient territories is more sparse, with just 40-70% of respondents reporting that Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands are part of the union. Supporters of both parties are significantly more likely to be aware of these places' inclusion in the union—consistent with partisans' generally higher levels of political knowledge (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992)—and especially Democrats in the cases of Guam, American Samoa, and Washington, DC (see SI X.Y for a full analysis of partisan differences in knowledge).

Importantly, we can compare awareness of DC and Puerto Rico's inclusion in the union with awareness of other states. On average, Americans are just as aware that Washington, DC belongs to the United States as they are that Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, and Ohio do. Awareness of Puerto Rico's place in the union is significantly lower than those states', but it is far from a false positive. As the bottom portion of Table 2 suggests, Americans are, in most cases, able to identify places that are not part of the union. (Although we suspect that many respondents believe that a city called Baja, California exists.) The relatively high rates of affirmative answers regarding the status of Puerto Rico, and even the other territories, compared to the items about, say, Sinaloa or even the Canary Islands, suggests that most respondents had some knowledge and did better than merely flipping a coin.

Table 2: Americans' knowledge of national boundaries

Jurisdiction	Part of U.S.?	% responding "Part of U.S."	95% conf. int.	n
Washington, DC	Yes	96.7%	[94.6, 98.8]	284
Puerto Rico	Yes	82.4%	[78.1, 86.7]	304
Guam	Yes	58.2%	[52.6, 63.5]	334
American Samoa	Yes	68.5%	[63.1, 73.8]	292
US Virgin Islands	Yes	89.9%	[86.6, 93.2]	323
Northern Mariana Islands	Yes	41.2%	[25.3, 47.1]	271
Alaska	Yes	94.3%	[91.7, 96.9]	303
Hawaii	Yes	96.7%	[94.7, 98.7]	310
Maine	Yes	95.3%	[92.9, 97.8]	288
Ohio	Yes	96.9%	[94.9, 98.9]	291
Philippines	No	13.6%	[9.6, 17.6]	288
Haiti	No	6.3%	[3.5, 9.0]	295
French Polynesia	No	7.6%	[4.6, 10.6]	305
Baja California	No	60.5%	[55.1, 65.9]	317
Manitoba	No	3.4%	[1.3, 5.5]	291
Vatican City	No	7.3%	[4.4, 10.3]	310
Canary Islands	No	18.4%	[14.0, 22.8]	299
Sinaloa	No	3.9%	[1.6, 6.1]	290
Cuba	No	10.0%	[6.5, 13.4]	297

Americans are not completely tuned out to the existence of places outside the 50 states. But do they know about the lack of representation these places receive? To assess this, we provided all respondents with a new form to complete, informing them that all of the places on this form—DC, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, and Wyoming (order randomized)—are part of the U.S. On this form, we asked respondents to indicate whether they believed each of these places had a voting Member of Congress and whether each of these places got to participate in presidential elections through the Electoral College. We show the results in Table 3.

Here, Americans appear to lack more knowledge. While four-fifths of respondents correctly identified that Washington, DC is represented in the Electoral College, nearly half incorrectly reported that it is also represented with a voting member in Congress. And while Americans' knowledge of which states get congressional representation is spotty in general, with a significant number of false negatives in the second half of the table, the number of false positives in the top half is significantly larger. Indeed, with roughly 50% of respondents answering that these places are represented in each of the cases in which they are not, the data produced resembles data that *would* be produced by flipping a coin. On the whole, it seems that Americans are liable to overestimate the degree to which DC and the territories receive meaningful representation, far more than they underestimate the representation that states receive.

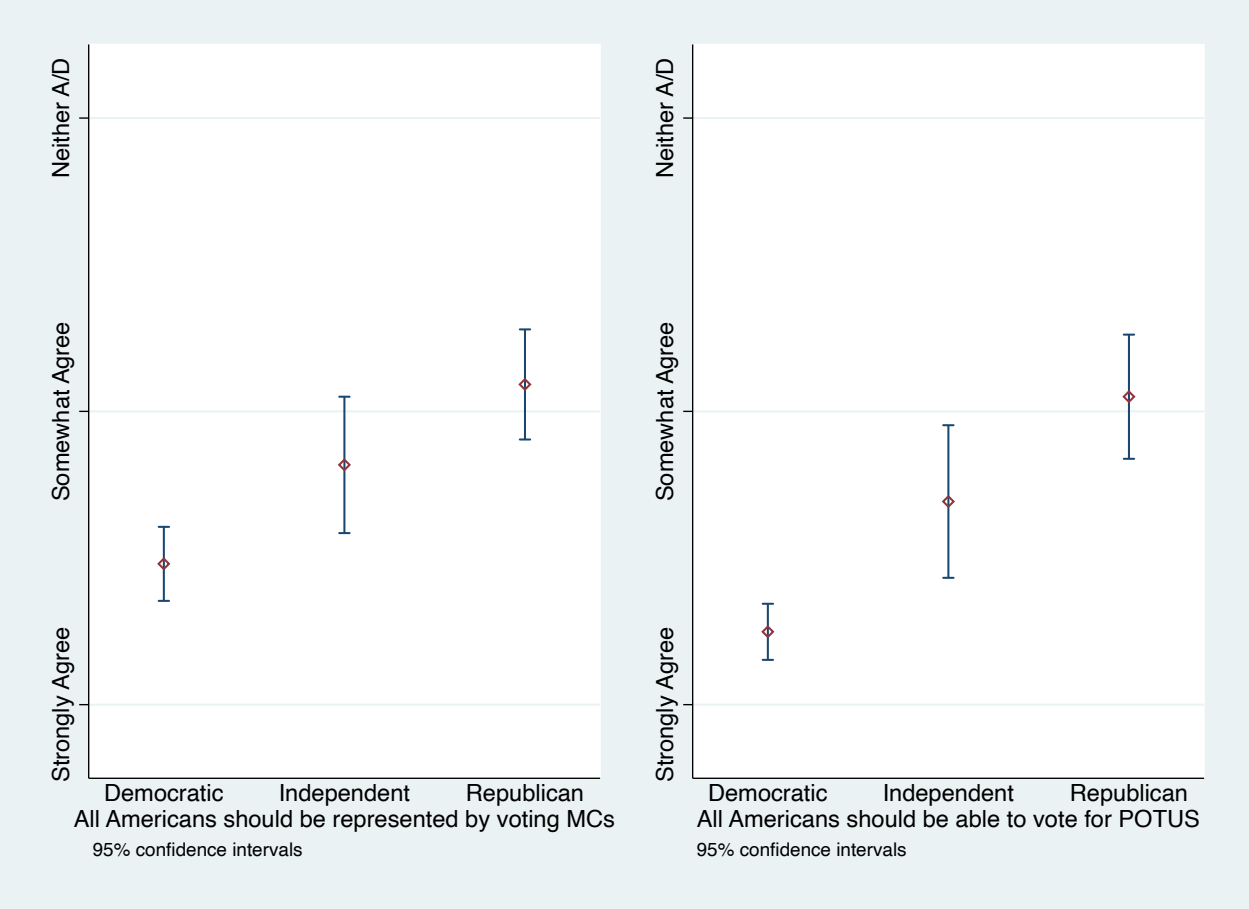
Results: Americans' Attitudes Toward the Inclusion Problem, Once Fully Informed

Across the board, Americans endorse democratic norms when given the opportunity to do so. The modal Democratic, Independent, and Republican respondent each strongly agree

Table 3: Americans' knowledge of the inclusion problem in national representation

Jurisdiction	% responding "Has voting MC"	% responding "Participates in the Electoral College"	n
Washington, DC	46.2% [43.1, 49.3]	81.3% [78.8, 83.7]	1000
Puerto Rico	50.0% [46.9, 53.1]	56.0% [52.9, 59.1]	1000
Guam	51.2% [48.1, 54.2]	49.3% [46.2, 52.4]	1000
American Samoa	51.9% [48.8, 55.0]	51.8% [48.7, 54.9]	1000
US Virgin Islands	49.5% [46.4, 52.6]	57.5% [54.5, 60.6]	1000
Northern Mariana Islands	51.4% [48.3, 54.5]	49.8% [46.7, 52.9]	1000
Alaska	78.2% [75.6, 80.7]	83.5% [81.1, 85.8]	1000
Hawaii	77.1% [74.5, 79.8]	84.7% [82.5, 87.0]	1000
Maine	74.3% [71.6, 77.1]	87.4% [85.4, 89.5]	1000
Wyoming	75.8% [73.2, 78.5]	86.8% [84.7, 88.9]	1000

Figure 1: Americans overwhelmingly endorse norms of inclusion



NOTE: $n = 496$. Only respondents who were asked these questions before being asked about specific American jurisdictions are analyzed here, so as to avoid priming. 5-point response scales were presented, but since responses tended to be so pro-inclusion, we truncate the Y-axis in the figure.

that "all Americans should be represented by voting Members of Congress" and that "all Americans should have the right to vote for President." Partisan differences do exist at the margins, as Figure 1 shows—Democrats are most likely to endorse these norms, while Republicans are least likely—but overwhelmingly, respondents endorsed full inclusion in the representative scheme.

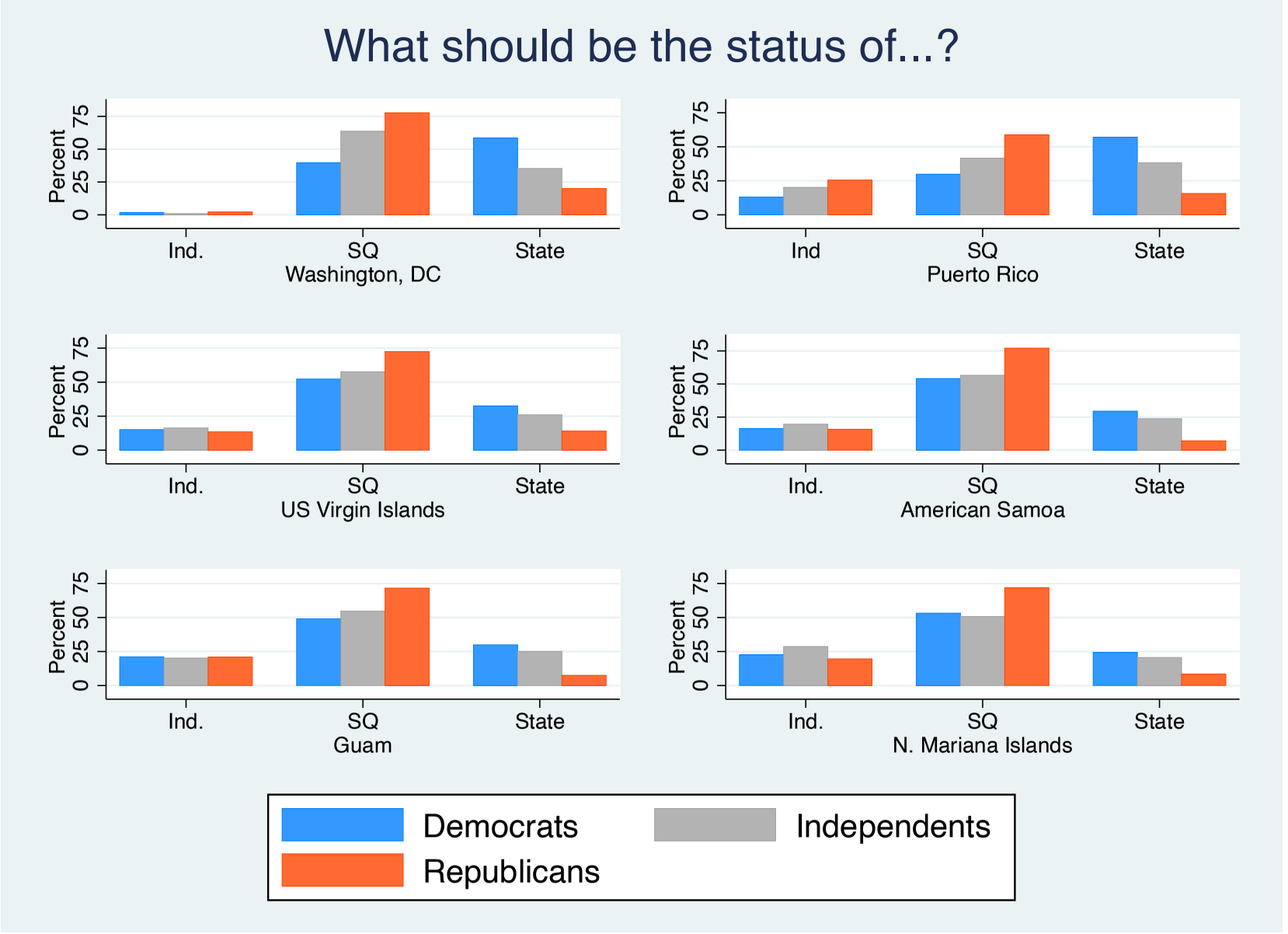
What about the specific cases of DC, Puerto Rico, and the other territories? Here, partisanship appears to more heavily condition attitudes. Again limiting analysis only to

respondents who saw these items first, so as to avoid priming effects, we find that Democrats are significantly more likely to endorse the inclusion of DC and the territories vis-à-vis independents, who themselves are significantly more favorable to inclusion than Republicans. For example, over 61% of Democrats support statehood for Washington, DC, compared to 34% of independents and just 21% of Republicans. The difference is perhaps even more stark for Puerto Rico: nearly twice as many Republicans favor independence over statehood, while nearly five times as many Democrats favor statehood over independence. Clearly, citizens with a rooting interest are aware of the short-term partisan implications of inclusion.

But as Figure 2 shows, another important trend exists: across the board, all partisan groups are more likely to support statehood for DC and Puerto Rico than the other territories. Although Democrats support statehood for DC and Puerto Rico, this support cannot be due exclusively to partisan rooting interest. If so, we would expect to see majorities of Democrats supporting statehood for Guam, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, but we instead observe massive support for the status quo in these places across the board. This could be due to the recent referenda calling attention to the representational defecits specifically in DC and Puerto Rico, or it could simply be due to respondents' greater awareness of those places; adjudicating between these two possibilities is beyond the scope of this study, but future work on Americans' attitudes toward continued imperialism might investigate the considerations going into these specific opinions.

Most interesting, however, is the apparent ability to move opinions on statehood in these two salient cases simply by priming democratic norms of inclusion. Recall that we randomly assigned the order of the specific questions about DC, Puerto Rico, and the status of the other territories, and the more general questions about support for democratic norms of inclusion. Respondents who first saw the more general questions—that is, respondents for whom we primed norms of democratic inclusion—responded with marginally more support for statehood and less for the status quo. When we stack the data at the item level—meaning

Figure 2: Partisanship conditions Americans' opinions about the status of DC and the territories



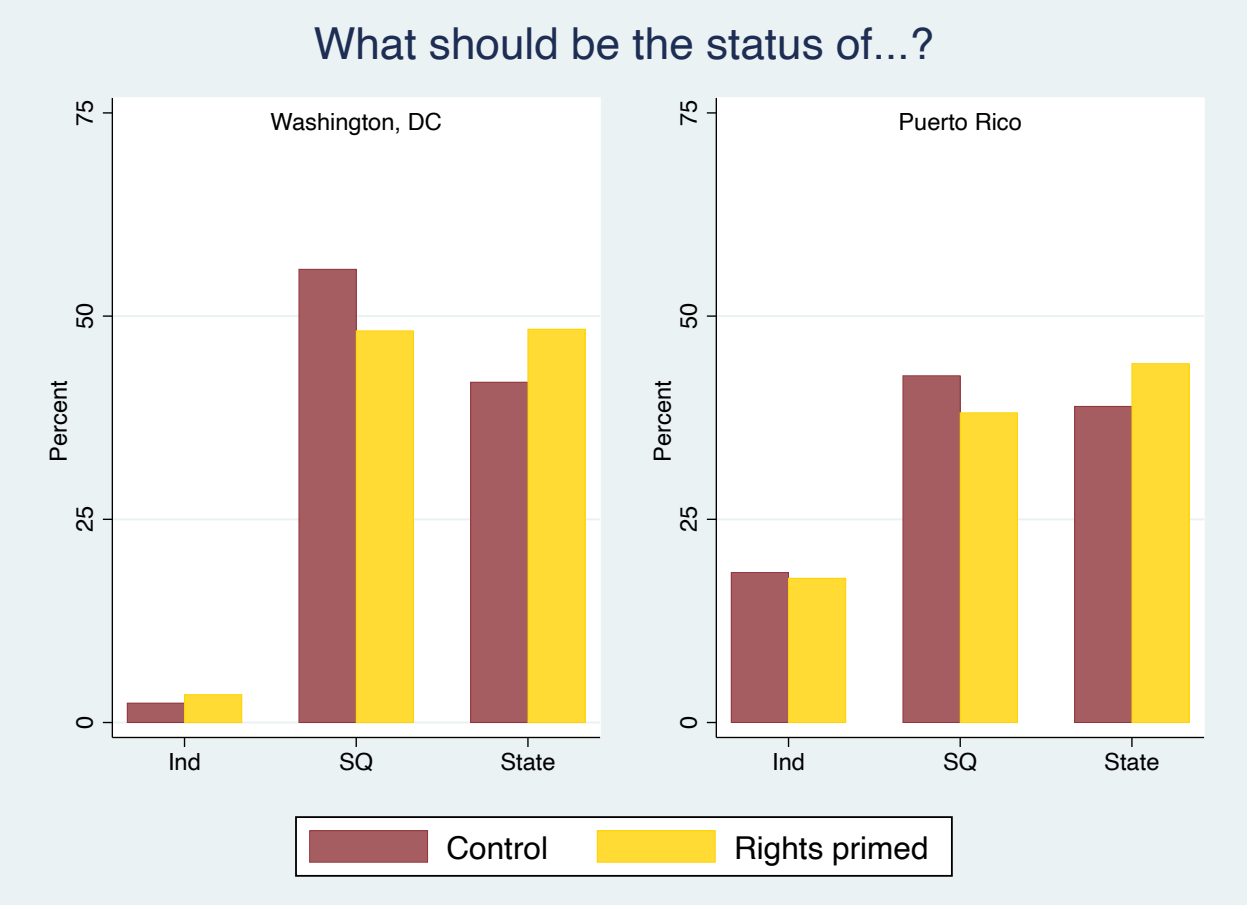
NOTE: $n = 504$. Only respondents who were asked these questions before being asked about norms of inclusion are analyzed here, so as to avoid priming.

six rows for each respondent, one for each respondent-item—and compare the distribution of responses between the two conditions, respondents are less likely to support the status quo when we prime democratic norms, but the difference is small and not statistically significant (55.9% support the status quo vs. 56.7% in the control condition, $p = 0.55$). However, when we restrict our analysis just to the most salient cases, and those for which Americans appear to harbor significant levels of baseline support for inclusion—DC and Puerto Rico—we find a stronger treatment effect. As Figure 3 shows, a plurality of respondents in the control condition supported the status quo in DC and Puerto Rico, but after priming democratic norms of inclusion, a plurality of respondents supported statehood. Testing this more formally, 49.2% of respondents supported the status quo in the control condition when asked about DC or Puerto Rico, but this falls to 43.1% among treated respondents ($p < .01$). At least with these most salient cases, priming norms of democratic inclusion appears to lead Americans to support greater rights for their fellow citizens.

Discussion

The United States currently faces an acute reckoning with racial inequality. A novel focus on how past injustices endure has become a part of the national conversation and, yet, political science has failed to address the enduring political inequality experienced by millions of Americans living in the capital and the territories—Americans who are significantly less likely to be white than their peers in the 50 states. Indeed, according to our analysis, just a tenth of a percent of white Americans lack meaningful representation in Congress and a hundredth of a percent lack the right to vote for president, but a full 2.7% of Americans-of-color lack voting representation in Congress and a similar 2.4% lack the right to vote for president. This is not due to some kind of provisional status; DC has been a part of the union since 1790, and the most populated territories—Puerto Rico and Guam—have flown

Figure 3: Priming democratic norms increases support for the inclusion of DC and Puerto Rico



NOTE: $n = 1000$. $\chi^2 = 8.0$, $p = 0.02$. Alternatively, the data can be analyzed in terms of preference for the status quo by regressing such a dummy variable (where 0 = prefers independence or statehood and 1 = prefers the status quo) on the treatment indicator. This analysis yields $\hat{\beta} = -0.06$, $p < 0.01$. Finally, a nonparametric Wilcoxon rank-sum test provides similarly significant results.

the stars and stripes as long as Hawaii. In sum, consent of the governed is incomplete in American democracy, and scant attention is paid to the political exclusion experienced by our capital and our vestiges of imperialism.

This project sought to adjudicate between public opinion explanations for the permanent second-class status of DC and the territories, using as a starting point the idea that if a critical mass of citizens demanded political equality for the excluded jurisdictions, democratic accountability would demand congressional action. Since we fail to observe such a pressure in our representative institutions, we can infer that the public does not view inclusion as a priority. But two distinct processes could belie what we observe. On the one hand, citizens may actively oppose the full inclusion of DC and the territories, perhaps because of ethnocentrism (although also potentially because of symbolic concerns, e.g., preserving a round 50 stars on the flag). On the other hand, political inequality in DC and the territories may not even register for most citizens. That is, perhaps citizens would oppose the lack of equality that exists today, but a lack of news coverage (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder 1987) or advocacy (e.g., Arnold 1993) means that most lack awareness of the inclusion problem, to the extent that ongoing inequality fails to register, a potential phenomenon we term blasé imperialism.

We find some support for blasé imperialism. First, although most recognize that DC and the territories are part of the union, significant portions of the American public appear to be unaware that these jurisdictions lack the same political representation that the 50 states receive. Second, when we prime experimental participants to think about norms of inclusion before providing opinions on the status of DC and Puerto Rico, we observe significantly less support for the status quo, suggesting that attitudes toward these places' status are somewhat labile and specifically susceptible to considerations about democracy and fairness.

On the other hand, these effects are somewhat limited. In particular, while we are

heartened by the treatment effect we observed, it faces two shortcomings. First, we only observe opinion moving for the most salient cases—DC and Puerto Rico. Priming norms of democratic inclusion fails to move opinions on the status of Guam, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Perhaps even more limiting though, the treatment effect we observed is relatively small in relation to the partisan gap in opinion we observe. Supporters of the Democratic Party overwhelmingly support statehood and only become more pro-statehood with our treatment. Supporters of the Republican Party are incredibly anti-statehood—preferring that Puerto Rico become independent to included—and while our treatment does push Republican opinion toward inclusion, it comes nowhere close to closing the opinion gap between the two parties. Thus, we suspect that any legislation advanced to include Puerto Rico and/or Washington, DC will face an uphill battle to passage because of polarization, even with a potential messaging strategy to warm attitudes via democratic norms.

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