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Representative Bureaucracy: Theory to Practice

A Lever to Enhance Social Equity, Coproduction, and Democracy

Abstract: *Scholars and practitioners have long questioned whether the race, ethnicity, and gender of public bureaucrats matter to the efficacy and legitimacy of public services. Representative bureaucracy theory and research provide a growing body of empirical evidence that it does. This article examines some of the rich scholarly work that has been generated on representative bureaucracy and its implications for practice. A significant aspect of recent research focuses on the notion of symbolic representation, whereby the mere existence of a passively represented bureaucracy can itself improve outcomes by influencing the attitudes and behaviors of clients, regardless of bureaucratic actions or results. This article is intended to help both students and public managers understand the importance of representativeness in public organizations for a broad spectrum of practices and goals, from the coproduction of services to democratic rule.*

Practitioner Points

- Representative bureaucracy can promote diversity within government organizations and, more broadly, social equity throughout the nation.
- Bureaucracies that are representative of the people they serve can enhance citizens' trust in government and foster the achievement of democratic goals.
- Through its effects on legitimacy and trust, representativeness can influence the extent to which clients and citizens cooperate and comply with government, thus coproducing important policy outcomes.
- Increasing the representation of women and people of color in government can promote bureaucratic accountability.

The theoretical foundation of representative bureaucracy can be traced back to Donald Kingsley's 1944 work on representation in the English civil service, in which he argued that class representation was critical for democratic rule. As Britain evolved from an aristocracy to a more middle-class society, Kingsley argued, it was necessary for the bureaucracy to reflect this new social order. Picking up on the normative threads of Kingsley's thesis, Mosher (1968) posited that bureaucracies were expected to push for the needs and interests of their sociological counterparts in the general population, a process he referred to as *active representation*. Mosher also pointed to the importance of *passive representation*, whereby the demographics of the bureaucracy mirror those of society, as this enhanced the legitimacy of government. Mosher's explication of representative bureaucracy also suggested that race and ethnicity would be especially significant foci for representativeness in the United States.

The works of Kingsley and Mosher set in motion a series of empirical studies to test the veracity of representative bureaucracy theory (see Meier 1975,

1993b). The purpose of this article is to highlight some of the efforts made by public administration scholars over the last several decades to validate and extend this theory. It begins by addressing two forms of representative bureaucracy that have received a good deal of attention in the literature: passive and active representation. Next, it addresses the newest iteration of representative bureaucracy: symbolic representation. The article illustrates how the progression of research in representative bureaucracy adds value to both theory and practice. For example, passive representation indicates the extent to which public workforces have become more diverse. Active representation indicates whether the representation or diversity translates into critical public policy outcomes or outputs. Symbolic representation suggests that diversity in government workforces (passive representation) helps promote policy outcomes by enhancing the legitimacy of government and thus the cooperation of citizens.

The significance of this article further lies in our presentation of the practical application of the theoretical constructs of representative bureaucracy. It

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seeks to provide insights to researchers and practitioners about the value of representative bureaucracy for social equity, the delivery of public services, and the achievement of democratic goals and principles.

Passive Representativeness

Early studies on representative bureaucracy examined the extent to which the social composition of a bureaucracy reflected the social composition of the population it served. A variety of measures were developed to demonstrate the extent to which bureaucracies were, in Mosher's (1968) terms, passively representative. The most popular measure was the representative ratio, which simply compared the percentage of women or racial and ethnic groups in a government bureaucracy with the percentage of those groups in the general population (see, e.g., Cayer and Sigelman 1980; Dometrius 1984; Rosenbloom and Featherstonhaugh 1977; Saltzstein 1983; Sigelman 1976). A representative ratio of 1.0 indicated perfect representation; anything below 1.0 suggested that the bureaucracy underrepresented those groups in the general population; and anything above 1.0 connoted overrepresentation (see Ricucci and Saidel 1997).

Other measures examined the distribution or stratification of people within the bureaucracy (i.e., hierarchical representation) and across agencies or departments (i.e., functional representation). These measures consistently showed that women and people of color were relegated to lower-level positions in public organizations and segregated in agencies that were deemed traditionally female or minority (e.g., housing, welfare, and education; see, e.g., Cayer and Sigelman 1980; Dometrius 1984; Saltzstein 1983; Sigelman 1976).

Implications for Practice

As a growing body of public administration scholarship suggests, important benefits flow from passive representation in public organizations. In the broadest sense, passive representation is indicative of the success of government in promoting social equity, long considered the third pillar of public administration. Writing more than four decades ago, Frederickson (1971) argued that government is compelled not only by the goals of efficiency and economy but also by social equity. Although the concept of social equity has assumed a host of different, sometimes conflicting meanings, it continues to center on the tenets set forth by Frederickson and, more recently, Gooden (2014) and Gooden and Portillo (2011)—fair and just treatment, justice, and the equal and equitable distribution of benefits to the society at large. To the extent that government demonstrates these values through its own employment practices, it creates a model and momentum for similar employment practices throughout society. Such employment practices include, for example, paying men and women equitably to promote social and economic justice. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently reported that for white-collar workers, pay disparities have dropped over the past 20 years: the average female salary is 87.3 percent of the average male salary (OPM 2014a). While better than the nation as a whole—where women earn 77 percent of what men

earn—pay inequities in the federal workforce persist. The OPM has created an agenda for addressing pay inequities, including an evaluation of the gender imbalance in hiring across all occupations. It also promises to develop stronger pipelines for women to reach upper-level positions. The OPM is working to improve the transparency of the federal government's pay tables, especially with respect to starting salaries for women, which lag behind men's.

By unpacking the concept of social equity, particular values of passive representation can be further identified. For one thing, it signifies greater diversity on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, and even disability (Allen and Cohen 1980; Gade and Wilkins 2013). Creating diverse organizations has been a major goal for governments at every level. This points to government's commitment to serve as a source of employment for women, people of color, and disabled people. African Americans in particular have historically viewed local government jobs as a symbol of stature, economic power, and social mobility (Frederickson 1974, 1990; Meier 1975). As Selden points out, government employment serves as "a ladder of opportunity and a symbol of career mobility" (2006, 917) for many historically disadvantaged groups (also see Meier 1975; Selden 1997).

Governments at every level have been successful in developing diversity programs aimed at increasing the percentages of women, people of color, and disabled people in their workforces. For example, in 2010, President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13548, which requires federal agencies and departments to improve their efforts to recruit, hire, and retain disabled people. It also requires the OPM to work with the U.S. Department of Labor, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Office of Management and Budget to design a model for recruitment and hiring strategies that would facilitate efforts to diversify the federal government based on disability (White House 2010).

State governments, too, have developed and implemented a number of programs to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Many have organized summits at which state agency hiring managers, community service providers, private sector

hiring managers, and people with disabilities are brought together to dispel myths about people with disabilities, raise awareness about their employment needs, and share human resource practices and strategies for recruiting, hiring, and retaining disabled workers. Other practices include training and educating cabinet-level officials and managerial and supervisory staff on the employment requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, in particular, reasonable accommodation policies (Barnett and Krepcio 2011).

Success in creating diverse institutions may also serve as a measure of the effectiveness of government in combating discriminatory practices in employment and its willingness to embrace equality of opportunities and affirmative action. Although affirmative action has faced legal and societal challenges, governments at every level have not backed

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down from their commitment to achieve affirmative action goals. To be sure, the U.S. Supreme Court has made it clear that to survive a constitutional challenge, affirmative action programs must meet the two requirements of the strict scrutiny test: (1) the program must have a compelling government interest and (2) it must be narrowly tailored to achieve its goals. The high court's decision in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (570 U.S. ___, 133 S.Ct. 2411 [2013]) struck down the manner in which the University of Texas sought to meet strict scrutiny in its use of affirmative action in undergraduate admissions. However, the Supreme Court agreed once again to review the *Fisher* ruling, and in 2016 (Docket no. 14-981), it upheld the use of affirmative action in a 4–3 decision.¹

Perhaps the one area in which governments have fallen short on diversity is the promotion of women and people of color to the upper, policy-making levels of government. A good deal of research has demonstrated that women and people of color continue to be underrepresented in higher levels of government, continue to lag in pay, and often remain segregated in traditionally female or minority departments or agencies (Gooden 2014, 2015; Guy 1993; Kellough 1990; Lewis 1988; Riccucci 2009). Efforts have been made over the years to advance promotion opportunities for women and people of color. For example, in 2011, President Obama issued Executive Order 13583 on “Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce.” It directs federal agencies and departments to develop and implement strategic efforts to hire, recruit, promote, and retain women and people of color (White House 2011). Notwithstanding the aims of this and other diversity initiatives, progress on the hierarchical and functional representation of women and people of color throughout government workforces has been relatively slow. Although greater progress has been seen recently, particularly for white women (see, e.g., OPM 2014b), this remains a challenge with respect to the application of representative bureaucracy theory and warrants further research.

In addition to the question of social equity, research has illustrated the importance of diversity for the *internal* functioning of organizations. For example, Choi and Rainey (2010) found that racial diversity enhances organizational performance, as perceived by workers, but only when agencies practice effective diversity management strategies. Oberfield puts this in the context of a “business case for diversity management—the argument that when public managers improve how they handle diversity issues, they will also improve how their organizations perform” (2014, 777). Oberfield points to the importance of programs and policies that promote understanding and acceptance of the diverse values represented in the workplace. He goes on to say that diversity management is expected to enhance performance by breaking down the social barriers between employees and by promoting a culture of inclusion (Oberfield 2014, 779).

Similarly, Choi (2009) found that when diversity is effectively managed in federal agencies, diversity based on race and ethnicity is positively associated with job satisfaction. Choi points to the overall significance of strategically managing diversity: “In order for diversity to benefit organizational effectiveness, sufficient managerial efforts must be necessarily invested in harmonizing differences in organizations” (2009, 623; see also Choi and Rainey 2014; Wise and Tschirhart 2000). Also noteworthy is Page’s (2007) study illustrating that greater diversity produces better organizational decisions and productivity in a variety of public and private sector settings.

Thus, passive representativeness in government bureaucracies expresses important democratic values and serves important goals related to fairness and equity in society. There is evidence that more representative agencies may function better as organizations, especially when coupled with effective diversity management. Selden adds this important benefit of passively represented bureaucracies: “in a global economy—and with a foreign policy premised on human rights and dignity—lacking a diverse workforce is embarrassing to the United States, undermines its credibility, and hurts its business success in dealing with other nations” (2006, 911). The next sections discuss additional important functions of this and other forms of representation.

From Passive to Active Representativeness

Do demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender correspond with particular sets of values that, when better represented in the bureaucracy, translate into better policy and administrative outcomes for underrepresented groups? This is a largely empirical question that seeks to determine whether passive and active representation are linked, graphically displayed in figure 1 (see Riccucci and Meyers 2004; Saltzstein 1979).

Kenneth Meier was the first scholar to empirically examine the linkage between passive and active representation, and he has made extraordinary contributions to the literature (Meier 1975, 1993a, 1993b; Meier and Nigro 1976). A number of other studies followed, also showing that race, ethnicity, and gender matter in decision and policy making (see, e.g., Bradbury and Kellough 2011; Lim 2006; Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006; Meier and Smith 1994; Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard 1999; Riccucci and Meyers 2004; Selden 1997; Sowa and Selden 2003; Wilkins 2007). As this body of research shows, women, compared with men working in the bureaucracy, are more likely to push for programs and issues that benefit women in the general population. Meier and Nicholson-Crotty (2006), for example, in their study on the extent to which passive and active representation are linked in policing, found that female victims of sex crimes are more willing to report those crimes to women police officers, who, in turn, become more active in filing reports and enforcing sexual assault laws. Wilkins

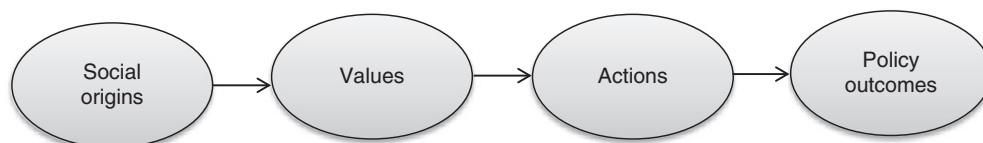


Figure 1 Passive-Active Representation Model

and Keiser (2006) in their study find that the representation of women in child support enforcement units positively affects women clients in those units. Also noteworthy is a study by Lim (2006), who illustrates that minority bureaucrats can also produce benefits for their social group indirectly by working to change the behavior of other policy participants such as “majority” group bureaucrats.

A recent study by Hong (forthcoming) produced a similar result. He found that increasing the proportion of ethnic minorities in English and Welsh police forces led to a decrease in citizen complaints not only per officer but also overall complaints against the police force. This suggests that a more representative police force, even in a symbolic sense, translates into better treatment of not only minorities but of all citizens. It further suggests that greater diversity in police organizations may encourage all officers to work against unfair or unethical practices such as ethnic or racial profiling. As Hong suggests, greater ethnic representation in police organizations may have a “transformative effect” on all police officers, thereby producing fairer, less biased, and more objective behaviors and actions in the communities they serve. This enhances the overall integrity and accountability of police forces, which is imperative, given, as Hong points out, the growing violence against ethnic minorities (also see Hong 2016).

As Meier and Stewart (1992), Keiser et al. (2002), and others have pointed out, a number of conditions must exist for a linkage between passive and active representation to occur. For example, bureaucrats must possess discretion in decision or policy making. Thus, the bureaucrats may be operating at any hierarchical level of the bureaucracy, including the street level, but they must have enough discretion to act on their values. In addition, there must be policy congruence between bureaucrats and those they represent. Bureaucrats must work in a policy domain that would serve the interests of their counterparts in the citizenry (e.g., veterans working in veterans’ affairs; see Gade and Wilkins 2013). Also, for women, the policy area must be gendered in that “the policy directly benefits women as a class, . . . the gender of the bureaucrat changes the client-bureaucrat relationship, . . . or the issue has been defined as a women’s issue through the political process” (Keiser et al. 2002, 556). Thus, when discretion is coupled with social or group identity and purpose, passive representation is likely to turn into active representation to benefit those in society whom bureaucrats represent.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) point out that we self-classify based on characteristics such as gender, race, ability, and religion. Moreover, we use these classifications to define others. Ultimately, we define ourselves based on the groups to which we belong, and we prefer to interact with members of our own groups. We may also hold more favorable perceptions about the qualifications of workers based on our group identity (Kossek and Zonia 1993). This serves as an underlying basis for the linkage between passive and active representation.

Implications for Practice

A critical feature of active representativeness is that not only elected officials but also career government bureaucrats have the power and discretion to engage in policy making (see Meier and O’Toole 2006;

Selden 1997). Moreover, there is an expectation that bureaucrats will do this; indeed, elected leaders depend on bureaucratic participation in the policy-making and implementation processes, not only because of administrative expertise but also in the event of policy failure. Elected leaders in legislative bodies, for example, can then place the blame on bureaucrats for failure, thereby deflecting blame from themselves; this ultimately helps ensure reelection, a major goal of elected leaders (see, e.g., Fenno 2008).

Of course, elected leaders can also serve as a challenge in applying the theory of representative bureaucracy. For example, Meier and O’Toole (2006) point out that “overhead bureaucracy” complicates the process. Overhead bureaucracy refers to a bureaucracy that is subservient to elected or politically appointed representatives. As Meier and O’Toole state, its purpose is to “ensure that political leaders are effectively able to direct, constrain, and control bureaucracy” (2006, 6). In this sense, although bureaucrats can work to represent their counterparts in the general population, they must also work strategically to overcome political pressures from above. They do this largely through the use of administrative discretion. As many have pointed out, bureaucrats possess discretionary authority particularly at the front lines of service delivery (see, e.g., Meier 1997; Selden 1997). Thus, as Meier and O’Toole continue, “top-down political control of the bureaucracy has only a modest impact at best on the activities of the bureaucracy in the United States” (2006, 19).

An actively representative bureaucracy is essential for democratic rule. Mosher (1968) was emphatic that representative bureaucracy is vital for the fulfillment of democratic principles. In his groundbreaking book *Democracy and the Public Service*, Mosher argued that a direct democracy was implausible in that a government “of the people, by the people, for the people . . . could not by itself be fully effective in the community because meetings could not be assembled on the hour every day to handle the continuing problems of government” (1968, 2). Elected representatives are necessary, but so, too, are career bureaucrats. He argued that the “accretion of specialization and of technological and social complexity seems to be an irreversible trend, one that leads to increasing dependence upon the protected, appointive public service” (3; emphasis added). Out of necessity, he continued, in order to be compatible with democracy, the public service must reflect the social characteristics of the people and work to serve their needs and interests.

A sine qua non for the fulfillment of democratic principles is representation of the interests of the people. Democracy denotes *all* the people, not just some. In effect, those who may not otherwise receive effective service provisions through traditional political mechanisms can rely on career bureaucrats to the extent that passive and active representation are linked. The New Public Administration movement of the late 1960s embodied this ideal: that a socially representative bureaucracy will ensure that underserved and disenfranchised populations are not omitted from the political processes of those government agencies that ultimately allocate public services in society.

In short, the linkage of passive and active representation works to fulfill a number of democratic goals and responsibilities. To

be sure, some have argued that democracy is better served to the extent bureaucrats are disempowered. Bureaucrats are not elected and therefore must be subordinate to elected officials (see, e.g., Finer 1941). Others have argued that bureaucratic discretion and responsibility are essential to democratic rule, especially to the extent that the political system is unable to effectively represent all interests within a society (see, e.g., Levitan 1946; Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998). Representative bureaucracy is critical for democratic rule because administrative discretion assures that the values and preferences of all the people will be better represented in policy outcomes or outputs (see, e.g., Mosher 1968). In this sense, the bureaucracy “becomes a representative organization that may supplement the representation provided through other political institutions including elected legislatures” (Bradbury and Kellough 2011, 158).

Lim (2006) revisits an old issue in the representative bureaucracy literature that asks whether the interests of *all* groups are really served, or whether gains to one group come with an expense to others (see also Hong, forthcoming). For example, if women bureaucrats are pursuing the needs and interests of women in the general population, are men’s interests being ignored or underserved? Is democracy then perverted? This, of course, defies the *raison d’être* of representative bureaucracy, which calls for demographic diversity in bureaucracies. From a practical standpoint, this suggests ensuring that all segments of society are represented in government organizations. One critical empirical study suggests as much. Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard found “that moving toward a more representative bureaucracy will not have outcomes detrimental to the established majority.... There appear to be no redistributive consequences” (1999, 1036). One explanation for this finding may be that institutionalized biases and stereotypes in society and in public organizations typically work against the interests of underrepresented groups, such as

women and people of color. The addition of these groups to the bureaucratic ranks, therefore, may serve mainly to mitigate these negative biases and stereotypes, providing more just and equal treatment for these groups without altering much the treatment of men and nonminorities.

From Passive to Symbolic Representativeness

A third, more recent strand of research in representative bureaucracy has focused on what has been termed “symbolic representativeness.” The main idea of symbolic representation is that the mere existence of a passively represented bureaucracy can itself translate into

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benefits for the citizenry—without any actions taken by bureaucrats (Gade and Wilkins 2013; Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006; Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Lavena 2014; Theobald and Haider-Markel 2009). Thus, in addition to bureaucrats producing outcomes through their discretionary actions, symbolic representation represents a second channel of causal processes operating through the perceptions and behaviors of citizens and clients. In figure 2, we show this second

channel as an expansion of the classic model presented earlier. As described more fully later, the model shows that the social origins of a bureaucrat can produce a sense of trust and legitimacy among citizens who share those social origins, thereby resulting in cooperation from the citizens and ultimately the production of more effective policy outcomes, *without* any action by the bureaucrat (in other words, without active representation).

Symbolic representation can have real effects. For example, Theobald and Haider-Markel’s (2009) research shows that the presence of African American police officers enhances African Americans’ trust of the police, thereby creating greater legitimacy for the law enforcement agency within the community and in turn more cooperation and compliance with the law. They point to the underlying mechanisms of symbolic representation:

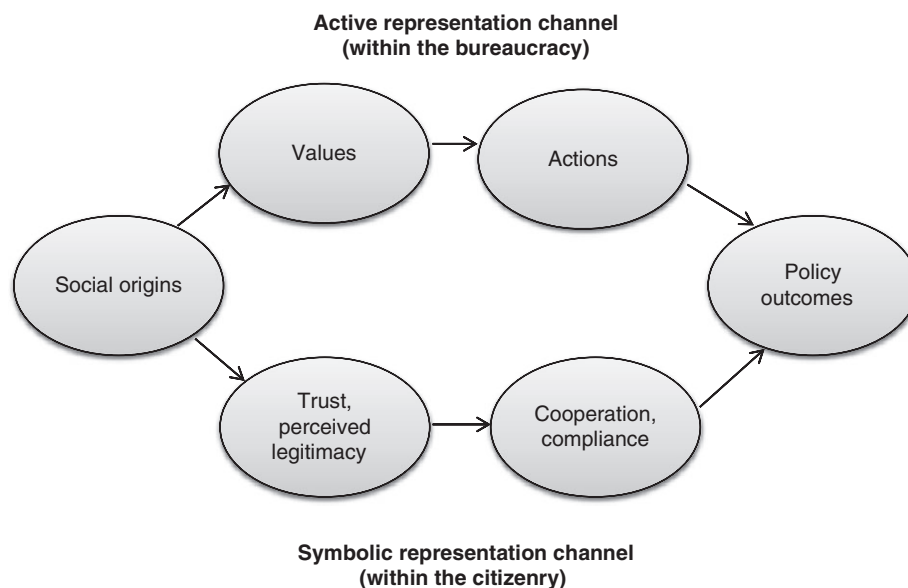


Figure 2 Expanded Two-Channel Model

Human perceptions of situations have real importance even when perceptions might be wrong. In a very real sense, an individual's perception is his or her reality. When considering the actions of government agents, perceptions of legitimacy, fairness, and justice in what actions are taken and how they are carried out has important potential implications for government legitimacy, especially in a democracy. If citizens come to believe that actions by government agents are in some way illegitimate, citizens may come to distrust the government. (Theobald and Haider-Markel 2009, 411)

There is also a perception that passive representation is indicative of shared values and experiences, which can promote greater trust in the citizenry (see, e.g., Childs and Lovenduski 2013; Wise 2003).

There is also a psychological dimension to symbolic representation. Nunnally (2012), for example, points to the psychological satisfaction among African Americans when their counterparts hold elective office apart from whether representative public policy is produced (see also Tate 2003). The same can be said for women when they are represented in Congress (Carroll 2006; Lawless 2004). These studies also extend to psychological satisfaction within the arena of education. For example, a recent Gallup Poll indicates that black students are more satisfied and feel more supported and engaged in work when they attend historically black colleges and universities (Seymour and Ray 2015). Certainly the election of President Obama produced hope and inspiration among African Americans in this nation. His election symbolized progress and opportunities, notwithstanding actual policy outcomes, in large part because he serves as a positive role model for African Americans (see Marx, Ko, and Friedman 2009). In short, symbolic representation can not only promote greater legitimacy in government, but it can also promote psychological satisfaction with government and its services.

Further evidence of symbolic representation can be seen in a study by Gade and Wilkins (2013), who examine the effects of this form of representation on veteran status. They found that veterans receiving vocational rehabilitation services report significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the services when their counselors are veterans. They point out that "passive representation can... translate into symbolic representation, where representation may change the attitudes and behaviors of the represented client without any action taken by the bureaucrat" (Gade and Wilkins 2013, 267).

In addition, Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Lavena (2014), using an experimental design, found that increasing the number of women in a hypothetical local domestic violence unit increased perceptions of trust, fairness, and job performance of the agency. As they point out, "If legitimacy of a domestic violence unit increases on the basis of its representation of women, then citizens may be more willing to report domestic violence crimes to the police, who will then presumably enforce domestic violence laws. Otherwise unreported crimes would thus more readily come to the attention of the police, who in turn, would be required to take some type of action such

as mandatory arrest, depending upon state and local mandates" (Riccucci, Van Ryzin and Lavena 2014, 548). Importantly, their findings indicate that the symbolic representativeness of the police influences how all citizens, not simply women, view and judge a law enforcement agency.

More recently, Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li (2016), again using an experimental design, found that manipulating just the gender of the first names of public officials in a description of a recycling program increased women's intentions to recycle hard plastics and, importantly, their willingness to do the more arduous task of food composting. Indeed, the symbolic representation effects were largest for this more difficult type of recycling. These results suggest that passive representation increases the willingness of women to coproduce important public services. They note the implication that "[a]s local governments continue to face fiscal stress and struggle to maintain service quality, identifying new ways to foster coproduction is paramount" (see Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016, 121). Their study is also important because the findings apply to a policy domain that is not explicitly gendered, in that recycling is not tied to a women's issue such as domestic violence (also see Atkins and Wilkins 2013; Gade and Wilkins 2013). Taken together, these studies suggest that symbolic representation effects may be widespread across government agencies and public policy areas, although further research is needed to confirm this speculation.

Implications for Practice

Symbolic representativeness is significant for a number of reasons. For one thing, it could be a factor in the coproduction of important policy outcomes in areas such as policing and recycling (see Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016). If women, for example, are more willing to report domestic violence crimes when women are the frontline workers with whom they interact, there is an increased likelihood that these crimes will be reported and potentially resolved. Research indicates that domestic violence and related crimes often go unreported for a variety of reasons, such as fear of being blamed or losing their children and a lack of trust of the formal complaint systems among victims (Kelly 2003). But, as Meier and Nicholson-Crotty found in the context of sexual assault, having more women police officers will increase "the likelihood that a rape victim's first contact with the bureaucracy will be a female officer," and therefore "women may be more likely to report a rape and press charges" (2006, 852). They also state that the "active cooperation of the victim, something that occurs simply because the police officer is female, results in a higher-quality outcome" (858; see also Andrews, Ashworth, and Meier 2014; Andrews and Miller 2013). In effect, the coproduction of important services will also better serve democratic interests.

But it is also important to point out that the effects of the representative bureaucracy dynamic are constrained by the policies with which it interacts. Meier and Nicholson-Crotty (2006) make this important point in the context of sexual assault policies, which, as they note, vary across jurisdictions. Thus, regardless of how aggressively women compared with men pursue perpetrators of

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sexual assault, in the end, a lax policy will hinder efforts to combat sexual assault.²

Importantly, the coproduction of government services can reduce costs and enhance the quality and quantity of those services (Alford 2002). As Clark, Brudney, and Jang point out, in “the current economic climate, it has become more important for local governments to find ways to reduce their budgets yet still deliver the level and quality of services to which residents have become accustomed. One method increasingly employed is coproduction, whereby government engages citizens as partners in service delivery” (2013, 687). In addition, “by supplementing—or perhaps supplanting—the labors of paid public officials with the service-directed activities of urban dwellers, coproduction has the potential to raise both the quality and efficiency of municipal services” (Brudney and England 1983, 59). Thus, to the extent that symbolic representation enhances coproduction, it contributes to the realization of these benefits.

Symbolic representativeness also enhances the legitimacy and accountability of bureaucracy. In the area of policing, this is critical. The problem of police brutality toward African Americans has shattered their trust of police in local communities across the country. Recently, in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; and North Charleston, South Carolina, riots and fervent demonstrations followed the fatal shootings of African Americans as young as 12 years old. It was found that in Ferguson, for example, that there was a severe underrepresentation of African American law enforcement officers. While approximately two-thirds of Ferguson’s residents are African American, only three of the town’s 53 police officers are African American (DOJ and EEOC 2015). In addition, a detailed investigation of the Ferguson police department by the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice revealed a “pattern or practice of unlawful conduct within the Ferguson Police Department that violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and federal statutory law” (DOJ 2014, 1). Ferguson provides a clear case of the detrimental effects of a simultaneous lack of passive representation, active representation, and symbolic representation.

As noted earlier, Hong (forthcoming) found that increasing the proportion of minority members in police forces in England and Wales encourages all officers, both minority and nonminority to engage in more ethical, fairer practices. This, as he points out, resulted in fewer complaints against police departments, thus, promoting “greater bureaucratic accountability within the organization, thereby increasing members’ feeling of responsibility for misconduct and fair treatment of minority citizens.” He goes on to say that “although police accountability is not restricted to managing citizens’ complaints, an effective complaints-management system is key to ensuring policy accountability as well as integrity.”

Thus, one clear way that local law enforcement agencies can rebuild trust in their communities is to promote greater diversity in the rank-and-file of their police departments. Greater representation of

people of color as well as women in the upper ranks may also prove beneficial. To be sure, there are racial imbalances in the broader criminal justice system that also need to be rectified. As suggested by the 2014 Justice Department report, police departments are called on to train their officers to move away from the use of excessive violence to a tactic of restraint.

Importantly, greater diversity also calls for effective management of diversity. As Choi and Rainey (2010) point out, this is critical for the overall performance of public organizations. Leaders and managers in organizations need to emphasize the value of representation and ensure that everyone feels included and valued. They can, in turn, emphasize in various ways the advantages that this culture or climate of inclusion and fairness can carry over into more favorable relations with clients and citizens.

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Symbolic representation may also be a driver of the formation of collaborative partnerships and networks (see Conner 2016; Davis, Livermore, and Lim 2011). Shared identity in terms of race, ethnicity, or gender between public managers and external stakeholders may thus improve service provision. For example, Conner (2016), examining the collaborative behavior of Native American nations and school districts, found that Native American public school officials are more likely to interact positively with Native American nations compared with non-Native American school administrators. He concludes that “having officials who reflect the particular values of those served has important implications for the involvement of potentially underrepresented groups. This involvement is expected to lead to more legitimate and effective policy outcomes” (Conner 2016, 298).

Symbolic representativeness thus may promote collaborative partnerships, as well as the coproduction of services, which, in turn, can lead to cost savings for governments and can also ensure that democracy is guaranteed to all citizens, including the disenfranchised and underprivileged.

Conclusion

Concerns about representative bureaucracy are justified given the important role administrative institutions play not only in the implementation of public policy but in more substantive, political decisions about the distribution of vital public services. As we have shown, moreover, evidence from public administration scholars and others demonstrates the important ways in which the social origins of bureaucrats shape the outcomes experienced by clients and citizens. This happens not only through the channel of administrative discretion, with bureaucrats taking affirmative steps to benefit disadvantaged groups, but also through the channel of symbolic representation, which involves citizens themselves judging administrative agencies as more fair and trustworthy. This enhanced legitimacy, in turn, seems to influence the extent to which clients and citizens cooperate and comply with government, thus coproducing important policy outcomes. Taken together, the growing research in this area suggests that passive representation, through the channels of both active representation and symbolic representation, can shape the efficiency and effectiveness of

government. To be sure, as we have noted, there are complexities in terms of the application of representative bureaucracy. But, as the empirical research has shown, the challenges are not insurmountable.

As discussed here, representative bureaucracy also promotes democratic governance. Selden, Brudney, and Kellough (1998) make this important point. They argue that representative bureaucracy “works to facilitate the consideration of the views of all interested parties in the policy process. In the context of minority representation, this position would mean that efforts are made to ensure that minority interests are not ignored in circumstances where those interests need to be heard and might otherwise be disregarded” (Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998, 739).

From a practitioner’s point of view, these research findings clearly suggest that efforts to enhance the diversity of administrative agencies become important for a variety of reasons. Beyond the basic issues of social equity in hiring and promotion, diversity of the workforce may also influence the capacity of the agency to accomplish its mission by more effectively meeting client needs and by inspiring public trust and cooperation. In the same way that managers expect good results from hiring technically competent employees, they should also view workforce diversity itself as an important asset for their organization’s effectiveness and efficiency.

Additional research on representative bureaucracy, particularly its symbolic effects, is certainly needed. Further research along the lines of Lim’s (2006) and Hong’s (forthcoming) is also important because such studies indicate that greater diversity in the workplace may work to improve the actions and behaviors of all workers, thus enhancing the overall responsibility and accountability of government organizations. This is particularly pressing in police forces, given the challenges they face today. In addition, replication studies would strengthen the evidence from previous findings (e.g., ensure validity and reliability of findings), help advance the theory of representative bureaucracy, and encourage further research in the area. It is critical that the research continues to examine the practical applications of the theory, including the challenges and complexities of creating a more representative bureaucracy.

Notes

1. At the time of the ruling, there were only eight justices sitting on the Court. Justice Antonin Scalia passed away in February 2016; Justice Elena Kagan recused herself from the case because she had been solicitor general when the Department of Justice filed an amicus curiae (friend of the court brief) in *Fisher* when the case was before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. It should also be noted that the Court has long upheld the legality of affirmative action programs under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended in both the public and private sectors (see, e.g., *United Steelworkers of America v. Weber*, 443 U.S. 193 [1979]; *Johnson v. Transportation Agency, Santa Clara County*, 480 U.S. 616 [1987]).

2. The same can be said for educational policies that disadvantage African Americans and Latinos (see, e.g., Meier 1993a; Meier and Stewart 1992; Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard 1999).

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