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“We did it! We Did it, Joe!”

– Vice President Kamala Harris

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Abstract

The motivation for this dissertation stems from the gap in existing representative bureaucracy literature regarding the role of race and racial identity in public administration. While considerable discourse exists on race, representation, and equity, the empirical study of race and identity within this field remains limited. I seek to address this gap by focusing on Black bureaucrats and their experiences, perceptions, and motivations related to identity and representation.

The research investigates the motivations behind Black bureaucrats' behavior and their engagement in representative work, their challenges, and their perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. I aim to better understand how identity influences bureaucratic behavior and representation in public organizations, especially in spaces where the work of these bureaucrats is explicitly racialized through expectations about which clients they will serve, which issues they will focus on, and what types of work will be expected of them.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with Black bureaucrats from federal, state, and local levels across various U.S. regions. Additionally, a survey was administered through Prolific and the National Forum of Black Public Administrators, gathering responses from 110 participants.

The first empirical chapter examines the variation in motivation among Black bureaucrats to engage in representative work. It found that this motivation varies significantly and is influenced by factors such as ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, and identity salience. For instance, first—or second-generation immigrants and individuals with a strong sense of racial identity are more likely to engage in representative work.

The second empirical chapter explores the concept of coercive representation, where bureaucrats feel pressured to represent their racial group due to organizational expectations. Survey

data revealed that those who are highly motivated to engage in representation are less likely to feel coerced. Conversely, those with a strong ethnic identity or who perceive their organization as highly committed to DEI initiatives are more likely to experience coercive representation.

The third empirical chapter investigates Black bureaucrats' perceptions of DEI initiatives. The findings indicate that while these initiatives are generally viewed positively, there is skepticism about their benefits for Black employees and clients. Participants from the National Forum of Black Public Administrators were particularly critical, feeling that DEI efforts often benefit the organization more than the intended beneficiaries.

This dissertation underscores the importance of considering identity in the study of public administration. It highlights Black bureaucrats' diverse experiences and motivations, the pressures they face, and their nuanced views on DEI initiatives. The research suggests that organizations should create environments where individuals can engage in representative work meaningfully and authentically without feeling coerced. Further, it advocates for continued efforts to incorporate identity into public administration research and practice to support marginalized groups within the bureaucracy better.

Chapter One: Introduction

Bureaucratic behavior is an essential phenomenon that public administration scholars have studied since the beginning of the field itself. Since the mid-20th century, scholars have contributed to our current knowledge of how bureaucrats can promote or inhibit social equity for their clients (Ricucci and Van Ryzin 2017; Rivera and Knox 2022). Drawing on representation and street-level bureaucracy frameworks, this literature shows that a bureaucrat's identity matters to clients, client outcomes, and organizations more broadly (Keiser et al. 2002; Chanin and Mendoza 2020; Rutherford and Mee 2022). The premise of this line of research is that representation is an essential ingredient of fair and equal governance.

Despite a large body of work on representation, we know relatively little about bureaucrats' attitudes toward representation, how bureaucrats understand the nature and function of representation, and whether engaging in identity-based representative work affects bureaucrats professionally and personally. Existing research often focuses on clients' well-being without similar regard to the bureaucrats doing the work. Studies have examined how bureaucratic behavior impacts clients. However, most studies have left underexamined the organizational, client, public, and community pressures bureaucrats face -- particularly pressures bureaucrats face from members of a valued ingroup.

At times, the conclusions of the representative bureaucracy literature suggest that public organizations can mitigate their equity issues by hiring or promoting minority-identifying bureaucrats, often Black bureaucrats. This is because organizations depend largely on their employees to promote equity and inclusion for clients and other employees (McCandless et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2023). Organizations are prone to viewing a diverse workforce as an objective metric for an organization having reached egalitarian goals. Nevertheless, there has been little to no

investigation into whether individual bureaucrats in fact perform meaningful representative work. (But see Hupe and Hill, 2007; Watkins-Hayes, 2009). This omission in the literature is potentially problematic, as there are various reasons for underrepresented group members to avoid performing meaningful representative work in their jobs. First and foremost, doing so places a heavy burden upon individuals who have experienced systematic injustices in these communities and racial biases in public organizations. The notion that increasing the proportion of underrepresented bureaucrats in any one organization will automatically result in organizational capacity to represent underrepresented clients, therefore, remains unclear, absent a clear test of underrepresented bureaucrats' individual-level behaviors. Previous work has identified the issues with this assumption, notably Domonic Bearfield's work on the "magical negro" or a "raised fist syndrome" (Bearfield, 2008) and Nicole Humphrey's work on racialized emotional labor (2021).

These studies shed light on the need for a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to achieving equity within public organizations. Crucially, this scholarship reveals the need to address inequities through strategies beyond recruiting and promoting minority personnel. Although hiring and supporting bureaucrats of color is clearly an essential consideration in discussions of equity, the overwhelming focus on this one mechanism can create a path dependence whereby organizations think they can fix inequity by solely hiring members of marginalized groups. For social equity and inclusion to continue to be a reachable goal, practitioners and public administration scholars need to better understand bureaucrats' behavior at the individual and group levels. Crucially, to achieve social equity, researchers need to examine the bureaucrats who are engaging in this representative work.

However, few representative bureaucracy studies focus on the bureaucrat's identity, intersectionality, and attitudes about representation (Meier and Morton, 2015; Baumgartner

et al., 2021; Fay et al., 2021; Nagel and Peters, 2021). The dearth of studies on this important topic presents an opportunity to expand upon existing identity and public sector research. My dissertation does so by exploring Black identity in the context of public sector bureaucracies. Central to my study are bureaucrat's attitudes about representation at the individual, group, and organizational levels. In particular, my dissertation asks first, what explains bureaucrats' preferences toward performing representative work, second, how does the organization impact their representation attitudes, and finally, what explains Black bureaucrats' attitudes about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (D.E.I.) initiatives? While some studies focus on Black bureaucrats and identity crafting in the public sector (Wilkins and Williams, 2008; Grissom et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2023), the organizational impacts of effective representation (Romzek and Hendricks, 1982; Brudney et al., 2000; Selden et al., 2016), and the effects of critical mass (Andrews et al., 2014; Meier and Xu, 2023; Li, 2024), few representative bureaucracy studies have provided an in-depth investigation of the role of all three on representation (Webeck and Lee, 2022). Even fewer have talked to Black bureaucrats about what it is like to be Black in the public sector (James, 2018; Cook, 2019), which is the current missing ingredient to developing an adequate understanding of how organizations can work toward achieving meaningful social equity within their ranks.

Our assumptions about the behavior of bureaucrats of color guide how we understand bureaucratic representation (Meier and Stewart 1992; Nicholson Crotty and Fernandez 2017; Ward and Menifield 2017). Based on previous scholarship, we know there are varying degrees of effective representation. Effective representation can vary based on location, community, critical mass, and organizational resources (see first empirical chapter literature review). This literature is helpful in explaining how different contextual- or macro-level variables result in different representation outcomes. However, existing research must focus on individual-level variation in the desire or perceived need to do representative work to understand why some bureaucrats engage in

representative work – and why others do not. Failure to examine individual-level relationships leaves the scholarship vulnerable to false conclusions about the power of the organizational context to solely guide representation outcomes without regard for the power of individuals working within organizations to shape representation outcomes.

It further entrenches a possibly false assumption guiding the macro-level analyses of organizational representation outcomes, which assumes that underrepresented group members act uniformly in their willingness and enthusiasm to perform representative work. Why do we assume that public employees want to do this work? Or why do we primarily extend representation to clients and not to coworkers, as in advocating for resources or opportunities for co-ethnic coworkers (which is different from symbolic representation)? Studies outside of public administration have discussed Black teachers' burnout (Campoli 2017; Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond 2017; Frank et al. 2021). Recent scholarship on gendered representative bureaucracy has shown that identity-based representation can burden the individual (Johnston and Yarrow, 2022). Understanding bureaucrat's attitudes on representation pushes us further in understanding bureaucratic behavior.

To better understand representation, we need to understand the representatives better. To move the literature forward, we need to know more about what it means to be a Black bureaucrat and what it means to be a Black bureaucrat that represents not just Black clients but all clients. I conducted a series of interviews with Black Bureaucrats to understand these phenomena. I also generated and fielded an original, comprehensive national survey of Black bureaucrats to examine Black representation in the public sector. To my knowledge, my original national-level survey is the first-ever large national survey of Black bureaucrats. The survey was administered through a well-regarded survey firm, Prolific, and complemented with a sample of respondents from the National Forum of Black

Public Administrators. For the Prolific portion of the survey sample, would-be respondents were identified via an online screener that asked a larger sample of Americans about their employment categorization and race. Only those who responded that they worked within a bureaucratic organization and identified as racially Black were included. There was no specific agency or job title to be considered in this project; the only work requirement was the sector in which they had to work in the public sector. After a sample of Black bureaucrats was identified (N=138), respondents were asked to take a brief survey questionnaire.

The questionnaire asks a series of questions on racial identity, motivation, mentoring, and lived experiences. The survey was constructed to have participants think about their views in pro-Black and anti-Black stances and rank each statement. For example, I asked respondents to “Please indicate the extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.” An example of the questions include, “All Black employees in public organizations should view representing or advocating for the Black community to be a top priority throughout their daily work” and “Some Black employees in government agencies dedicate too much of their time and energy advocating for the Black community and not enough time doing their core function of their job. The questionnaire also included open-ended questionnaire items to allow for a more in-depth test of my conceptual argument. The survey was fielded from October to May 2024.

This dissertation provides a theoretical framework and foundation for understanding Black bureaucratic behavior and attitudes about representation work. It further examines factors that explain the variation in the desire to represent and the lived experiences that influence a bureaucrat’s view towards representation and D.E.I initiatives. Work has been done on implementing the lived experiences of healthcare employees into programming for patients (Merritt et al., 2020), and social workers incorporate their lived experiences when motivating a client (Watkins-Hayes, 2011)—all of which have shown positive outcomes for clients. Nevertheless, some studies show adverse outcomes

of representation, particularly when it comes to Black police officers and arrest rates of Black citizens (Shjarback et al., 2017; Headley and Wright, 2020) and community bias influencing representation from Black teachers (Park and Favero, 2023).

Following the introductory chapter that discusses the theme and overview of the dissertation, chapter 2 initiates the first of three empirical chapters, which are produced as three articles. Chapter 2 examines Black bureaucrats' attitudes about representation. In this chapter, I focus on the salience of their racial identity and whether Black bureaucrats who view their racial identity as more salient express a stronger desire to represent their community (e.g., Black clients and Black people in general) relative to Black bureaucrats who rank low in racial identity salience. What explains Black bureaucrats' willingness and motivation to perform representation work? To answer this question, I look at how Black people's lived experiences may explain Black bureaucrats' preferences to perform representative work and what types of representation tasks they perceive as their job. Black bureaucrats come from a multitude of backgrounds and often have varying experiences with discrimination, which impacts how they view the world and others. These experiences diverge based on the organization, group dynamics, personal views, identity, and preferences. The same experiences also contribute to the motivation to work in the public sector and do representative work. This study was conducted to capture the experiences of all types of Black bureaucrats across titles, agencies, and government levels. Little attention has been given to understanding bureaucrats on the individual level. There are reasonable expectations and theoretical insights as to why bureaucrats will vary in their desire to perform this work.

Chapter 3 enters the discussion on organizational support for representation. This chapter goes beyond whether the organization has resources to support representation by asking whether an organization's managers, coworkers, etc, support representation

holistically. Do organizations allow Black bureaucrats to have agency in how they show up for a client or advocate for a cause that supports the Black public? Are organizational support systems more than just the Black body in the room? My argument for this chapter directly confronts the hidden assumption many organizations (and theory) employ, which is to hire representatives that mirror the population without considering whether or not they are in the job to do representation work. This chapter isn't advocating not hiring Black people or other people of color, but rather, it is advocating for more critical thinking on what organizational diversity is or should be. Organizations need procedures and processes that will encourage everyone who works there to do representation work on behalf of our most vulnerable group populations and not rely on BIPOC (but, more realistically, rely on Black people) for these actions. And there needs to be more trust in bureaucrats to make decisions. Representation work goes beyond pushing for better policies. It requires bureaucrats to use their discretion to achieve equitable outcomes for their clients (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Marvel and Resh 2015). I address these questions using my national-level survey data on Black bureaucrats.

Chapter 4 focuses on Black bureaucrats' attitudes about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. My motivation for this chapter is the lack of equity for Black public service employees. I find that most Black bureaucrats have positive attitudes towards DEI initiatives but believe that most of these initiatives benefit the organization more than the people the initiatives seek to benefit. The findings suggest that public organizations should critically assess and refine their DEI initiatives to ensure they genuinely benefit the individuals they are intended to support. The findings contribute to our understanding of how the DEI initiative impacts the organization on a macro, meso, and micro level.

I conclude by discussing my findings on Black bureaucratic representation and what they mean for future work on representation.

Chapter 2: Understanding Active Representation through the Attitudes and Experiences of Black Bureaucrats.

As a Black woman, I don't see representation as my duty; I only get involved when I need to, when I see people getting discriminated against, but other than that, I keep quiet. -Anonymous Participant

Representative bureaucracy research offers ample debate about the actions of bureaucrats of color and what they should do to help advance equity for the marginalized populace. However, there is a notable disconnect in the literature between identity and representation, particularly regarding how Black public employees perceive the role of their identity and their role in their jobs. Representation can have consequences for those individuals who are involved in pushing for more progressive policies or changes in the organizational culture. The risks associated with representation for bureaucrats, or in this case, Black bureaucrats, aren't often discussed (Meier, 2019; Gilad and Dahan, 2021; Webeck and Lee, 2022). Scholarship on representative bureaucracy should focus their lines of inquiry upon active representation, which centers the choices made by bureaucrats and the circumstances under which bureaucrats feel compelled to engage in representation work.

Representation is not a new idea; it has been a principal idea since the founding of the United States and is linked to a just democracy (Pitkin, 1967). Early thinkers theorized that democratic societies function better if the populace is well-represented and power is less concentrated in the hands of the few. The idea of representation applied mainly to elected government officials representing the public interest (e.g., the masses). However, as time has moved on, representation in the government has not been solely about elected officials and their actions in the policy arena; it has expanded to non-elected officials in the bureaucracy who also have pivotal roles in policymaking, administration, and implementation. Contemporary scholars emphasize that officials in the bureaucracy are highly influential in

policymaking and should be held accountable to the public they serve. Bureaucrats have just as much influence as the legislature in allocating resources and can often contribute to inequities in marginalized communities (Ricucci and Saidel, 1997; Liang et al., 2020). Altogether, these considerations contributed to the development of the theory of representative bureaucracy.

Representative bureaucracy scholars suggest that a diverse and inclusive government, reflective of the broader population it serves, can lead to improved governance, greater equity, and more effective public policies due to the amount of decision-making power bureaucrats have (Meier & Stewart, 1992; Nicholson Crotty & Fernandez, 2017; Ward & Menifeld, 2017). This framework is based on various assumptions about how passive and active representation likely operate for marginalized group members within bureaucracies. The theory fundamentally relies on the notion that active representation, which entails bureaucrats actively pushing for policies that will vantage their social group, will and should occur if there is passive representation, which is achieved when the demographics of a public organization match the public's actual demographics. The assumption the representative bureaucracy literature, therefore, makes is that bureaucrats with marginalized identities will be more effective in making decisions to support clients with shared marginalized identities because marginalized group members can draw on similar life experiences and socialization. Over the years, this concept has generated significant scholarly interest and has been a dominant theme in public administration.

Scholars have begun delving deeper into concepts related to active representation, raising new questions about how bureaucrats with marginalized identities experience their work environment, especially as it relates to the communities they serve. Very few representative bureaucracy studies have attempted to measure bureaucrats' beliefs and lived experiences, although both are assumed to be mechanisms for representation (Merritt et al.; Favero, 2023). The emerging research has left the theory with many critiques of its mechanisms for which we would see

substantive active representation. For example, even as an equity-focused literature, much of the representative bureaucracy scholarship unintentionally centers on whiteness and masculinity as the baseline (Portillo et al., 2022), limiting the focus on differences within marginalized communities and glossing over the burdens marginalized communities face when working for the government (McCandless and Blessett, 2021).

Other scholars have raised similar issues, such as a lack of documentation of differences within intra-racial groups, leading groups to be treated as a monolith, particularly the Black bureaucratic community (Capers and Smith, 2021). Treating Black bureaucrats as a monolith has led to the belief that they can fix any equity issue and be a champion for all without understanding racial and ethnic diversity, and their lived experiences can lead us to not move beyond our current understanding (Bearfield, 2008). Few empirical studies have focused on the diversity within the Black community in a way that would advance our understanding of who engages in active representation and who is likely to be effective in these efforts. Scholars often discuss the actions of bureaucrats of color and what they should be doing, but the disconnect between identity and representation in the literature is glaring.

Given the rich diversity of the Black community (not just in ethnicity, but in personal and political beliefs), it is reasonable for us to expect meaningfully different attitudes on representation and prioritization of needs; how can we be sure that we can rectify those inequities if the government hires people who do not believe in inequities set forth by racist laws? We can no longer assume that bureaucrats will be positively inclined to actively represent their in-group members based on their racial identity (Headley, 2022). It is important to note that hiring and supporting bureaucrats of color is essential in discussions of equity. This isn't advocating not hiring Black people or people of color in general. Still, rather, it is advocating for the understanding of how one views representation and how one's

identity influences that view. Understanding this aspect can further help us understand how we burden Black bureaucrats before they all get burnt out and stop being able to do the representation work that is vital to organizational success. However, the disproportionate focus on organizational mechanisms in the literature raises further questions about what else likely explains representation outcomes in the bureaucracy – such as the behavior of bureaucrats and the intersectionality of personal and professional identities.

Intersectionality has been discussed as a valuable factor in representation. While we can consider intersectionality with the variation of representation, the desire to represent is more than just discussing intersectionality and how a specific identity profile makes a person want to perform representation. Human behavior and its effects on representation are about more than the context in which a person exists. They are about that person's attitude towards representation, which could be influenced by intersectionality or their intersections of identities. Andrea Headley, in her 2022 article, “Representing Personal and Professional Identities in Policing: Sources of Strength and Conflict,” has documented the hesitation with which cops holding marginalized identities can become hesitant to represent their community because of their job role. Could it be possible that Black bureaucrats are not looking to engage in active representation? What if Black bureaucrats see representation differently than the mainstream? What if existing in the bureaucracy while Black is not enough?

To understand these questions, there is a need to dig deeper into the behavior and identity of bureaucrats, particularly Black bureaucrats. Representative bureaucracy literature has spent decades understanding Black bureaucrats' impact on clients in relation to social work, healthcare, education, and policing (Andrews and Miller, 2013; Hong, 2017; Agyapong, 2018; Wright, 2022; Meier and McCrea, 2022). The conclusions of this literature largely attribute clients' positive and negative outcomes to bureaucrats' behavior – or, more accurately, what is assumed to be their behavior. However, having based our models on *assumed* behaviors, the research is incredibly limited in its

comprehension of their *actual* self-identified behaviors or attitudes. The Black diaspora is highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, political beliefs, and socioeconomic class (Smith, 2014), which can influence their perception of the world and shape their identities in equally diverse ways. As stated, as a concern earlier, treating Black bureaucrats as a monolith can hinder our understanding of representation even further.

In this article, I leverage an original data collection, multi-method study to ask a fundamental question: To what extent do Black bureaucrats vary in their attitudes about engaging in active representation? To answer this question, I will first discuss the representative bureaucracy literature and how it supports examining Black attitudes about representation despite having not yet addressed it directly. Expanding upon this groundwork, I discuss the concept of linked fate, delving deeper into the complex layers of Black representation. This study analyzes the relationship between the motivation for active representation among Black bureaucrats and the influence of linked fate. The article sheds light on these dimensions, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities of Black representation within the public sector.

I find strong support for the motivation to engage in racialized work as something distinct from similar concepts like linked fate or public service motivation. I find equally strong support for the proposition that there is meaningful variation among Black bureaucrats in their interest in engaging in representative work and that much of the variation can be explained by factors like ethnicity, government level, and identity salience.

Literature Review

Black Bureaucrats and Representative Bureaucracy:

The discourse within the representative bureaucracy literature is relevant to understanding the dynamics of equity and representation within public administration. It primarily focuses on how minority bureaucratic representation contributes to equity outcomes for their clients. The literature has consistently emphasized the need for bureaucratic diversity regarding gender, race, socio-economic, and veteran status. Previous scholarship has highlighted that the behavior of these bureaucrats (in particular those who have a marginalized status) can be associated with positive outcomes for organizations in shaping organizational responsiveness and equity (Meier, 1993; Riccucci & Van Ryzin, 2017; Rivera & Knox, 2022; Chanin & Mendoza, 2020; Rutherford & Mee, 2022). Our assumptions about the behavior of bureaucrats of color have often been how we understand bureaucratic representation. Scholars posit that there are three types of representation: passive (Selden, 1997), active (Hindera, 1993; Bradbury & Kellough, 2008; Bishu & Kennedy, 2020), and symbolic (Riccucci et al., 2015; Headley et al., 2021; Wright, 2021; Hawes, 2022). One of the goals of having passive representation is for the passive to become active representation.

Active representation has shown that bureaucrats of marginalized identities will push for policies that benefit their in-group (Meier and Nigro, 1976; Lim, 2006). For instance, scholarship on representation and education has been equated to better student performance (Pitts, 2007). Black faculty has been shown to impact Black students through mentorship positively (Guiffrida, 2005; Davis and Allen, 2020; Griffin, 2012), leading to better achievement scores (Easton-Brooks et al., 2010; Roch & Pitts, 2012; Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019), higher recommendations for gifted programs (Meier & Stewart, 1992; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2016), and rigorous math classes (Klopfenstein, 2005) and overall better institutional experience for students (Rocha & Hawes, 2009; Roch et al., 2010). Black faculty and teachers are crucial to the achievement and development of Black students, yet some scholarship suggests that representation can come at a cost for Black educators.

Black educators¹ are outnumbered in education and often work in spaces where their peers are majority-white—even in Black school districts (NCES, 2020). They often face instances of racism (overt and covert) in which they have to defend themselves or their students (Legette et al., 2023). Scholars show that the abundance of racism educators face and then having to defend and educate their peers constantly leads to “racial battle fatigue” (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018), which in turn leads to burnout. Black educators who often face systemic bias and racism from peers, students, and their school administration are more likely to leave than their white counterparts (Farinde-Wu et al., 2020; Grooms et al., 2021; Hall & Miller, 2022). Research shows they are often devalued and discredited (Young & Easton-Brooks, 2020) and “pigeonholed into specific roles (Hasberry, 2013). Black teachers have burnout due to being expected to take responsibility for disciplining Black students (Campoli, 2017; Frank et al., 2021). New scholarship on gendered representative bureaucracy has shown that identity-based representation can tax the individual (Johnston & Yarrow, 2022). While educators are not the sole focus of my research, they are a large part of the representative bureaucracy literature, and it is essential to highlight the issues they may face in the workforce, especially given the attention educators in K-12 and higher education have received in recent years.

At its core, the theory of representative bureaucracy is about bureaucratic discretion. It suggests a connection between bureaucrats’ demographic characteristics (such as race, ethnicity, and sex) and their behavior, particularly in how they exercise their discretion in decision-making processes (Selden & Sowa, 2003). However, there have been instances where bureaucrats have not used their discretion to benefit the client. In particular, we see

¹ I use this term instead of faculty/teacher due to the research in this section being a mix of both Higher Education and K-12 educators.

this with law enforcement (Wilkins & Williams, 2008; 2009). Based on previous scholarship, we know there are varying degrees of effective representation. Effective representation can vary based on community (Park & Favero, 2023), critical mass (Meier & Xu, 2023; Andrews et al., 2014), resources (McCrea, 2021), and identity salience (Keiser et al., 2002).

Prior research consistently acknowledges the significance of identities and intersectionality within individuals. However, only recently have scholars in this domain actively pursued a deeper understanding of representation, identity, and intersectionality (Baumgartner et al., 2021; Fay et al., 2021; Keiser & Haider-Markel, 2022). By highlighting the importance of considering intersectionality, scholarly work illuminates how the fusion of various individual identities—such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status—shapes the experiences of public employees (Breslin et al., 2017; Blessett, 2018; Blessett, 2023). While studies acknowledge the impact of identity salience on representation outcomes (Grissom et al., 2009), the assessment of identity salience remains unexplored mainly, often constrained by the use of secondary data (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020). This constraint has caused some of the significant gaps in the literature.

More recent scholarship has shifted the focus to the direct attitudes of bureaucrats and representation. Favero (2023) captured bureaucrats' attitudes about politics and the representation of minoritized student interests by using Texas school data. Favero finds that there is a connection between the attitudes of bureaucrats and policy outcomes. Watkins-Hayes (2019) examined the attitudes of representation through interviews with Black and Latino welfare clients and Black and Latino social workers. She finds that clients of social workers often do not care about the race of their social worker but sometimes will attribute an experience to their race. She also finds that Black social workers do not take the identity of their clients into account unless they need to use it to boost their confidence. They use their lived experiences to connect with their clients (pg). In 2008,

Bradbury and Kellough found that African American citizens and administrators support government endeavors that specifically support the interests of the African American community.

The conclusions of the representative bureaucracy literature signal a strong need for a deeper dive into the attitudes of Black bureaucrats and their perception of being an active representative for Black clients. By focusing on the bureaucrats, we can better understand when and where we will see substantive representation and the effects of doing active representation work on the bureaucrat.

Given that much of the Black workforce in government is rarely in positions that hold substantive decision-making power, many Black bureaucrats, particularly those in conservative states or white-dominant organizations, face constraints that would inhibit them from being active in representation. There is also a risk for them to experience racial battle fatigue, and we could start to see more of a decline in the retention of Black educators and representation in K-12 and Higher Education institutions. These well-known issues facing Black people in America, and Black bureaucrats in particular as evidenced by the scholarship in public administration, lead me to believe there is variation in the motivation to do representative work among Black bureaucrats.

H1: Based on the variation of adequate representation in the representative bureaucracy literature, I hypothesize Black bureaucrats' motives to perform representation work vary.

While political and organizational constraints are essential considerations in measuring substantive representation, it is also important to consider the individual beliefs and the role their identity plays in their beliefs. Black identity is not simple; identities are multi-faceted and exploring identity scholarship uncovers how individuals are continuously navigating and prioritizing their identities based on context, thus revealing that identity is situational in addition to complex (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Watkins-Hayes, 2019). The

politicization of racial identity has led to a complex formation of one's personal identification with one's racial group. Black linked-fate scholarship has shown a shift in Black consciousness regarding political action and the prioritization of Black interests, particularly regarding secondary marginalization (Bunyasi & Smith, 2019). According to Pew Research, 59% of Black Republicans believe that individual people, rather than racist laws, commit racism and are least likely to support institutional change (2022)². While Black Republicans only account for four percent of Black voters, central to the mission of having a representative and equitable government—bureaucracy or legislature—is rectifying historical inequities stemming from past legislation and regulations (Gooden, 2015). The Black linked-fate and group consciousness literature can offer a way to understand when we may see substantive representation.

Identity Saliency

Since its inception in 1790, the U.S. census has counted the population by race/color. The social construct of race has always been an issue in the United States; not only does it make diverse groups seem to be a monolith, but it confuses people who may not see themselves fit into a singular racial category. Identity is intricate and fluid for many individuals. It becomes more critical as the world becomes more diverse, particularly in the United States. Identities change over time, from political to social and even ethnic. Black Americans make up 14% of the population in the United States (Pew Research, 2022), and 20% are either immigrants or born to immigrant parents. Being a native-born Black American versus being a Black immigrant comes with different experiences that influence how people view their identity.

Historically, in the U.S., race is often linked to skin color and physical features. Racial identity plays a significant role in many people's lives in the United States. The government's role in the

² In contrast to 41% of Black Democrats polled.

construction of racial group identities has further helped make the Census inseparable from state policies that give different groups various privileges and rights. Race and ethnicity often signal differences among individuals (Leeman, 2004). It can influence how they live, where they work, and whom they associate themselves with (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Thus, many minoritized racial groups align more with their ethnic group than their structured race. This has been shown throughout current research on Black and Middle Eastern immigrants and how they may use their ethnicity as leverage in society (Waters, 1999; Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Adida & Robinson, 2018; Davenport, 2019). By using their ethnic group or by passing as another race, it can be used as a means for survival or leverage to evade discrimination and other stigmas that have been put on their race or the racial category they are categorized (Waters, 1999; Haney & Lopez, 2006; Austin *et al.*, 2012) and thus, they may enjoy a higher status.

Having a higher status means having more power and access to different products/goods (Posner, 2004; Kasara, 2007). The social environment often determines how much people care about identifying with their group, with many identities being sensitive to group status and perceived similarity (Shambanis & Shayo, 2013; Tajfel, 1970). In ethnocentric societies, even when a part of the in-group, it can have its share of problems. To help combat this discrimination, there must be a form of contact between the groups. Social contact yields positive outcomes between individuals who form friendships with others in the outgroup (Bracic, 2018).

In some situations, however, contact can yield negative results (Scacco & Warren, 2018), such as when introducing contact in highly segregated societies (Stephan, 1978). There are times when individuals who are a part of the immigrant community want to keep their immigrant status known. While there has been plenty of research on 'like' groups

banding together to have a sense of group consciousness (Kerevel, 2011; Okongwu *et al.*, 2013; Sanchez & Vargas, 2016; Vega & Ortiz, 2018) and to have more political influence in the United States; other research has shown that many groups do not wish to integrate with their host communities outside of political situations and even then, there is often a split between groups (Jo, 1992; Waters, 1999; Chako, 2003; Habecker, 2011; Adida & Robinson, 2018). This is particularly true among nonwhite immigrants who are posed with a choice to adapt their host country's national identity (Manning & Roy, 2010).

Social contact theory has raised issues and solutions regarding how individuals interact with both those in the host community and other immigrant communities. The most effective results stem from having an equal group status, shared common goals, cooperation, and the support of authorities and individuals from the majority community (Allport, 1954). Social contact is important for individuals in eradicating racism and discrimination against minority groups (Bracic, 2018; Scacco & Warren, 2018).

Social identity theories, explained by Henri Tajfel, John C. Turner, Sonia Roccas, and Marilynn B. Brewer, indicate that social identities are complex. Social identities can be very salient, so much so that out-group members are often discriminated against by the in-group, and it becomes accepted (Monroe *et al.*, 2000). When individuals leave their in-group (often of lower status) to achieve a higher status, this shows a 'disidentification' with the in-group but often does not change their group status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Since immigrants (mainly those from ethnically diverse countries with strong cleavages) are no longer among the same social structures, they may find that carrying a strong ethnic identity is no longer needed and choose not to identify heavily with their ethnicity or leave their group altogether.

Immigrant visibility theory states that to be more visible to others in their host community, their ethnic identity becomes more salient, and they are least likely to take on their host country's

national identity (Adida & Robinson, 2018). As stated before, because race and ethnic identity are used interchangeably, diversity amongst marginalized groups is often overshadowed. Immigrants from low-status groups, who would typically integrate with the most similar host community (i.e., Liberians with African Americans), would want to distance themselves from the African American community and keep their identity as being Liberian.

Racial fluidity and ethnicity are essential when discussing privileges and rights that groups or individuals attain by being members of the dominant group (Myrdal, 1944; Keith & Herring, 1991; Davenport, 2019). Because of this history, Black immigrant experiences may differ from those of native-born Black Americans (even if they share a history of colonization and slavery). This leads to a concept coined by Michael Dawson known as linked fate. Linked fate has been pivotal in understanding African American political behavior and social identity. Linked fate refers to the notion that individual life chances are inextricably tied to the collective well-being of the Black community (1994).

Given the importance of linked fate, identity salience, and the unique experiences of Black individuals, if we are to fully understand representation within the bureaucracy, it is crucial to explore how these factors influence Black bureaucrats' professional motivations and behaviors. It is for this reason that this study examines Black bureaucrats' motivation to engage in representative work. The following hypotheses are proposed to guide this investigation:

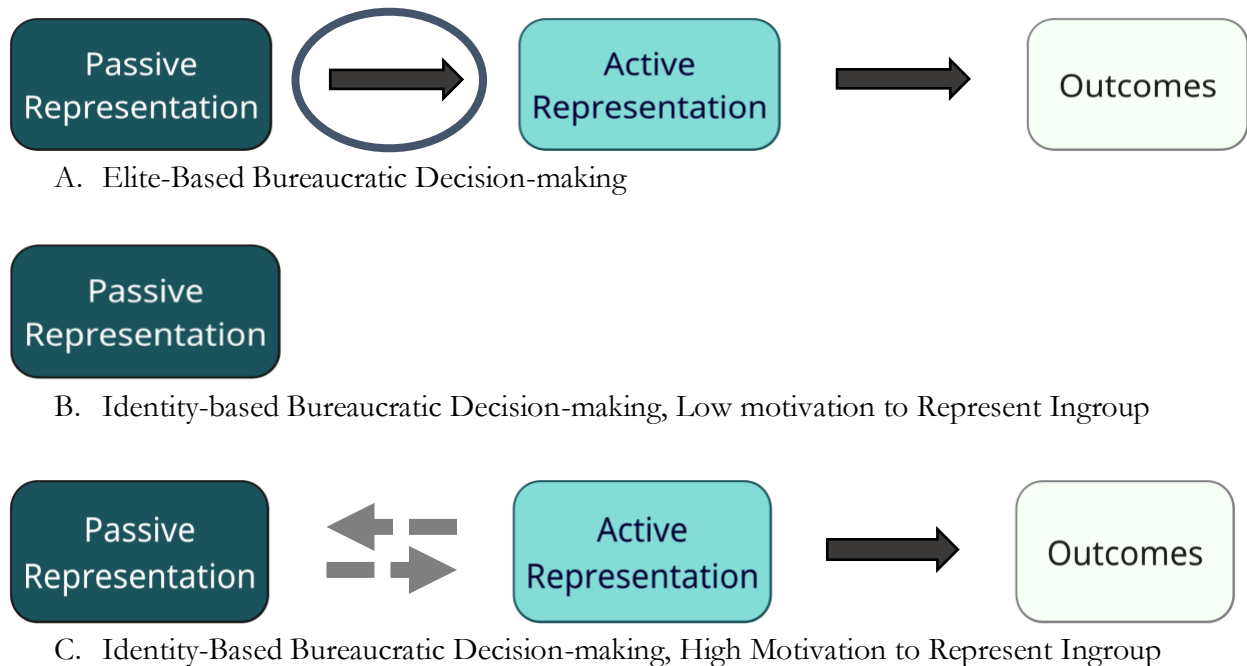
Hypotheses:

- H2: Motivation to engage in representative work will be influenced by an individual's background/demographics.

Background characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, immigration status, income, and education are important in shaping one's experiences in the world and how an individual views themselves.

- H3: Black bureaucrats with a strong sense of linked fate will be more motivated to engage in representative work.
- H4: Black bureaucrats who consider their racial identity to be more salient to their sense of self will be more motivated to engage in representative work.

Figure 1: Argument/Theoretical Development



My study is looking to understand what contributes to engaging in active representation. Specifically, what kind of person is motivated to engage in representation, what causes people to stay in the passive role, and what causes people to go into the active role but retreat back into a passive

role? Figure 1 (A-C) highlights the different scenarios one may see if they observe individuals in their roles.

Figure 1 shows our current assumptions about representation. We, scholars, assume that passive representation will turn into active representation based on different factors. Active representation is then supposed to bring benefits to groups that are represented. Another assumption for Figure 1 that is often left unexamined is that some individuals may not view representation as related to equitable outcomes for client or citizen beneficiaries. Individuals may have more of a focus on changing who receives beneficial outcomes within the organization, which may directly (or indirectly) bring benefits for clients.

Figure 2 can be one of two scenarios. The first scenario is individuals who do not want to actively represent but will contribute to the organization's diversity. The second scenario is individuals who do not seek to actively represent their group, e.g., in this case, Black clients, but purely wish to represent their organization's interests and do not seek out identity-based roles. Lastly, and perhaps the most interesting, is Figure 3. These are individuals who move into an active role, and something happens that forces them to move back into a passive role. People go back and forth depending on the situation, and there are those who are starting to get burnt out. Themes that popped up in relation to this scenario were risks and lack of support.

Multiple scenarios can be at play. According to my qualitative data, in one scenario, there is a Black woman who has worked for over 20 years in an agency in the Deep South. She did not want to actively engage in representation, nor did she feel it was her job to do so. Others come into work wanting to represent and having goals related to representation, while others are fine not doing it.

This leads me to my research questions. To what extent do Black bureaucrats vary in their motivation to engage in representative work, and what explains variation in motivation to engage in representation? I want to uncover what explains Black bureaucrats who exhibit high levels of motivation.

Research Design and Methods:

My study employs a mixed-methods design, utilizing a comprehensive cross-sectional survey to collect both quantitative and qualitative responses and interviews to capture the variation in the motivation to do active representation. Cross-sectional surveys allow for data collection at a single point in time, offering a snapshot of the population's characteristics and behaviors. The survey was distributed through Prolific, an online survey platform. Qualitative interviews were collected through snowball sampling and LinkedIn. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary; respondents were paid \$4.00-\$6.00 (based on survey completion time) for the survey, with an average completion time of 20 minutes. Survey participants were vetted through a pilot survey fielded through Prolific, which asked a series of screening questions to ensure respondents met the participation qualifications. Participants had to identify as Black and work for the government in a non-elected position to be included in the final survey sample. The average interview lasted 40 minutes. No monetary award or incentives for participation.

Survey Participants Demographics

The analysis is based on 77 (initially 80) respondents who work in the government (46 females (57.5%) and 34 males (42.5%). The breakdown of the respondents' age range is as follows: 18–29 (19; 23.75%), 30–39 (27; 33.75%), 40–49 (21; 26.25%), 50–59 (12; 15%), 60–69 (1; 1.25%). 25 (31.25%) were counted as being full-time or part-time students, 33 (41.25%) were not students, and 24 (30%) were missing data. All levels of government are represented, with 15 respondents indicating that they work for the federal government (17.65%); 37 work for the state (43.53%); 11

are employed at the county/parish level (12.94%), while 22 are at the city/local level (25.88%). Many of the respondents have substantial tenure in the government. Fourteen respondents have more than 20 years of experience in the government (16.47%), 23 have between 10-20 years of experience (27.05%), while 20 have 5-10 years (20.53%), 10 have 3-5 years (11.76%), and 17 have 1-3 years of experience in the government (20%). Four of the respondents have less than one year in the government (4.70%). All respondents are based in the United States.

Participants' Race and Ethnicity

All respondents self-identified as Black through Prolific. Once screened through Prolific, my survey asked them more detailed questions about their racial and ethnic identities. Survey participants were asked the following questions about their race and ethnic background: 1. What do you consider your race? 2. What do you consider to be your primary ethnicity or family ancestry (i.e., ethnicity describes their feeling of belonging and attachment to a distinct group of a larger population that shares their ancestry, color, language, or religion)? 3. Immigration status: What generation are you? Respondents were able to mark all that apply in the applicable areas.

Quantitative Methodology

Black Bureaucrats' Attitudes about Active Representation Survey

The survey was piloted twice through Prolific drawing the responses of 20 respondents. Revisions were able to be made based on any notable and/or unforeseen issues with the piloted responses. A comprehensive survey using Qualtrics featured 63 questions, including eight matrices with a range of statements. The survey was organized by individual-level motivation for representation, organizational and colleague motivation and support for representation, lived experiences, and influence of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Questionnaire item response options included a diverse range of scales related to frequency (never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, or always), Likert-scale agreement (*strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree agree, or strongly agree*), comfortability (*extremely uncomfortable, somewhat uncomfortable, neither comfortable nor uncomfortable, somewhat comfortable, or extremely comfortable*), and performance evaluations (*not well at all, slightly well, moderately well, very well, extremely well or unsure*). While scales offered diverse attitudinal types, all response item sets were on the same scale of 1 to 5. For data analysis, all responses were therefore coded with scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. A few questions in the survey were constructed in the negative direction to counter response biases among respondents. Questions were also constructed using pro-Black and anti-Black sentiments. Questions deemed as “pro-Black” were worded in a positive tone. For example, “The Black community would be better off if more Black employees in the public sector dedicated more of their efforts to advocating for the Black community.” Questions that were anti-Black were addressed in a negative tone. For example, “It is frustrating when people assume I want to do certain types of work because of my Black identity.”

Qualitative Methodology: Survey

Two supplementary, open-text questions were included at the end of the survey so that respondents could make statements regarding their work experience: What is the best part about doing your job as a Black employee? What is the hardest part about doing your job as a Black employee?

Dependent Variable: Measurement for the Motivation to engage in Representation Work

My dependent variable, motivation to engage in representation work, is measured through multiple survey items. A total of four measurements were used to construct the dependent “want to

rep” variable. Respondents were asked about their motivation to represent in several ways using a five-point scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

- (1) At work, I actively seek out opportunities to engage with clients who look like me.
- (2) A big part of the motivation to pursue this career was needing more people like me in this space.
- (3) All Black employees in public organizations should view representing or advocating for the Black community to be a top priority throughout their daily work.
- (4) It is personally important for me to be seen as a representative of the Black community while at work.

I utilized exploratory factor analysis to identify the appropriate measures for this variable to ensure that responses to the four items held together as the function of a singular concept, as expected.

This had an Eigenvalue of 2.4.

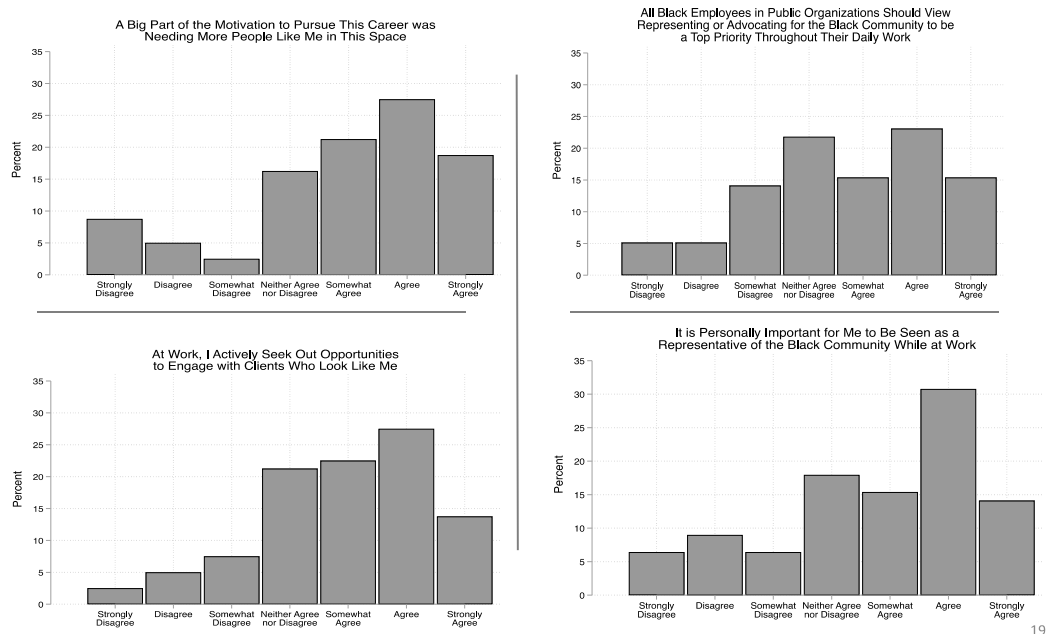


Figure 2: DV Construction

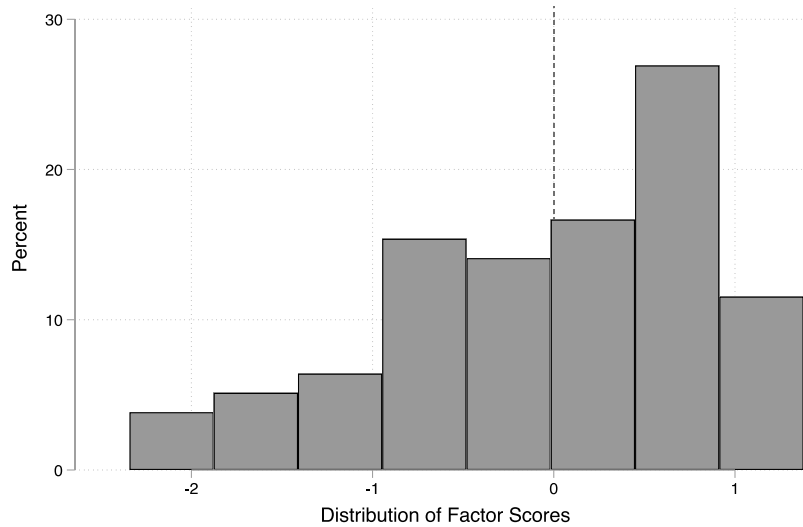
First, I established that there is variation in the motivation to engage in representation, as shown in Figure 2. While many people have strong motivations to represent their ingroup, this figure also shows many respondents who are in the neither agree nor disagree category. Interpreting this population of Black bureaucrats as people with “no opinion” would be ill advised. Likely, the reasons for neutral opinion responses are just as diverse as the reasons to voice supportive or oppositional attitudes. I base my interpretation of this particular set of neutral opinion responses on my observations gained through qualitative interviews, which often resulted in neutral feelings about representation from: 1. people who engage heavily in active representation but believe not every Black bureaucrat should do so; 2. Black bureaucrats who perform a great deal of active representation are contemplating stepping away; 3. And finally, others who were apathetic to the idea of actively pushing for policies that advantage Black citizens.

Procedure:

To investigate the motivation to do representative work, I ran an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to disentangle the underlying structure of relationships among the observed variables. It follows from representative bureaucracy and linked fate literatures that there is a motivation to perform race/identity-based work in the public sector. However, because of the organizational-level theorizing of the representative bureaucracy literature, and the different mechanisms that could be influencing representation outcomes, it remains unclear which currently theorized mechanism is influencing Black bureaucratic decision-making absent directly asking employees. The mechanism that has directly tested behavior-level outcomes, linked fate, is differently limited – mainly by a lack of focus on the bureaucracy (i.e., there is, however much evidence to suggest linked fate explains Black voting behavior in American politics); thus, EFA serves as a valuable tool in identifying latent constructs that might explain the variance within a dataset (Hooper, 2012). Prior to conducting

EFA, the dataset underwent meticulous preparation involving data cleaning, handling missing values, and necessary transformations to ensure the robustness of the analysis.

Figure 3: Factor Score for DV



20

Figure 3 represents the factor score of the DV. To be clear, this does not showcase how much a person is motivated to represent, but whether a person desires to represent more or less than other Black bureaucrats in the data. If their score is 0, they are exactly average in wanting to represent relative to other black bureaucrats in the data. If their score is 1, their motivation is one standard deviation higher than average. If someone is a -1, they're 1 standard deviation lower in motivation.

Linked fate was measured using the trusted question, “How much do you think what happens to Black people here in the U.S. will have something to do with what happens in YOUR life?” Respondents were then asked to answer the question using a five-point scale: (1) Nothing to do with what happens in my life, (2) Only a little to do with what happens in my life,

(3) Something to do with what happens in my life. (4) A lot to do with what happens in my life (5) A huge amount to do with what happens in my life.

Independent Variables:

Independent variables used: Race, ethnicity, identity saliency, and affinity group status.

Race

Participants were asked to choose all that apply to *What Do You Consider Your Race?* 1. white; 2. Black; 3. American Indian/Alaskan Native; 4. Asian American; 5. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; 6. Arab, Middle Eastern, or North African; 7. Hispanic/Latino/Spanish.³ Respondents could choose the race(s) they identify with. Respondents had to choose at least Black in order to participate in the survey. The survey ended for those who did not choose Black.

Ethnicity

To better understand Black bureaucrats and their ethnicity, I stated that *Black people come from a diversity of backgrounds. What do you consider to be your primary ethnicity or family ancestry (i.e., peoples' ethnicity describes their feeling of belonging and attachment to a distinct group of a larger population that shares their ancestry, color, language, or religion)?* Respondents were asked to choose all that applied. Respondents were given five categories to choose from (number 5 being other): 1. African American (African Descendant of Slaves in the United States); 2. Caribbean ancestry; 3. African Ancestry; 4. Latin/Hispanic ancestry.

³ My race and ethnicity questions were based on REP questions used in the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS). Generation questions are based on the 2020 Census.

Ethnicity is coded as a dichotomous variable. 1= African American (they make up the most significant part of the sample), 0=is everyone else.

Immigrant Identity

Immigrant identity has been shown to matter in some linked fate and identity saliency studies (Dion and Dion, 2004; Wiley et al., 2008; Noels and Clement, 2015; Gay et al., 2016; Carter and King-Meadows, 2016; Maltby et al., 2016; Hussain, 2023). I asked, *Some Black Americans are part of immigrant communities that are newer to America, while others have roots in America for generations going back to slavery*. What generation are you?: 1. First generation, you came here as a child; 2. First generation, you came here as an adult⁴; 3. Second generation, at least 1 parent(s) born abroad; 4. Third generation, at least 1 grandparent(s) born abroad 5. Fourth generation or more parents and both sets of grandparents are born in the U.S.; 6. Other. Immigrant status: 1=1st or 2nd generation, 3 or 4th generation was coded as a 0. My reasoning behind that is based on acculturation and past assimilation literature; by the 3rd generation, immigrant identity wanes and isn't as important of an identity (Cohn et al., 2021). Based on my interviews with people who were not African American, it was also someone.

Identity Salience

To measure identity saliency, I used a five-point scale in which respondents were asked, *how important are the following identities to you personally? Please rank the following from not important to least important*. Respondents were asked to rank the following identities from not at all important to extremely important: 1. Racial (Black) identity; 2. Ethnic/cultural (ancestry) identity (eg. Being African American, Nigerian, Caribbean, etc.); 3. Religious

⁴ Often referred to as 1.5 generation, but for clarification purposes I labeled it as first generation.

identity; 4. Gender identity; 5. Party/Political identity; 6. American identity; 7. Socio-economic class.

Results: Table 1:

Using an OLS Regression analysis, the findings suggest that ethnicity does not serve as a motivator for engaging in representative work. This outcome aligns with expectations, although based on existing literature on black politics and black immigration scholarship, it was anticipated that African Americans might exhibit a higher motivation for such engagement.

A significant finding is that being a first—or second-generation immigrant strongly predicts motivation to engage in representative work. This result corroborates insights gathered from interviews, suggesting that immigrants working in government have a meaningful expectation of representing their communities. This often necessitates a greater emphasis on racial identity.

Gender presents a negative and significant relationship with the motivation to engage in representative work, indicating that men are less likely than women to pursue representative roles. This finding is consistent with emotional labor scholarship, which posits that women often undertake more of this type of labor. Recent data from Pew Research indicates that Black men are more likely to hold individualistic views and exhibit less of a sense of linked fate with the Black community.

Income and education were included as variables reflecting life experiences that could enable greater engagement in representative work. The findings suggest that higher income levels correlate with increased opportunities to influence change or connect with influential individuals.

Table 1: Motivation to Engage in Representative Work

Motivation to Engage in Representative Work		
	Motivation	
	Demographics	Attitude
Ethnicity (African American)	0.41 (0.30)	0.26 (0.24)
Immigrant (1 st or 2 nd Gen)	0.61 *** (0.21)	0.73 *** (0.22)
Gender (Man)	-0.63 *** (0.21)	-0.44 ** (0.18)
Level of Government (Federal)	0.03 (0.24)	0.26 (0.21)
Education (Bachelors +)	0.34 (0.24)	0.07 (0.19)
Income	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)
Linked Fate		0.03 (0.08)
Importance of Racial Identity		0.28 * (0.12)
Importance of Ethnic Identity		0.13 (0.10)
Importance of Religious Identity		-0.14 ** (0.06)
Importance of American Identity		0.28 *** -0.12
Constant	-0.40 (0.38)	-2.41 *** (0.52)
Observations	77	77
R ²	0.17	0.55

*Note: Robust Standard Errors are in Parentheses * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01*

A surprising outcome is that the notion of linked fate does not hold statistical significance for the motivation to represent. This is notable given recent literature, which suggests a shift in Black-linked fate and political beliefs (Carerra et al., 2023). These findings suggest that the traditional understanding of linked fate may be evolving in the context of contemporary Black political thought.

Discussion and Conclusion

The motivation to engage in representative work varies. While identity is important in representation, attitudes about identities matter just as much, if not more, to understanding representation. Understanding these dimensions will help people in the practitioner and academic communities appreciate the diversity in the Black community.

And that there will be differences in how Black bureaucrats orientate their identity with their work, and that is ok.

There is a focus on ensuring equity for clients and the community, but we should also consider the people who work in these organizations. Doing this work is highly taxing and has risks, and in the context of DEI, we don't often consider this, nor do we put the same pressures on white individuals.

A major takeaway of this study is that organizations should have avenues for people who want to do this work meaningfully. However, for the ones who do not wish to perform this taxing work, organizations wishing to support their diverse Black employees would benefit from offering other avenues in which Black workers can still contribute to building up their spaces without relying on their identity. On the organizational level, continuing to build equity into their mission is highly important to keeping good people around.

Scholarship on representative bureaucracy has played a significant role in public administration by offering insights into bureaucratic behavior. Primarily focusing on street-level bureaucrats, this literature examines how bureaucrats' actions impact clients, particularly those with whom they may share an identity. With a broader goal of fostering an equitable bureaucracy, representative bureaucracy aims to address historical inequities rooted in past regulations and legislation. However, the responsibility for rectifying these inequities remains a complex question—Who should we rely on to rectify government inequities? --organizations, non-minority bureaucrats, or minority bureaucrats? Often, this burden falls heavily on minority bureaucrats.

This places an undue weight on individuals who have themselves faced systemic injustices in their communities and encountered racial biases within public organizations. While acknowledging the significance of hiring and supporting bureaucrats of color in achieving equity, overemphasizing this approach may present serious challenges to resolving inequities both within and outside of the

organization. Previous scholarship, like Domonic Bearfield's concept of the "magical negro" and Nicole Humphrey's exploration of racialized emotional labor, critiques the burden of representation. These studies advocate for a broader approach beyond relying solely on recruiting and promoting minority personnel to address equity issues within public organizations. Representative bureaucracy can sometimes overlook the varied experiences and challenges bureaucrats face in advocating for equity. It regularly fails to account for the risks bureaucrats encounter, such as job security, hostile work environments, and additional emotional labor ().

Moreover, it sidelines discussions about individuals who uphold organizational cultures perpetuating inequities. While equity is a fundamental government objective, it is vital to acknowledge that many individuals work in government for economic stability and benefits, which is a legitimate choice. They may not aspire to do representative work outside of their job function. As we can see from my findings, Black bureaucrats vary in their desire to do this work, and it depends on certain aspects of their lives.

Despite a large body of work on representation, we know relatively little about bureaucrats' attitudes about representation, how they understand the nature and function of representation, and whether engaging in identity-based representative work has affected them professionally and personally. In many ways, we focus on clients' well-being without similar regard to the bureaucrats doing the work. We understand how bureaucratic behavior impacts clients but lack an understanding of the organizational, client, public, and community pressures bureaucrats face, particularly from others who look like them. All of which can vary based on the bureaucrat's social identity.

While Representative Bureaucracy scholarship recognizes varying degrees of adequate representation, influenced by location, community, critical mass, and organizational

resources, discussions must extend beyond assumptions of bureaucrats' willingness or motivation to undertake representation work. Why assume that all public employees want to engage in this burdensome work? Some Black bureaucrats may not be interested in or comfortable engaging in this work. Additionally, conversations often focus on representing clients without considering advocating for co-ethnic coworkers or pushing for their resources and opportunities. In advancing the literature, there is a critical need to delve deeper into the experiences of Black bureaucrats, not only in representing Black clients but in advocating for all clients. Understanding these nuances is pivotal for a more comprehensive understanding of representative bureaucracy and effective advocacy within public organizations.

This study examined Black Bureaucrats' attitudes toward representation. I aimed to comprehensively investigate the motivations and challenges encountered by Black public service employees. Employing a mixed methods approach combining a structured survey and in-depth interviews, this study sought to understand the factors influencing motivation, satisfaction, and the complexities of doing representation work.

My findings ultimately demonstrated strong evidence that the motivation to engage in representative work is something distinct from similar concepts like linked fate or public service motivation. I found equally strong support for the proposition that there is meaningful variation among Black bureaucrats in their interest in engaging in representative work and that much of the variation can be explained by factors like ethnicity, government level, and identity salience.

Chapter 3: Individual Autonomy and Organizational Pressures in Active Representation among Black Bureaucrats

“Sometimes these committees are taking me away from rooms where I can make real change.”

In the past 20 years, we have seen an uptick in bureaucratic agencies implementing more equity committees, pushing for more diversity in hiring, and engaging with diverse communities. These actions align with the goals of rectifying inequities caused by agencies; ensuring more equitable outcomes for the marginalized public. With calls to hold public entities accountable to the people they serve, goals around government hiring practices have shifted to increasing the diversity of the government workforce (DOL, 2024). Scholarship on social equity and representation has indicated that minoritized bureaucrats make organizations better by alleviating inequities for minoritized clients. The government has also recognized the impact of representation and has further developed strategic plans for diversity and inclusion.

Increasing staff diversity has led to better outcomes, but it has also shown some disparities among bureaucrats themselves. According to a report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), racial minorities are 31-41% less likely to be promoted than their white counterparts with similar backgrounds (GAO, 2020). Yet, knowing this, public administration scholars maintain an expectation of bureaucrats as autonomous decision-makers and representatives of clients who share their racial identity.

When we examine representation and street-level bureaucracy scholarship more closely, we see that these expectations can create false narratives about what bureaucrats can do or (more importantly, perhaps) are willing to do, especially as minoritized bureaucrats. Representative bureaucracy literature emphasizes active representation as a goal of minority bureaucrats to ensure an even playing field for minority citizens interacting with government agencies. This work is predicated on the idea that organizational outcomes and client outcomes are going to be better,

more representative, and more equitable when the workforce better represents the community they serve (Hsieh and Winslow, 2006; Grissom et al., 2015; Badache, 2020; Kennedy and Bishu, 2022). We often see varying outcomes in the literature -- positive, negative, and null. Representative bureaucracy scholarship discusses why we may see these variations in representation. Sometimes, it is based on the community, organizational culture, critical mass, resources, identity salience, etc. (Brudney et al., 2000; Lasley et al., 2011; Ding et al., 2021).

Alongside active representation, we see other types of representation involved, such as passive, which is demographic representation. Along with symbolic representation, which is the behavior of the community being altered due to the commonality with the bureaucrat (Theobald and Haider-Markel, 2009). However, active representation is the primary catalyst on which scholars rely to understand the performance and outcomes of representation. Yet, do we truly understand what active representation means? Existing research leaves untested whether and under what contexts the actual bureaucrat decides to engage in these actions of their own accord and to what extent they perform representation the same way as scholars theorize. Active representation is a behavioral function in which bureaucrats who represent these underrepresented groups are either engaging in agenda-setting efforts, shifting policy proposals, influencing policy decisions, speaking up for people whose voices are relatively brought to the table, or improving the organization's ability to work with clients within the active representation. Conceptually, active representation is predicated on the assumption that people from these underrepresented groups bring their personal experiences and the experiences of those in their community to work. But what if the organization has other goals in mind?

This work seeks to understand how Black bureaucrats perceive and experience the work we label as “active” representation and how organizations promote or inhibit them from performing

active representation. To answer these questions, I utilized mixed methods, including a first-of-its-kind national survey of Black bureaucrats, which I paired with qualitative interviews.

Literature Review: Representative Bureaucracy

Representative bureaucracy explores the idea that a diverse and inclusive government, reflective of the broader population it serves, can lead to improved governance, greater equity, and more effective public policies. Over the years, this concept has generated significant scholarly interest and has been a central theme in public administration. The literature has shown the positive outcomes of diversity in the government throughout the years.

The concept of representative bureaucracy was first introduced by J.D. Kingsley in 1944 in his seminal work "Representative Bureaucracy: An Interpretation of the British Civil Service." Kingsley argued that a bureaucracy that mirrored the demographic composition of the population it served could enhance the legitimacy, fairness, and effectiveness of public administration. Scholars have continued to argue that fostering diversity within public administration is not only a matter of equity but also crucial for designing policies that effectively address the needs and concerns of diverse citizens.

Since Kingsley, scholars have long expanded these initial insights. Representation can either be passive, the extent to which the demographics of the public sector employees match the demographics of the population, or active, the extent to which bureaucrats actively use their identity to advocate for or use discretion to benefit the group they identify with terms of race, gender, and social class (Mosher, 1968; Selden, 1997). Representative bureaucracy has also shown organizational impacts on effective representation. More recent scholarship has shifted to how more diverse organizations can prevent the mistreatment of minorities (Rocha and Dawes, 2009; Ricucci and Van Ryzin, 2016; Gooden, 2023) and how it can foster understanding of minoritized clients from non-minoritized bureaucrats and lead to positive policy outcomes (Liang et al., 2020; Nicholson-Crotty et

al., 2011; John et al., 2024). We learn that teachers who share an identity with underrepresented students will often focus their attention on them and produce better outcomes for those students. Literature on policing shows that when police forces are comprised of a large number of African Americans, African Americans who interact with cops will find their actions more legitimate, while women who interact with women cops are more willing to report sex and domestic crimes (Meier and Nicholson-Crotty, 2006; Wilkins and Williams, 2008; Andrews and Miller, 2013; Baumgartner et al., 2020).

While there have been critiques on the appropriateness of discretion by street-level bureaucrats, research has shown that when bureaucrats consciously avoid showing partiality, they still increase benefits for those with whom they share an identity (Keiser, 2010). Recent research has begun to acknowledge the complexity of identity in representative bureaucracy. Scholarly work highlights the importance of considering intersectionality—how individuals' multiple identities, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, impact their experiences in public administration (Breslin et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2022).

Street-Level Bureaucracy and Discretion

Street-level bureaucracy literature helps scholars and practitioners understand how informal policy is made and implemented from a bottom-up perspective by street-level bureaucrats, i.e., teachers, police, and other low-level government employees. Street-level bureaucrats are often defined as "public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs and who have substantial discretion in executing their work" (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody and Portillo, 2010). Street-level bureaucrats can respond by punishing or helping the individual they interact with. Scholars of this literature emphasize how the work environment and the scarcity of resources contribute to bureaucrats' understanding of their role as implementors of policy and as decision-makers (Gofen and Lotta, 2021; Hill, 2003; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, 2012;

Oberfield, 2014; Andersen and Jakobsen, 2017; Masood and Nisar, 2021,2022; Nielsen, 2006; Nisar and Maroulis, 2017).

Scholarship on street-level bureaucracy suggests that bureaucrats may sometimes consider the characteristics of their clients in their decision-making processes (Junge, 2022; Oberfield and Incantalupo, 2021). The concept, as well as the theory, has broadened to include other forms of street-level workers, such as those who work for private companies and nonprofits, to those who do not interact with the public directly but make discretionary decisions that impact citizens (Yngvesson, 1988; Kingsey and Stalans, 1999; Guy et al., 2014). The theory has expanded to include the advancement of technology no longer requiring direct interaction with clients (Bovens and Zouridis, 2002; Buffat, 2015; Keiser, 2010; Busch, 2019) and how political influence, along with ideology and religious views, influence the discretion bureaucrats give to clients (May and Winter, 2009; Pfaff et al., 2020).

Street-level discretion is essential to understand because street-level bureaucrats are the ones who implement policies that they may or may not agree with, which in turn can create more or less favorable outcomes for their clients (Scott, 1997; Keulemans and Groeneveld, 2019; Wagenaar, 2020;). Discretion is often the self-interest of both the bureaucrat and the client. Bureaucrats within the same agency/unit may even experience a different level of discretion due to knowledge, personal values, identity, status, and relationships with higher-ups (Evans, 2011; Tummers and Bekkers 2014; Akosa and Asare, 2017; Jensen and Pedersen, 2023). An organization's rules and regulations shape discretion (Hasenfeld 2000; Schutze and Johansson 2020). Understanding this literature of street-level bureaucrats can help us understand why policies' may affect groups of people differently. For instance, scholars have noted that officers use their discretion differently when pulling over Black and Latino drivers more than their white counterparts (Roach et al., 2022; Baumgartner et al., 2021; Riccucci et al., 2018; Shoub, 2022). Frontline workers also use discretion when administering

protocols (Garrow and Grusky 2013). This scholarship shows how discretion can intensify the abuse of laws and make the outcome more inequitable for clients, but the same discretion can also make laws more equitable.

Background/Argument:

During my interviews with individuals, one phenomenon repeatedly arose in my attempts to understand the concept of active representation, although it manifested in different ways for different people. This phenomenon manifests the idea that people who do want to engage in representation (and even those who do not) deal with organizational pressures on how they should engage with and advocate for the Black community. One clear example of these individual-level challenges to bureaucratic decision-making comes from the literature on street-level bureaucrats, which shows that police officers often must navigate their professional and personal identities to appease their racial communities at the same time that they must fulfill their organization's goals (Rantatalo, 2016; Hong, 2017;2021). Drawing on the scholarship's insights in the policing realm, I now turn to an investigation of this phenomenon to further understand how other populations of bureaucrats reconcile their identities within the context of their work.

Interview Protocol:

A random sampling method was employed for selecting states and agencies to ensure a randomized approach in recruiting interview subjects. Each state and agency was assigned a random number, and a number generator was used to select the corresponding state and agency. This process ensured an unbiased selection. To further refine the selection, agency directories were cross-referenced with LinkedIn profiles. Invitations for participation were then sent through LinkedIn messages to potential interview subjects⁵.

⁵ See appendix for recruitment message.

I achieved a response rate of 50%. Out of the 20 prospective participants I contacted, six initially agreed to participate. However, one of these respondents failed to appear for the interview. Additionally, four participants declined, and ten did not respond at all. Other participants were collected using a snowball method. In the end, I was able to conduct a total of 8 interviews for this project. All participants are employed by the government at various levels and positions. Two participants are federal employees, three are city employees, and three are state employees.

The one thing they all had in common was that they claimed a highly salient identity Black identity, which they also viewed as playing a major reason for the occupation they held. However, each participant expressed different goals and views of how their identity factors into the work they perform. The use of interviews in this project is important for providing a more in-depth analysis of the phenomena I discovered in my preliminary interviews. Some mechanisms cannot be captured in a survey measurement, thus the goals of the interviews were to capture these phenomena and test the assumptions existing research makes about representation.

Interviewees:

City bureaucrat in Rocky Mountain region

- He has been employed with the government all of his life, from 18-53. He served over 20 years in the military, retired, and went to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in DC but now works for a large city.

He discussed his experiences trying to be an active representative throughout his time in the military at the VA and in his current job. In all his experiences, he's been shut down from doing what he thought was the best way to go about actively representing. His organizations always had other plans. He was expected to engage in certain spaces that didn't feel natural to him.

In one instance, when he first went to the VA, he was asked to be the president of a DEI committee when, at the same time, there were other people in that space who were much better

equipped to do it, but because he was Black (and the only Black employee in his area), he was expected to take charge of it. Although he supported the efforts, he thought his time could be spent better elsewhere and that this wasn't going to get anything done. He felt the VA was not utilizing his talents in a way that would benefit the Black community.

Federal bureaucrat in a policy area with low Black representation

She discussed how complicated her relationship is between her Black identity and her job. She has always been passionate about voicing Black concerns or looking out for Black people in substantive ways, but she's often bogged down and put on a lot of different kinds of committees, initiatives, or task forces, and many times, she's the only Black voice in the room. She opened up on how there's just this expectation that she's supposed to be on anything that might have something to do with Black communities, whether she really wants to be in that space or whether she has expertise in that space or not. Her major complaint is that all of these committees are taking her out of decision-making rooms in which she could have the most impact, and it's not benefitting anyone.

These two are not the only ones who talked about this conundrum of wanting to actively engage but also feeling like your organization isn't giving you the agency to have a say in certain things. The majority of the people I talked to mentioned that they felt their organization's approach was wrong and that there were other ways to approach representation.

As I was hearing stories from Black bureaucrats who are interested in engaging in active representation but are being pressured to do it in ways that they think are either inauthentic, inappropriate, or outside what they would choose to do on their own, I realized they are communicating a feeling of having been *coerced* into "active" representation.

Argument:

From the perspective of the literature, the concept of feeling coerced into representation is not widely addressed. The existing literature on representative bureaucracy and equity does not

extensively discuss the notion that active representation might not naturally follow from passive representation. There is limited space in these bodies of work to explore how bureaucrats may feel pressured to engage in active representation against their own preferences. Scholars of representative bureaucracy and social equity almost always assume that passive representation turns into active representation in a space where the bureaucrat has full agency and autonomy, but it's not just if they decide to engage; it's how they engage and where they engage.

During my interviews, recurring themes of pressure, uncertainty, and disillusionment emerged among the participants. Many public organizations strive to project an image of diversity and equity yet frequently fall short of genuine inclusion. Participants reported that their suggestions on issues impacting the Black community were often disregarded by their organizations. Despite this, they were frequently placed in prominent roles for initiatives, even when they disagreed with the underlying actions. This disconnect highlights a significant gap between our theoretical understanding of active representation and what practitioners understand as representation.

Coercive Representation

Coercive representation can be defined as organizational pressures on bureaucrats to engage in active representation in ways they may not prefer. This idea of coercive representation is different than tokenism. Tokenism is about visibility, social isolation, and identity stereotypes, often related to race or gender (King et al., 2010). Coercive representation is specifically looking at those who want to take on the role of active representation (token or not).

It is this idea that it's not just about whether bureaucrats are choosing to engage in active representation (that is another question) but that bureaucrats face this choice in the context of other organizational pressures. It's not a situation in which Black bureaucrats want to engage, and the organizations are telling them not to or that they're being punished for trying to (which we see in some Representative Bureaucracy literature on police officers and teachers). Sometimes, bureaucrats

want to be more active and work with the organizations, but their managers want them to do something different. It is also not as clear-cut as politics. There is no informational shortcut or label such as “Republicans” or “conservatives” don't want outcome A, so you should do outcome B. Instead, the organization can make Black bureaucrats feel pressure to perform representation in a way that doesn't align with Black bureaucrats' understanding of what's best for Black clients or the Black community. What explains Black bureaucrats' perceptions of coercion in this space?

I expect several factors to explain perceived coercion by Black bureaucrats. First, H1 posits that Black bureaucrats' tenure in public service will influence their perception of coercion into representative work. This expectation is grounded in the understanding that longer tenures provide individuals with greater familiarity with organizational culture, policies, and politics. Those with extensive experience might make these individuals feel more empowered to resist coercion or, conversely, might make them more targeted for visible roles due to their established presence. Next, H2 states that the motivation to engage in representation will affect whether Black bureaucrats feel coerced. Individuals who are highly motivated to perform representation work may perceive such roles as aligned with their personal goals, thereby reducing feelings of coercion. Conversely, less motivated individuals might feel more pressure when compelled to take on representative tasks, viewing them as a burden rather than an opportunity to advantage Black clients or their peers.

H3 explores the impact of identity salience on feelings of coercion. When racial, ethnic, or religious identities are central to an individual's self-concept, they are likely more sensitive to how these identities are mobilized within their professional environment. Those with a salient religious identity may feel less coerced due to the service aspect of religion.

H4 and H5 focus on the role of organizational commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). H4 hypothesizes that perceptions of an organization's genuine commitment to DEI will influence feelings of coercion. If DEI efforts are perceived as authentic, employees may

feel less coerced and more willingly engaged. Conversely, H5 posits that if DEI initiatives are seen as benefiting the organization rather than the community or the individuals themselves, this could heighten feelings of coercion. Lastly, H6 considers the percentage of Black bureaucrats within an organization. A higher percentage may reduce feelings of tokenism and, consequently, perceived coercion, as individuals may feel less isolated and more supported in their representative roles.

Hypotheses:

H1: I expect Black bureaucrats' tenure in public service to matter in determining whether they feel coerced into representative work.

H2: The motivation to engage in representation will have an impact on whether Black bureaucrats will feel coerced into representing.

H3: How salient one's (racial, ethnic, or religious) identity is will impact whether Black bureaucrats feel coerced into representative work.

H4: If the organization is committed to DEI, will be significant in whether Black bureaucrats feel coerced into representative work.

H5: The feeling that DEI initiatives only benefit the organization will impact how Black bureaucrats feel about being representative work.

H6: The percentage of black bureaucrats will have an impact on whether Black bureaucrats feel coerced into representative work.

Survey Design and Data

I opted for a mixed methods approach to understand how Black bureaucrats experience active representation and how organizations promote or inhibit them from doing active representation. I constructed and distributed an original cross-sectional survey and conducted 12 interviews of Black bureaucrats. Over the past few years, public administration scholars have called for more qualitative or mixed methods work in representative bureaucracy scholarship (Kennedy, 2014; Wilkins and Williams, 2008; Bishu and Kennedy, 2019). This study incorporates measures of

Black identity, Black lived experiences working in bureaucratic agencies, and Black intragroup collaboration. Focusing on Black bureaucrats and disaggregating the group allows for a more nuanced understanding of Black bureaucrats (Capers and Smith, 2021). Much of the representative bureaucracy literature treats race, racial subjects, and experiences as a monolith (Strader et al., 2023).

Data for the survey is based on a nationally representative (Black) sample of the U.S. adult population. Respondents were recruited through Prolific, a high-quality online survey platform (Douglas et al., 2023) that connects researchers with participants (Prolific, 2024). The survey was conducted between September 7-28, 2023. Respondents spent, on average, 20 minutes to complete the survey. Individuals who finished the survey were compensated \$4.00. A total of 137 were originally recruited, with only 79 starting and finishing the survey. Respondents were asked to read and answer 63 questions related to their identity and work experience.

While I did not have any attention checks, I did include a positionality (reflexivity statement) and a commitment statement. The positionality statement was randomized evenly across respondents. Research has been done on the benefits and pitfalls of positionality statements. On the one hand, they are beneficial for research in the equity space, particularly for those with marginalized identities (Secules et al., 2020), and on the other hand, they introduce bias and potentially undermine norms of scientific research (Savolainen, 2023). I opted to include a positionality statement because of the racialized nature of the questions I ask. The questions I ask are Black-centric, and I wanted respondents to be honest and not hesitate to answer questions, particularly the open-ended questions. However, to test for any positionality statement effects, I included in my analysis a simple 1 X 2 factorial design survey experiment that randomized the positionality statement to half of the survey respondents. The findings of that brief survey experiment show that the positionality statement did not hinder respondents from taking the survey. Commitment statements are effective

in improving data quality (Cibelli, 2017), and the findings of my robustness experiment show that, at a minimum, my commitment statement did not significantly influence my participants' responses.

Commitment and Positionality Statement:

I know that you are busy, and I appreciate you taking the time to complete my survey. My survey will ask you to provide your opinions on topics that may not come easy to you or may be a little difficult to express. I just ask that you provide thoughtful and honest answers to each question in this survey.

As a Black woman in the political science discipline, I am largely concerned with how Black public sector employees navigate their professional and social identities, particularly in a workforce where being Black is sometimes politicized.

Your response is confidential, no identifiable data will be collected.

Do you commit to providing thoughtful answers to the questions in this survey?

Commitment Statement (control):

I know that you are busy and I appreciate you taking the time to complete my survey. My survey will ask you to provide your opinions on topics that may not come easy to you or may be a little difficult to express. I just ask that you provide thoughtful and honest answers to each question in this survey.

Your response is confidential. No identifiable data will be collected.

Do you commit to providing thoughtful answers to the questions in this survey?

Respondents were then asked to select one of the following: Yes, I commit to providing thoughtful answers; No, I do not commit to providing thoughtful answers; or I can't promise either way. Only those who selected yes were allowed to continue taking the survey. Table 2 showcases the respondents' characteristics. Table 2 categorizes respondent characteristics based on ethnicity, gender, age, level of government, and their tenure working in the government.

Most respondents identify as African American, comprising 65 of the total participants. There are smaller representations from other ethnic backgrounds, with 3 respondents identifying as

Caribbean, 3 as Afro-Latino, and 5 as African. The gender distribution shows that 57% of the respondents are women, while 42.5% are men. Women are overrepresented in this sample, as Black women only make up 23.5% of all public service employees (Pitts, 2011).

The age distribution of respondents is varied, with the largest age group being 30-39 years old, accounting for 33.75% of the sample. The next largest groups are 18-29 years at 23.75% and 40-49 years at 26.25%. A smaller portion of the sample is aged 50-59 years (15%), and an even smaller group falls in the 60-69 years category (1.25%). This spread across different age ranges indicates a diverse range of career stages among the respondents, from early-career professionals to those nearing retirement.

Table 2: Respondent Characteristics

Ethnicity Background	
African American	65
Caribbean	3
Afro-Latino	3
African	5
Gender	
Woman	57%
Man	42.50%
Age	
18-29	23.75%
30-39	33.75%
40-49	26.25%
50-59	15%
60-69	1.25%
Level of Government	
Federal	17.65%
State	43.53%
County/Parish	12.94%
City/Local	25.88%
Tenure	
Less than 1 Year	4.70%
1-3 Years	20%
3-5 Years	11.76%
5-10 Years	20.53%
10-20 Years	27.05%
More than 20 Years	16.47%

Overall, table 2 illustrates diverse categories of participants in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, level of government employment, and tenure. The majority are African American, with a balanced gender representation slightly favoring women. The age distribution shows a predominance of mid-career professionals. At the same time, the level of government and tenure data indicate a wide range of experiences within different government tiers and varying lengths of service. This diversity across respondent characteristics is crucial for understanding Black bureaucratic representation.

Dependent Variable

For this empirical analysis, the dependent variable, coercive representation, is a construction of three other variables factored into one. I utilized exploratory factor analysis to identify the appropriate measures for this variable since no singular variable could account for this phenomenon of coercive representation. The coercive representation variable encompasses several assumptions made throughout the representative bureaucracy literature. There are underlying assumptions made in the literature about the autonomy of Black bureaucrats in making decisions on behalf of Black clients in their organization and whether the type of representation is being done because of Black bureaucrats' input. Therefore, I identified three key questions in my survey addressing this coercive representation concept. Two out of three of the measures are on a seven-point agreement scale, from strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=7). The questions are as follows: "It is frustrating when people assume I want to do certain types of work because of my Black identity," and "I often feel like I am invited into certain spaces to be the token Black person." My third measure is "how often you feel that you are put into situations where you are **expected** to speak on behalf of the Black community while at work." This is on a five-point frequency scale from always to never. Since two of my measures are coded in the negative, I reverse-code them to correspond to higher levels of perceived coercion.

My motivation for coding a coercive representation variable is to capture some of the assumptions. This underlying notion expects Black employees to speak up for Black clients or the community while at work and that they inherently want (are expected) to do it because they work in the public sector. There is no term in the literature that adequately describes this form of organizational control over representation decision-making. The three variables I picked encompass this aspect that is not often talked about.

In the figures (4-7) below, we can see from the descriptive data that there is variation in the responses from Black bureaucrats. These data ultimately reveal that Black bureaucrats are not a monolith and in fact have diverse perceptions of active representation.

Figure 4: ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WORK BASED ON IDENTITY

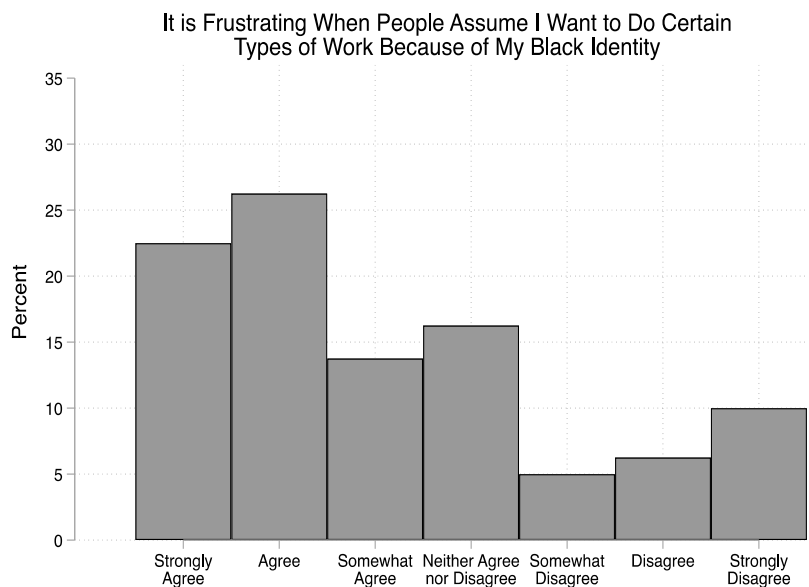


Figure 4 shows that most respondents fall in the strongly agree category, while the others lean more towards strongly disagree. Based on this descriptive figure, we can see that Black respondents have varying opinions about doing identity-based work.

Figure 5 shows how Black respondents feel about being tokenized in certain workspaces. There are varying opinions on how respondents feel, but we can see that many agree with the notion of being the token black person. Tokenism is an experience that many marginalized people experience, especially those who are considered racially minoritized (Yoder, 1992; King et al., 2010). Kanter's tokenism theory purports that once an organization reaches 15% or more the tokenism effect disappears (Stichman et al., 2010). The majority of my respondents reported that they are in organizations that are less than 10%.

Figure 5: ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WORK BASED ON IDENTITY

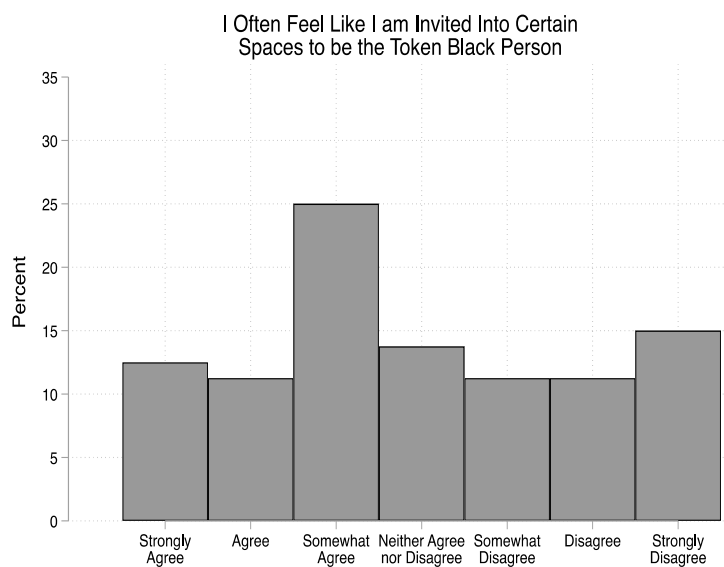


Figure 6 shows whether Black bureaucrats are put into situations where they are expected to speak for the Black community. This is important in understanding representation because Black employees may not be in a position where it is their job to advocate, but are essentially forced to do so.

Figure 6: EXPECTATIONS OF SPEAKING UP

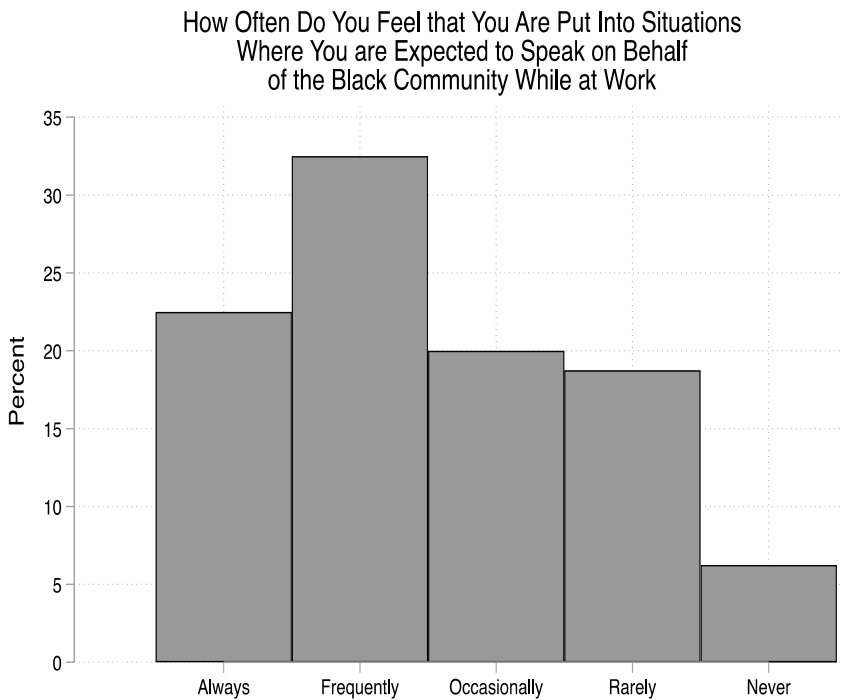


Figure 7 shows the distribution of the Coercive Representation factor score. As a factor score, it is forced to be normal and shows respondents' relativity to one another. Respondents at zero are average from the mean. This means that those respondents who are at zero are average in feeling coerced. Respondents who are 1 or 2 standard deviations from the mean are more likely to feel coerced. Those who fall -1 or -2 standard deviation from the mean are less likely to feel coerced.

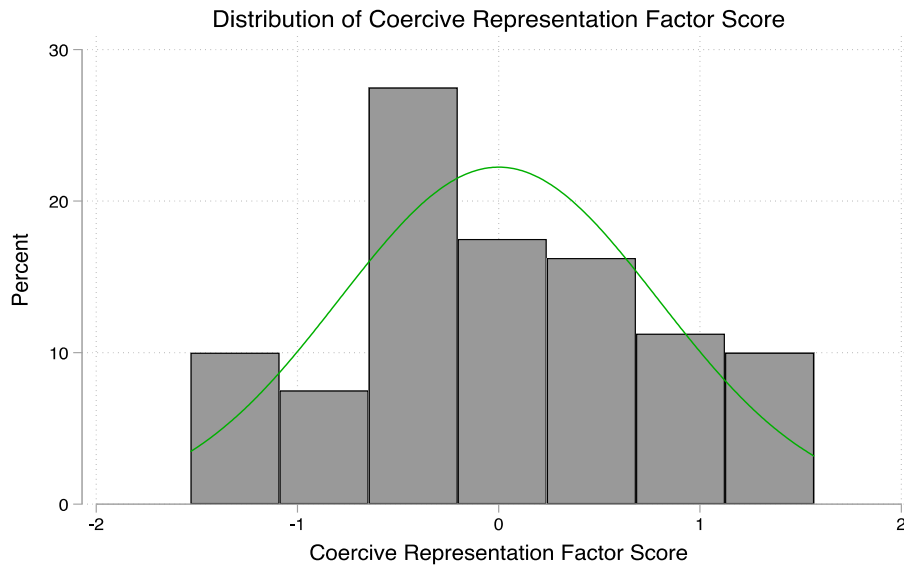


Figure 7: Distribution of Coercive Representation Factor Score

Several factors explained the variation in these feelings of feeling coerced. However, before focusing on the individual-level variables, organizational factors are considered.

Independent and Control Variables

I controlled for identity saliency, government level, and tenure in the survey. My primary variable is a question on the motivation to engage in representative work. This variable is constructed using a factor score (see previous chapter) of four measures. By utilizing this variable, I am able to gauge whether those who are already inclined to represent feel coerced by their organization into doing certain kinds of representation. I also determined that the amount of time you have been with an organization could influence whether you feel coerced. The wording for this question is “How long have you been employed in your current organization?” The answers ranged from less than one year to more than 20 years. The median answer was 5-10 years. I also asked them about the percentage of Black employees in their department. The exact wording is “What percentage of employees in your department are Black? If unsure, please provide your best guess.” The answer choice ranged from, “I am the only one” to “over 90%.” The median answer is 10-25%.

I made sure to ask this question because there has been work done on the critical mass of nonwhite employees, having an effect on whether there will be representation (Li, 2024). Also, this idea of coercion may happen in departments that have fewer Black employees, and the organization may rely on tokenism to push certain initiatives.

To gauge whether Black employees are in a work atmosphere that is conducive to diversity and equity, I framed the following statement as “My organization shows commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.” Respondents were able to choose strongly agree to strongly disagree on a Likert scale. Identity salience is important in determining whether bureaucrats want to engage with representation. It could also determine whether they would feel coerced into doing representative work. To get at identity salience, I asked, “respondents, how important are the following identities to you personally? Please rank the following from not important to least important.”

Results

The survey results, showcased in Table 3, are both surprising and unexpected. The most surprising results are those that are deemed as supporting the null hypotheses. For instance, the level of government bears no statistically significant relationship to perceived representation, which is unexpected based on the scholarship that shows employees who work at the federal level have more autonomy and are more satisfied with decisions (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2015; Han and Hong, 2019; Demircioglu, 2021). I will discuss the findings through the lens of organizational characteristics and individual characteristics.

Starting with my first finding on the motivation to engage in representation being a factor in the feeling of coercion, we see that the more you are motivated to engage in active representation, the less likely you think you are being coerced. While not necessarily unexpected, the expectations are going in the opposite direction of what I expected. The results show that it is $-.68$ and statistically

significant. I expected that the more you desire to perform representation work, the more you will feel coerced into doing what the organization wants. However, it is reasonable to explain this finding; if Black bureaucrats want to engage, they may be willing to do whatever it is to benefit Black clients. They may also see it as a way to make decisions later on.

*Table 3: EXPERIENCE WITH COERCIVE REPRESENTATION*⁶⁷⁸

Motivation to Represent	-.680*
Racial Identity Salience	-.072
Ethnic Identity Salience	.267*
Religious Identity Salience	-.139*
Org. Committed to DEI	.148*
% Dept. Black	.033
Federal Gov	-.081
Tenure	.018
Constant	-1.29
R-Squared	0.70
# of obs.	77

Racial Identity

The findings reveal that racial identity does not significantly influence the respondents' perceptions of coercion. Despite the participants' diverse racial backgrounds, their racial identity does not appear to influence their feelings of being coerced. This finding is notable as it challenges the assumption that racial identity is critical in shaping how Black (or minoritized) bureaucrats would see representation. Because there has been a lot of virtue

⁶ OLS Regression

⁷ Robust Standard Errors

⁸ Significance is at .05

signaling since 2020, I would think perceptions of coercion within organizational or societal contexts would be influenced by race. It could also be a function of analyzing one racial group. There are no racial effects due to the lack of comparison between Black and nonblack respondents. Instead, it suggests that other factors may be more influential in shaping these perceptions.

Ethnic Identity

In contrast to racial identity, ethnic identity emerges as a significant factor. The data indicates that the more important an individual's ethnic identity is to them, the more likely they are to feel coerced. This suggests that individuals who place a high value on their ethnic identity may perceive coercion more extremely, possibly due to a heightened awareness of ethnic dynamics and pressures within their environment. This finding aligns with recent literature on linked fate, highlighting the importance of ethnic identity in shaping individual experiences and perceptions.

The majority of the data comes from African American respondents, who make up 65 of the participants. Additionally, there are smaller groups of Caribbean (3), Afro-Latino (3), and African (5) respondents. This demographic breakdown is crucial as it provides context for understanding the findings. The predominance of African American respondents may influence the overall trends and insights derived from the data, particularly concerning ethnic identity and perceptions of coercion.

Religious Identity

Religious identity also plays a significant role in perceptions of coercion. The data show that the salience of religious identity correlates with an increased sense of being coerced. This suggests that individuals for whom religious identity is a central aspect of their self-concept may feel more pressured or constrained in their environments. The importance of religious identity in shaping perceptions of coercion underscores the multifaceted nature of identity and its impact on individual experiences.

Organizational Commitment to DEI

Perceptions of organizational commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are significantly related to feelings of coercion. The data indicates that the more individuals perceive their organization as being committed to DEI, the more they feel coerced. This counterintuitive finding may reflect complex dynamics where efforts to promote DEI are perceived as imposing certain expectations or pressures on individuals, leading to a sense of coercion.

Non-Significant Factors: % Department Black, Level of Government, and Tenure

Other factors, such as the percentage of Black individuals in the department, the level of government, and tenure, do not appear to significantly influence perceptions of coercion. This indicates that these variables are less relevant in shaping how individuals perceive coercion within their organizational or social environments. The lack of significance for these factors suggests that perceptions of coercion are more closely tied to personal and organizational identity factors rather than structural or positional variables.

Discussion/Conclusion

Going forward, this research presents a significant opportunity to expand our understanding of representative bureaucracy beyond merely active representation by focusing on the agency and experiences of Black bureaucrats. It encourages us to ask broader questions about what active representation is and whether an organization genuinely aims to become more representative or seeks to improve its engagement with the Black community in making representative decisions. This opens up new avenues for discussing the importance of authenticity, choice, and agency in the realm of representation. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to consider the diversity among Black bureaucrats and their autonomy in engaging in representation.

The interviews suggest that many Black bureaucrats want to engage in representation but may lack the autonomy to do it in an authentic way. This indicates that organizations lack genuine feedback from Black employees and that Black bureaucrats may not be able to make the changes in the bureaucracy that scholars are calling on them to make.

The concept of coercive representation contributes to our understanding of the challenges within representative bureaucracy, particularly concerning Black bureaucrats. Coercive representation highlights the often-overlooked pressures that Black bureaucrats face when they are expected to engage in representation initiatives, even against their personal preferences or professional judgments. This phenomenon underscores the disconnect between active representative bureaucracy literature and the lived experiences of Black bureaucrats.

By identifying and examining coercive representation, we can better appreciate the nuanced challenges that come with being Black in public service. Furthermore, this concept prompts organizations to reflect on their DEI initiatives. Ultimately, recognizing coercive representation allows for more informed and empathetic policy-making that truly values input from employees, leading to more effective and equitable public administration.

Future work should examine the impact that perceived superficial DEI initiatives have on the morale and job satisfaction of Black bureaucrats and what are the effects of mentorship and allyship on mitigating feelings of coercion among Black bureaucrats? Many Black bureaucrats talk about the lack of mentorship they receive in the public sector. By understanding the impact of mentorship on representation scholarship we can further the discussion on substantive representation and lean into understanding the impact relationships have on individuals and their role perceptions.

Chapter 4: What Have You Done for Me Lately?: Black Bureaucrats and Perceptions of DEI Initiatives in Public Organizations.

Interview participant from a southern state:

“There has been so much focus on DE&I this, DE&I that. But we haven’t really stopped to think about what these words mean to us as an organization or to the public. There is only so much we can do.”

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives have been recognized as essential to effective governance (OLMS, 2023). These initiatives, which aim to foster an inclusive environment, promote equity, and ensure that the diverse needs of all community members are addressed, are significantly shaped and implemented by minoritized bureaucrats (Berry-James et al., 2023; Blessett, 2023). Black bureaucrats have been vital in efforts to combat systemic racism and promote equity and social justice in public organizations (McCandless and Blessett, 2021). Their crucial role in this process emphasizes their importance and influence in the realm of DEI initiatives. The effectiveness of DEI initiatives in public organizations can be significantly influenced by the perceptions of those who implement the initiatives.

For DEI initiatives to succeed, it is essential that Black bureaucrats perceive them as genuine efforts to bring diversity to the organization and ensure that minoritized bureaucrats have an equal opportunity for growth and that clients who look like them receive adequate services. When Black bureaucrats trust that DEI initiatives are authentic, they are more likely to engage actively and support these efforts, thereby fostering a more inclusive and effective workplace. Nevertheless, understanding the diverse perspectives within the Black community is crucial to tailoring these initiatives effectively.

The diversity within the Black community extends beyond simple demographic differences, encompassing a wide array of cultural, political, and socio-economic backgrounds, which shape their views on representation and DEI initiatives. This diversity

means that Black Americans' experiences and perspectives on DEI are influenced by a multitude of factors, including their ethnicity, the length of time their families have been in the United States, their economic status, educational background, and regional differences. For instance, the experiences of African Americans whose families have lived in the United States for generations are often deeply rooted in the historical context of systemic racism and civil rights struggles. In contrast, Black immigrants and their descendants may not view these issues as having an influence in modern times and may question the need for DEI initiatives or have different goals pertaining to these initiatives, such as navigating a new culture and new identity (Christie, 2023). These differences can influence how individuals perceive the effectiveness and authenticity of DEI efforts. For example, Black immigrants might prioritize different aspects of DEI initiatives, such as language inclusion and cultural representation, compared to African Americans, who might focus more on addressing systemic racism and historical injustices.

The origin of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives can be traced back to the Civil Rights era, when calls for incorporating diversity in the workplace and schools were made (Golden, 2024). Over the following decades, public organizations began to implement DEI initiatives more systematically, initially focusing on compliance and legal mandates to avoid discrimination lawsuits. This period saw an increased focus on creating inclusive work environments through training programs, diversity councils, and strategic planning. More recently, movements such as Black Lives Matter have further highlighted the importance of DEI, leading public organizations to reevaluate their practices and commit to more comprehensive and sustained efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels.

However, in the last few years, we have seen widespread criticism of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs (Iyer, 2022; Walk-Morris, 2024). Many people have come out against the initiatives, and even more have supported DEI initiatives. Questions surrounding whom DEI

benefits, whom it excludes, what the words mean, how we implement the programs, and finally, how we measure the success of these initiatives have influenced perceptions (Goldberg, 2022). Plenty of research has come out and shown the benefits of implementing programs that help not only marginalized people but also non-minorities. (Foy, 2021; Parker, 2022). This research shows that DEI efforts have been meaningfully beneficial to Black clients and the community. But there are further questions we should seek to understand, such as questions further related to the people who are doing the work.

Representation literature highlights Black bureaucrats bringing unique perspectives and experiences to public organizations, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the needs and challenges of the Black community. Black bureaucrats often leverage their positions to influence policy and practice, advocating for initiatives that address the specific needs of Black communities (Li, 2024). Although this is the goal, these same organizations can lead to exploitative conditions for Black bureaucrats if DEI initiatives only focus on the hiring component and not the overall well-being and retention of Black employees (Weeks et al., 2024). If DEI is making a positive, beneficial contribution, we would expect to see that the communities that are most often connected to DEI initiatives would view these initiatives to be beneficial both to themselves, to the organization, and to the communities they serve.

Despite the positive intentions behind DEI initiatives, Black bureaucrats often encounter challenges that can lead to skepticism. These challenges include dealing with colleagues who aren't invested in the initiatives and being the only one to push for outcomes, leading to tokenism. If the organization is performative, they may lack actual support to improve outcomes for the Black community (Beeman, 2021). When DEI initiatives are perceived as superficial or performative, Black bureaucrats may not believe DEI efforts make real change.

Public organizations have made diversity, equity, and inclusion a crucial factor in employment, although very few marginalized people have moved up to manager or senior-level positions, in particular Black bureaucrats (Swift,). Black bureaucrats operate in a workforce that regularly claims to value diversity and equity; still, they are often the lowest paid and least likely to experience mobility. Despite being marginalized and often without (meaningful) power, Black employees are expected to continue striving for D.E.I. goals, yet often without reaping significant benefits for themselves. Keeping this in perspective, my study explores three key areas related to perceptions of DEI initiatives: 1. the organization, 2. employees, and 3. the Black community. Specifically, I explore the perceptions of Black bureaucrats' viewpoints on DEI initiatives and their organization. Historically, Black Americans have been the group most often identified as communities of interest in the context of DEI programs. As such, if we want to understand whether or not DEI initiatives are effective, Black bureaucrats' perceptions matter. I ask, how do Black bureaucrats perceive D.E.I. initiatives?

Leveraging insights from scholarship on social equity and representative bureaucracy, my research sheds light on the dynamic interplay between lived experiences, professional inclinations, and the complex landscape of identity and representation in public organizations. Through a combination of interviews and two groups of survey participants, I find that Black bureaucrats believe that D.E.I. initiatives are important but largely benefit the organization rather than the people it serves or its employees.

Background and Literature Review:

The increasing recognition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives as essential components of effective public administration has led to a growing body of research examining their impact on fostering inclusive environments, promoting equity, and addressing the diverse needs of community members (Blesset et al., 2019; Svara and Brunet, 2020; Cepiku and Mastrodascio, 2021).

Central to this discourse is the role of Black bureaucrats, who are pivotal in shaping and implementing these initiatives within public organizations. Calls to recognize equity as being an important component of governance started in the late 1960s following the Civil Rights movement.

During this time, scholars of public administration started to challenge the traditional paradigms, which were focused on treating government as a business and prioritizing cost-effectiveness and performance. Equity becoming a new pillar of public administration was spearheaded by Frederickson at the 1968 Minnowbrook Conference. This new train of thought brought in a new following and ushered in the new public administration era. NPM emphasizes the need for public service employees to focus on equity for the public (Guy and McCandless, 2020). Advocates have continued to demand a more socially responsive and ethically driven public service that actively promotes social equity. Social equity work emphasizes the need for bureaucrats to actively address disparities and injustices in their communities. Frederickson suggests that equity requires proactive measures, including affirmative action and targeted policy interventions, to rectify historical and systemic inequities (1971;1990). However, translating these theoretical principles into actionable policies can be challenging.

While social equity should be a top priority for government officials, there is often a disconnect between the theory of social equity and its practical implementation. Policies may be well-intentioned but fail to achieve desired outcomes due to inadequate resources, lack of political will, or resistance from those within and outside of the organization (Enders et al., 2020; Kiradoo, 2023). Efforts to promote social equity can encounter resistance from various quarters, including within public agencies themselves. This resistance can stem from ideological opposition, lack of support from management, colleagues, and community, or fear of redistributive policies (Theoharis, 2008; Lerma et al., 2020).

DEI Initiatives in Public Administration

The origins of DEI initiatives in public administration can be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement, which laid the groundwork for incorporating diversity into workplaces and educational institutions (OLMS, 2023). Over the decades, public organizations have progressively adopted DEI initiatives, initially driven by compliance with legal mandates aimed at preventing discrimination. These initiatives have evolved to encompass more proactive measures, including diversity training, strategic planning, and the establishment of diversity councils (OPM, N.D.; DOC, 2023). Contemporary DEI efforts have been further heightened by social movements such as Black Lives Matter, prompting organizations to reevaluate and deepen their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Toll, 2023).

Despite the progress made in DEI efforts, Black bureaucrats continue to face significant challenges within public organizations. These challenges include limited opportunities for career advancement, inadequate support for their initiatives, and the persistent presence of systemic biases (EEOC, n.d.; Partnership for Public Service, 2022). The literature suggests that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes policy reforms, targeted professional development programs, and a cultural shift toward genuine inclusivity (Bartnett, 2020; Olzmann, 2020). The pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has become a cornerstone of modern organizational management. Creating an inclusive organizational culture is recognized as a foundational aspect of effective diversity management.

Methodology:

I opted for a mixed methods approach to understand how Black bureaucrats experience active representation and how organizations promote or inhibit them from doing active representation. I constructed and distributed an original cross-sectional survey and conducted 12 interviews of Black bureaucrats. Over the past few years, public administration scholars have called for more qualitative or mixed methods work in representative bureaucracy scholarship (Kennedy,

2012; Wilkins and Williams, 2008; Bishu and Kennedy, 2019). This study incorporates measures for Black identity, Black lived experiences working in bureaucratic agencies, and Black intragroup collaboration. Focusing on Black bureaucrats and disaggregating the group allows for a more nuanced understanding of Black bureaucrats (Capers and Smith, 2019). Much of the representative bureaucracy literature treats race, racial subjects, and experiences as a monolith.

Interview participants were recruited using LinkedIn. Participants were selected using a randomized selection process. Before recruiting on LinkedIn, participants were selected by randomizing 10 public agencies. Each agency was given a number, and using a number randomizer, the agency that was picked matched the number on the counter. I had a list of states that I numbered, and I randomized that number, and the state that matched the number was picked. I then went through a list of employees on the state agency's website and picked names deemed "Black." I looked each individual up on LinkedIn and recruited them. If I came up with no Black employees from the agency, I went on LinkedIn and looked up "state" state employees or state of "state", depending on the results. I also relied on snowball sampling to gather interviews.

I achieved a response rate of 50%. Out of the 20 prospective participants I contacted, six initially agreed to participate. However, one of these respondents was a no-show for the interview. Additionally, four participants declined, and ten did not respond at all. Other participants were collected using a snowball method. In the end, I was able to conduct a total of 8 interviews for this project. All participants are employed by the government at various levels and positions. Two participants are federal employees, three are city employees, and three are state employees.

To explore the perceptions of DEI initiatives, I used data from two participant groups for comparison. Group 1, the Prolific group, has 84 respondents. The second group, the National Black Forum of Black Public Administrators (NFBPA), has 16 respondents. I wanted to compare these two groups to see how they differ in responses. Prolific respondents are thought to be more entry-

level professionals, while NFBPA has a range of entry, mid, and upper-level management. I am only focusing on a few variables of interest for this paper.

Variables of interest:

The variables of interest were rated on a 0-7 rating scale from strongly Disagree to strongly agree. The higher on the scale, the more you agree. The measures used were: I have benefitted from DEI initiatives. (coded as benefits me). This question was asked to gauge whether Black bureaucrats felt these DEI efforts benefitted Black employees. We can see in Figure 1 that respondents from Prolific are slightly higher than those from NFBPA. This could be due to the difference in positions and tenure. Those who are newer to the organizations may feel that DEI has had some input on them getting the job versus more tenured respondents.

The next variable measures whether Black bureaucrats feel that most DEI efforts are meaningfully beneficial to Black employees (employees). Respondents in both groups agree slightly more with this measure than the previous measure, benefits me. There is still a small gap between the two groups and their feelings towards DEI and the benefits to Black employees. This may be the lack of diversity in their organizations. The positive reflection of Black bureaucrats towards DEI efforts is further shown in their belief that these initiatives benefit not only themselves but also the broader Black community. This dual perception gets at the importance of DEI efforts in addressing systemic inequities and enhancing opportunities for Black individuals both within bureaucratic institutions and in the wider society. The data may also further suggest that Black bureaucrats see DEI efforts as instrumental in creating more supportive, inclusive, and equitable environments.⁹

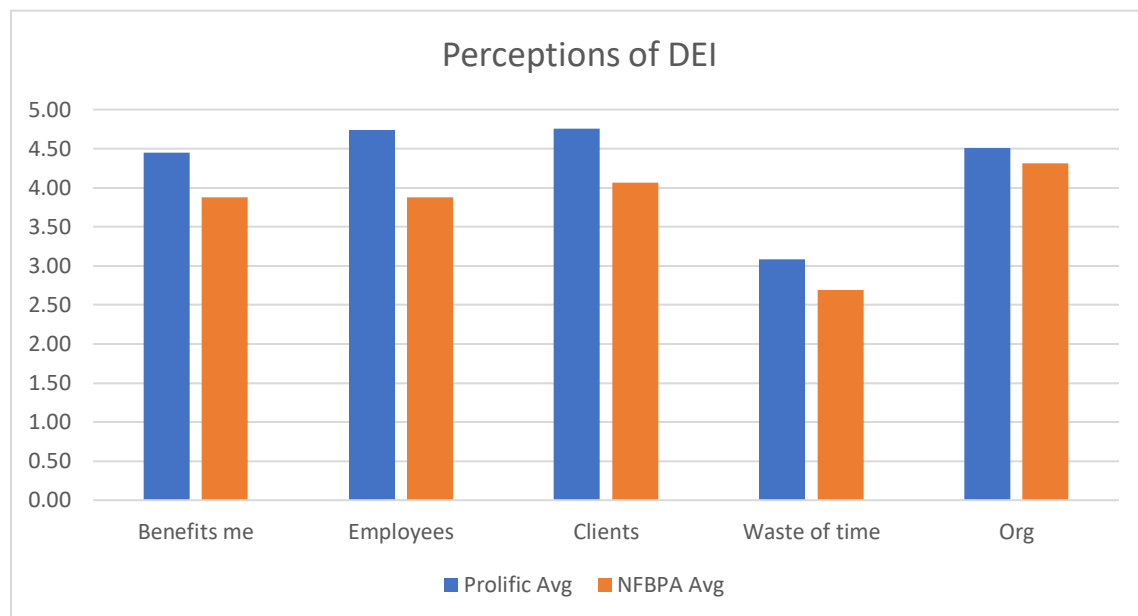
Figure 1 illustrates that Black bureaucrats generally lean towards disagreeing with the perception that most Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts are a waste of time. This suggests a relatively positive view of DEI initiatives among Black bureaucrats, indicating that they

⁹ I have these data. Not included in dissertation.

recognize these efforts' potential value and impact. This finding aligns with broader perspectives within the Black community, which often views DEI initiatives as beneficial for fostering inclusion, reducing disparities, and promoting equitable treatment within organizational contexts.

There has been much criticism of DEI initiatives as being excessive and not offering any support. Figure 8 shows that Black bureaucrats in both groups seem to have the same perception that most DEI efforts benefit the organization more than the people they seek to serve and support. Although Black bureaucrats lean more positively towards DEI initiatives, this underlying perception may be that organizations are only in it for themselves, but good can also come out of it. We see plenty of public organizations that have a strong history of having a diverse organization, while other organizations may lack that diversity, so it leads to better hiring practices. But Black bureaucrats are still paid less than their white colleagues and are least likely to be in upper management positions.

Figure 8: Perceptions of DEI



Discussion/Conclusion:

Opportunities for enhancing DEI initiatives lie in fostering a more inclusive organizational culture that values the contributions of Black bureaucrats and other marginalized groups. This involves creating pathways for meaningful participation in decision-making processes, ensuring equitable access to resources, and recognizing the diverse experiences and perspectives that enrich public administration (Rice, 2004).

While most Black bureaucrats see the benefits of DEI for themselves and the Black community, there is a clear perception that organizations only do these initiatives to benefit the organization. This could mean that bureaucrats are facing these pressures with no benefits in return. Considering that Black bureaucrats are least likely to be in upper management positions and are kept in entry positions in the government, it could be a reflection of that.

Although DEI initiatives hold great promise, there are also significant questions that must be addressed to ensure their success and that they are promoting equity. Black bureaucrats face unique barriers that can hinder their effectiveness in promoting DEI goals. As stated before, Black bureaucrats are least likely to be in positions where they can actively make a change and actively pursue the goals of the initiatives, meaning there is such a focus on hiring to make a diverse organization. Still, bureaucrats may lack the support to move into the decision-making spaces.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of DEI initiatives. This includes ongoing employee training and development, creating channels for feedback and dialogue, and ensuring that DEI goals are integrated into all aspects of organizational operations. There needs to also be as much focus on DEI outcomes for employees as there is on outcomes for clients.

Black bureaucrats are crucial in shaping and implementing DEI initiatives in public organizations. Their perceptions of these initiatives are influenced by their personal and professional experiences and the organizational culture in which they work. By drawing on diversity management

literature and DEI studies, public organizations can create more inclusive and equitable environments that fully leverage the talents and perspectives of Black bureaucrats. Addressing the challenges and barriers that hinder DEI initiatives will require sustained commitment, resources, and a willingness to engage in meaningful systemic change.

Going forward, I will gather more respondents for the NFBPA and run more empirical analyses to understand the relationships between the variables. I am interested in seeing how DEI is influenced by the critical mass of Black employees in an organization. I am also curious as to how race and ethnicity may hold up.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This project aimed to shed light on the complexities and nuances of the Black experience in the bureaucracy, particularly in relation to representative work. Representative bureaucracy has guided the public administration field in understanding representation and identity in government. Representative bureaucracy scholarship often emphasizes the role of bureaucrats of color in advancing equity for marginalized populations.

Among representative bureaucracy's central tenets, passive representation suggests that simply being a member of a particular race, such as being Black, can influence one's work. However, the theory does not suggest that all passive representation will always lead to active representation. Active representation, on the other hand, involves deliberately engaging in work or approaches connected to one's racial (among others) identity, which can lead to more equitable policies, programs, and outcomes. However, despite its significance, there has been limited opportunity to understand the nuanced views of Black individuals engaged in this type of work.

We did not know much about what it means for Black bureaucrats to engage in active representation, how they interpret it, or how they varied in their motivation to be active representation in their organization. Yet, there are times in the literature that these variations are pushed to the side as a resource issue, an organization issue, or the bureaucrat not identifying strongly enough with their race or gender. Still, this research has illuminated other more complicated aspects than surface level values. Representation is crucial for promoting equity, but the risks and pressures associated with representation for Black bureaucrats are frequently overlooked.

Being Black in the United States is a more nuanced identity than what the literature has shown us (even when scholars acknowledge it). By incorporating the panethnicity of the Black diaspora as a function of representation offers insight into when active representation may be strongest and how Black bureaucrats view other Black community members that are outside of their

ethnic group. With the abhorrent racial history (and present) of the United States, it is essential to understand how these groups navigate their way in an institution that has historically and continues to discriminate against them (housing, education, policing, access to social services, etc.).

Furthermore, it is essential to understand that just because a person identifies as Black (visibly and socially) or is from any historically disadvantaged group does not equate to them wanting to represent members of their “visible” in-group, nor does it always equate to equitable outcomes for them, the bureaucrats, or the clients. This also prompts us to dive into understanding bureaucratic behavior, utilizing the Black diaspora to illustrate the complexities of representation within a vast and diverse community across bureaucrats and their clients.

My work shows that Black bureaucrats vary in their motivation to do representative work and that this variation relies on the bureaucrat's ethnicity, the salience of specific identities, and gender. It is important to note that race was not shown to be significant in their motivation to represent. I also showed that Black bureaucrats can view specific actions by the organizations as a form of coercion (either positively or negatively). My research also explored how Black bureaucrats perceived DEI initiatives. Most bureaucrats (in my sample) believe that DEI initiatives are beneficial, but they also benefit the organization more than the people these initiatives are supposed to help. My work utilized representative bureaucracy theory and other theories as a way to explain Black bureaucratic behavior.

My dissertation contributed to our understanding of representative bureaucracy and identity, particularly Black bureaucrats, by expanding our conceptual understanding of representative bureaucracy and the measurement of active representation. I have constructed one of the only datasets of Black bureaucrats from a wide range of governments and roles. Therefore, my contribution extends to further understanding Black bureaucrat's attitudes and perceptions about representative work. I also tested for linked fate and identity saliency of Black bureaucrats.

Doing this work is highly taxing and has risks, and in the context of DEI, we don't often take this into account, nor do we put the same pressures on white individuals. To foster a truly representative bureaucracy, it is essential to consider the diversity within marginalized groups and provide support for bureaucrats who may face unique challenges in their roles. Organizations should offer avenues for those who want to engage in representative work to do so substantively while also providing other opportunities for contribution that do not rely solely on their identity. By addressing these issues, public administration can move toward a more equitable and inclusive future where the experiences and motivations of all bureaucrats are acknowledged and valued.

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