

Representative bureaucracy and organizational attractiveness: An experimental study of symbolic representation of the US and UK police

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Abstract

Drawing upon representative bureaucracy theory, this study investigates the relationship between passive and symbolic representation by examining the extent to which a more passively representative public organization would be attractive as an employer. The study involved a randomized survey experiment of members of the public in the US and UK. Overall, and contrary to the theory of representative bureaucracy, results show that women found a male-dominated police department more attractive. The explanation for the results of the study may lie in bureaucratic reputation as a boundary condition of symbolic representation.

Evidence for practice

- The underrepresentation of women and minorities in the workforce impacts the bureaucratic reputation of the police and the extent to which it is perceived to be organizationally attractive to potential job applicants from diverse sociodemographic identities.
- Human resource programs and recruitment drives by police departments to diversify the workforce may be bounded by the reputation of the police.
- If representation is lacking, then this impacts efforts to improve the diversity of the police.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain (UK), there is an increasing human resource crisis with declining rates of applicants seeking public sector employment leading potentially to critical skills shortage (Hinna et al., 2021; Linos, 2018). In addition to the decline in those seeking public sector employment, there is generally a lack of diversity within public organizations (Lincoln, 2018). Although many studies have proven the value of a diverse workforce, such as better performance (Fernandez & Lee, 2016; Pitts, 2005; Riccucci, 2002), responsiveness (Andrews & Johnston Miller, 2013; Meier, 1993; Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006; Meier & Stewart, 1992), and increased legitimacy and trust in public organizations (Hong, 2017; Riccucci et al., 2014; Van Ryzin et al., 2017), underrepresentation

of women and minorities in public organizations remains (Johnston, 2019).

This study draws upon the theory of representative bureaucracy to understand whether passive representation leads to symbolic representation—that is, if passive representation has a symbolic value to the extent that women find the police an attractive employer. There have been a few studies of symbolic representation with a focus on citizen perceptions of the performance and legitimacy of public organizations (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020), but there has been no study that has simultaneously explored organizational attractiveness and symbolic representation. This exploratory study, by employing an experimental research design involving three randomized treatments, that vary the gender representation of a police department, adds to the body of representative bureaucracy research by focusing on the extent to which

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women find the police attractive as a potential employer. Thus, the research question for this study is: *Does the gender representation of the police affect the extent to which women find the police attractive as an employer?*

Overall, the results show that as the passive representation of women in the police department increased, it was less likely that women found the police department attractive as an employer. Although there are nuanced results in the US and UK samples, which are reported upon, the overall findings are counter-intuitive to the theory of representative bureaucracy, specifically that passive representation leads to symbolic representation (Ricucci et al., 2018; Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2009). A possible explanation for the finding is that the bureaucratic reputation of the police may be a boundary condition to symbolic representation (see Dantas Cabral et al., 2021; Headley et al., 2021; Van Ryzin et al., 2017). Therefore, the first contribution of the study is to add to the theory of representative bureaucracy in that boundary conditions may exist with the result that passive representation does not necessarily lead to symbolic representation. A further contribution of the study is a focus on gender and organizational attractiveness from a comparative country perspective with a cross-country sample (US and UK), which is the first study in representative bureaucracy research to do so. A final contribution of the study is the provision of contemporary evidence from the US and UK police contexts, which suggests that attempts to increase the workforce diversity of the police, despite recruitment campaigns, remain a challenge.

The structure of the article, after this introduction, is first an outline of policing in the US and UK to contextualize the study. The article then includes a theoretical section that outlines representative bureaucracy theory, specifically symbolic representation research, toward a proposition for this exploratory study. The third section is a description of the experimental research design and methods. The fourth section presents the results and analysis; the fifth section is a discussion of the results; and finally, a conclusion arguing that bureaucratic reputation is a boundary condition to symbolic representation.

POLICING IN THE US AND THE UK

Policing is traditionally male-dominated with well-embedded patriarchal norms although there have been efforts to diversify (Brown et al., 2020; Bury et al., 2018; Franklin, 2005). The perception and reputation of the police are one of promoting and valuing masculine attributes of aggression, creating a cult of masculinity (Dick & Jankowicz, 2001; Fernandes, 2011; Johnston & Houston, 2018). The social construction of gender results in societal mores with expectant behaviors and attributes associated with masculinity (e.g., aggression) and femininity (e.g., nurturant) (Bem, 1981). The police is a space that places a value on masculinity, which glorifies status, aggression, and dominance; by

entering the police, officers gain status, authority, and legitimacy in the use of force (Franklin, 2005). Men in the police therefore do not accept the encroachment of women in policing (Aiello, 2019) because femininity is seen as being incongruent to policing (Simpson & Croft, 2021). Thus, the police as a masculine space is where women (and minorities) are considered as “other” and excluded (Kennedy et al., 2020).

It has been recognized that increasing the passive representation of women police officers is particularly important in addressing gender-based violence such as sexual assaults (Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006), domestic violence (Andrews & Johnston Miller, 2013), and rape (Schuck, 2018), thus improving performance outcomes (Schuck et al., 2021) and the legitimacy of the police (Kang et al., 2021). However, evidence suggests that women find the police unattractive as an employer because of perceptions of masculinity, sexism, and poor career opportunities (Aiello, 2019; Batton & Wright, 2018). More recent studies report that gender representation in policing has improved but varies across the globe (Batton & Wright, 2018). For example, the percentage of women in the police force is higher in the UK than in the US (Simpson & Croft, 2021).

Increasing workforce diversity has been an objective for US police departments with departments launching recruitment drives and outreach programs to the public in order to increase workforce diversity (Police Executive Research Forum [PERF], 2019). For example, in 2015, an initiative was launched to improve the gender and ethnic representation of the police and thus better reflect the public (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). Most police departments, however, were unsuccessful in attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds with approximately, a third of police departments declaring an inability to attract women candidates (PERF, 2019). Despite the introduction of strategies to attract women applicants such as the “Women in Law Enforcement Open House”, organized by the Tucson Police Department, and the “Women in Blue” event, organized by the Miami Beach, Florida Police Department (PERF, 2019), the lack of diversity and gender representation remains a key issue for the US police, possibly due to embedded norms of masculinity, prejudice, and gender discrimination (Shalal & Moore, 2020). For example, Wilson et al. (2010) found that US police offered greater flexibility in salary offerings to men compared to women applicants. Moreover, George Floyd’s murder led to a noteworthy decrease in recruiting police officers regardless of gender, suggesting that the public perceives the police as a discriminatory and thus unattractive employer (Shalal & Moore, 2020). According to Mellen (2021), the US police now face a historic workforce crisis with difficulties in attracting and retaining police officers.

Similarly, the UK police introduced various recruitment drives across the general population through, for example, the Police Uplift program (Home Office, 2022) and human resource practices such as clear and flexible entry

routes and professional development opportunities with the aim to improve its workforce diversity (Silvestri, 2018). Women in the police have increased over the past two decades in the UK (Silvestri, 2015), but there remains gender underrepresentation. HM Government (2021) reported that up to 31 March 2021, the UK police workforce consisted of approximately 32% women. However, in terms of voluntary resignations, 43% were by women police officers compared to 29% of men in the year ending March 2021 (HM Government, 2021). The UK police have a reputation of having a macho canteen culture of discrimination and misogyny (Franklin, 2005; Johnston & Houston, 2018). A recent investigation by Independent Office for Police Conduct (2022) found that the Metropolitan Police, the largest police force in the UK, has a culture of racism, misogyny, harassment (including threats of rape), and the exchange of offensive social media messaging. The rape and murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 by a serving police officer and the handling by the police of women protesters following the murder brought into sharp focus the egregious treatment of women by the police. According to the Police Foundation (2021), the public's perception of the police is therefore at an all-time low. While the 2040 vision of UK policing promises to improve policing (College of Policing, 2020), high turnover rates and low rates of recruitment of women persist (HM Government, 2021), suggesting that the UK police may be perceived as an unattractive employer. Hence, it is timely to explore the extent to which a more representative police force would be attractive to women as an employer.

REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY THEORY: SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

The study draws upon representative bureaucracy theory, and although much has been written about the relationship between passive and active representation, there is less research on symbolic representation (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Headley et al., 2021). Passive representation is the extent to which a bureaucracy reflects or mirrors the society it serves, and active representation is the extent to which bureaucrats of a sociodemographic group represent the interests of citizens from the same group (Mosher, 1968). A bureaucracy is passively representative to the extent that it employs minorities and women in numbers proportionate to the share of the population (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011). Active representation is the extent to which bureaucrats act, consciously or unconsciously, in the interests of citizens who share group identities (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011). The shared identity is based on sociodemographic groups that have the same attitudes, values, and beliefs (Pitkin, 1967). For example, studies have shown that passive representation of women police officers has resulted in active representation with better outcomes for women as victims of gender-based violence (Andrews & Johnston Miller, 2013;

Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006). Much of the studies on representative bureaucracy has examined the benefits of representation, the translation of passive to active representation, and the circumstances under which this occurs (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Fernandez, 2020).

Mosher (1968) acknowledged that there is symbolic value to passive representation. The implication is that passive representation sends a strong signal that the bureaucracy is open and accessible to citizens (Mosher, 1968; Riccucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). Passive representation is symbolic in the sense that the sociodemographic group sees and identifies with people like themselves in positions of authority (Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2009). Thus, the benefits of passive representation are in essence symbolic, a reassurance that the process of government is open to all people (Headley et al., 2021). In other words, the mere presence of passive representation could itself translate into benefits for the citizenry without any actions taken by bureaucrats (Gade & Wilkins, 2013; Riccucci & Van Ryzin, 2017; Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2009). According to Hawes (2021), symbolic representation may produce changes in citizens themselves (without bureaucrats even taking representative action) because bureaucracies that are passively representative of their communities send signals of representation that can create greater levels of cooperation and coproduction.

The extent to which an organization is passively representative signals to women and minorities the extent to which they would fit into an organization (Carless, 2005; Thomas & Wise, 1999) or trust an organization (Hawes, 2021). Thomas and Wise (1999), in their study of organizational attractiveness, found that women and minorities placed more importance on diversity factors than did men and non-minorities. Judge and Cable (1997) found that job applicants' choices are influenced by perceptions of compatibility between the applicant and an organization, which occurs when an organization and the applicant share similar characteristics or values. Madera et al. (2019) found that perceptions of fitting into an organization were influenced by perceptions of diversity in the organization. Their results also showed that women perceived more fairness than men when an organization was more passively representative of women in senior management positions (Madera et al., 2019). Thus, the extent to which an organization is passively representative sends signals or symbolic messaging on the extent to which an applicant would feel they would fit into the organization or be treated fairly (see Aiello, 2019; Yu, 2018).

Extant research has demonstrated the translation of passive to symbolic representation and the benefits to citizens or the organization. Theobald and Haider-Markel (2009) found interactive effects between the race of a police officer and citizens in traffic stops and searches concluding that passive representation of African-American police officers led to symbolic representation with enhanced African-American citizens' trust and legitimacy in the police. Their findings showed that the perceptions of citizens differ depending on the race of the

police officer, which suggests that police "...should be encouraged to find additional ways to diversify the police force if they are concerned with citizen perceptions of police actions" (Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2009, p. 419).

Symbolic representation was also found in a study of US veterans. Gade and Wilkins (2013) found that service providers influenced the level of service that US veteran clients reported receiving from the agency; that is, veterans were more satisfied with a service when their counselors were also veterans, suggesting a link between passive and symbolic representation, in that clients of a bureaucracy perceived better treatment and were more satisfied when a bureaucrat shared their identity. The studies by Theobald and Haider-Markel (2009) and Gade and Wilkins (2013) could not necessarily discern whether active representation was at play in the interaction between bureaucrat and client, i.e., whether there were coproduction effects (see Hawes, 2021).

Thus, a new wave of symbolic representation research emerged using experimental research to test the effects of passive representation on citizens' perceptions of a public organization (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020). Riccucci et al. (2014) varied the gender composition of a hypothetical domestic violence unit (DVU) in an experiment to test whether the passive representation was associated with citizens' perceptions of the unit's efficacy, trust, and fairness and whether there was an interaction of representativeness and perceptions of performance. The randomized experiment, using an online survey, showed that if the legitimacy of the DVU increased on the basis of the passive representation of women, then citizens were more willing to report domestic violence crimes (Riccucci et al., 2014). Furthermore, the study showed that the gender representativeness of the DVU had a causal effect on co-production behaviors (i.e., willingness to report domestic violence crimes) and perceptions of efficacy, trust, and fairness (Riccucci et al., 2014). The causal effect of gender representation in terms of perceptions of efficacy, trust, and fairness were greater for women who was more willing to co-produce with the police (Riccucci et al., 2014). Similarly, Riccucci et al. (2018) tested for symbolic representation by varying the race composition of police officers in a hypothetical police department and showed the effects on citizens' perceptions of performance, trustworthiness, and fairness of the police, which increased among black citizens when the police department was composed of mostly black police officers (Riccucci et al., 2018).

A further experimental study by Riccucci et al. (2016) found that when the description of a recycling program included public officials with women's names, women in the study were more willing to recycle. Thus, women were more willing to cooperate with the government and coproduce policy outcomes (Riccucci et al., 2016). Their findings supported symbolic representation effects. Van Ryzin et al. (2017) conceptually replicated these experimental studies within the policy domain of emergency services, although they found no symbolic representation

effects. Van Ryzin et al. (2017) therefore suggest that further studies on symbolic representation should probe conditions under which symbolic representation takes place. The current study addresses this research call by replicating these experimental studies.

A field experiment in a Rio de Janeiro favela, involving citizens' perceptions of public organizations (police and public schools) found that bureaucratic reputation was an important factor in symbolic representation (Dantas Cabral et al., 2021). More precisely, bureaucratic representation was less important when public schools had a positive reputation, and when bureaucratic reputation was negative, as in the case of the police, symbolic representation was more important (Dantas Cabral et al., 2021). Their study also showed procedural justice, or the way citizens expect to be treated by the police, has interactive effects with symbolic representation (Dantas Cabral et al., 2021).

A further field experiment conducted by Linos (2018) within a US police department tested for variations in job adverts and whether they would attract more diverse applicants. Although the study did not specifically test for symbolic representation but rather public service motivation, the relevance of this study is that it investigated whether a job advert focusing on community service, challenging work, or the career benefits would be more salient for African-American and women applicants. The results showed that challenging work and career benefits had a significant effect on attracting applicants, suggesting that public service motivation messages in job adverts alone would not attract diverse applicants, but rather adverts that had a focus on personal benefits would be more effective in attracting minorities (Linos, 2018). The current study employs a job advert and provides a description of benefits in the advert, but through a randomized online experiment, heeding Van Ryzin et al.'s (2017) and James et al.'s (2017) guidance on experimental research design (see Methods section), with the aim to explore the effects of the varying gender representation of a hypothetical police department and the extent to which women find the police attractive as a potential employer. In line with previous studies, the proposition of this exploratory study is that women will find the police organizationally attractive when the police are more passively representative of women.

METHODS

Measures: Organizational attractiveness

The study employs the construct of organizational attractiveness because organizational attractiveness research has demonstrated that job applicants' attraction to an organization is based on symbolic meanings about the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Applicants may be attracted to an organization because of symbolic attributes

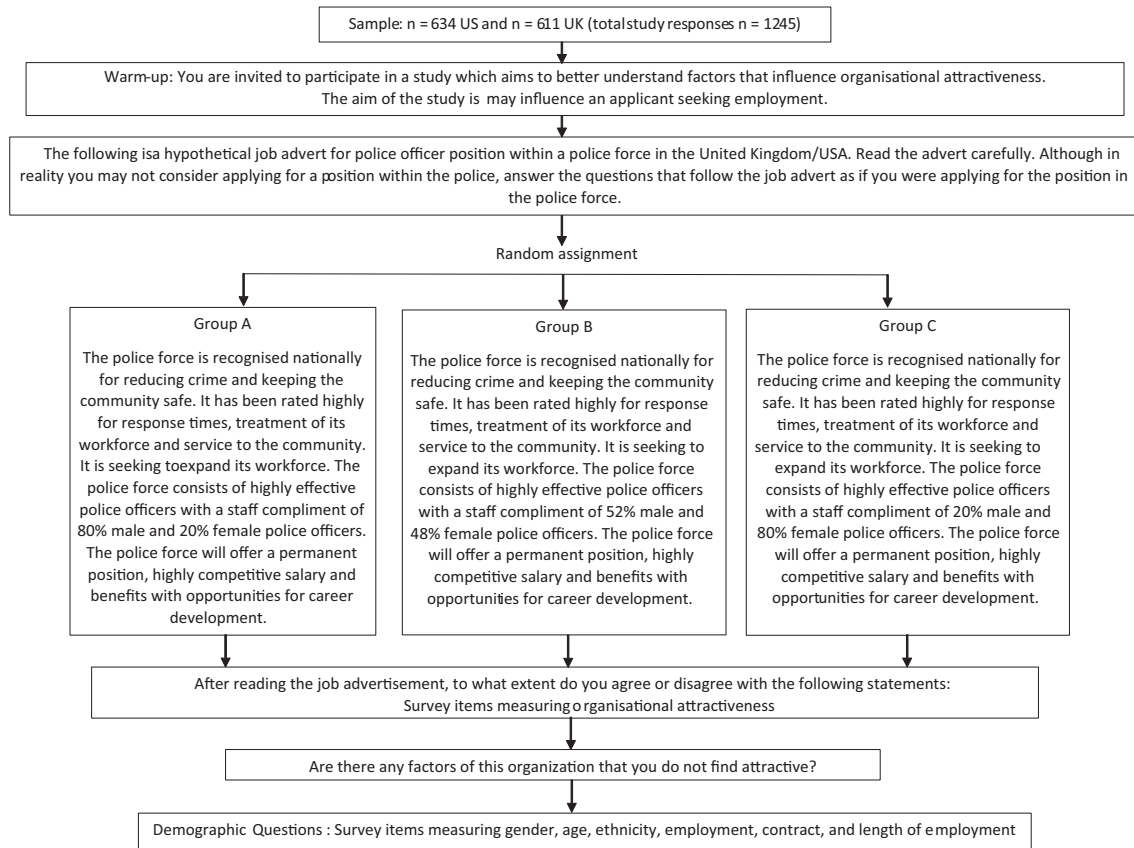


FIGURE 1 Experimental research design.

TABLE 1 Confirmatory factor analysis for the constructs of organizational attractiveness.

Model	χ^2	Df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Three-factor model	106.882	25	0.991	0.983	0.991	0.051
Two-factor model: General attractiveness and intentions to pursue	64.206	13	0.993	0.989	0.993	0.056
Two-factor model: General attractiveness and reputational prestige	66.077	8	0.985	0.972	0.985	0.076
Two-factor model: Intentions to pursue and reputational prestige	111.415	13	0.979	0.966	0.979	0.078
One-factor Model	615.018	35	0.935	0.916	0.935	0.115

Note: CFI is the comparative fit index; TLI is the Tucker–Lewis index; IFI is the incremental fit index; and RMSEA is the root-mean-square error of approximation.

such as reputational prestige (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Organizational attractiveness is conceptualized as the degree to which a person perceives an organization as a good place to work, or the desirability of working for an organization (Aiman-Smith, 2001). Highhouse et al.'s (2003) scale measure of organizational attractiveness is therefore adopted because it has been demonstrated to have construct validity in applicants' intentions to apply for a job vacancy (see Gomes & Das Neves, 2011). The Highhouse et al. (2003) measure for organizational attractiveness uses three scales, namely, general attractiveness, intentions to pursue, and reputational prestige, based on five-point

Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) questions (see Appendix A for scale and survey questions). Cronbach's alpha for general attractiveness, intentions to pursue, and reputational prestige was 0.898, 0.899, and 0.757, respectively.

Experimental design

Observational studies have reported the external validity of representative bureaucracy theory (see Gade & Wilkins, 2013), and experimental studies have reported

TABLE 2 Descriptive data for US sample.

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Total	$\chi^2/df, p\text{-value}$
Gender	Female	100	103	107	310	4.8398/4
	Male	110	100	100	310	$p = .304$
	None gender specific	4	8	2	14	
	Total	214	211	209	634	
Age	18–24	46	43	44	133	11.9365/10
	25–34	68	87	81	236	$p = .289$
	35–44	50	37	46	133	
	45–54	25	14	12	51	
	55–64	20	20	18	58	
	Over 65	5	10	8	23	
	Total	214	211	209	634	
	Ethnicity	African American/other Black ethnicity	33	24	32	89
America/Native Indian/Alaskan		4	7	3	14	$p = .487$
Arab		0	0	2	2	
Asian (Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese)		11	8	8	27	
Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, other Asian)		10	8	12	30	
Hawaiian/Pacific Island		0	0	1	1	
White		156	164	151	471	
Total		214	211	209	634	
Employment	Full-time student	23	20	26	69	6.7147/12
	Full-time employment	95	94	94	283	$p = .876$
	Part-time employment	31	22	23	76	
	Furloughed	1	3	1	5	
	Retired	12	10	9	31	
	Self-employed	18	26	25	69	
	Unemployed	34	36	31	101	
	Total	214	211	209	634	
Contract	Non-permanent	101	88	93	282	1.2968/2
	Permanent	113	123	116	352	$p = .523$
	Total	214	211	209	634	
Length of Employment	< 1 year	63	58	63	184	13.9647/12
	1–3 years	57	57	58	172	$p = .303$
	4–6 years	32	41	32	105	
	7–9 years	26	18	22	66	
	10–14 years	18	12	17	47	
	15–20 years	7	16	4	27	
	> 20 years	11	9	13	33	
	Total	214	211	209	634	

high internal validity (see Jilke et al., 2016). This study therefore employed an experimental method, which involved a randomized 3×3 factorial design that was incorporated into an online survey. The experimental design adhered to the recommended guidelines for experiments in public management (James et al., 2017) by involving “active interventions (treatments)”, randomly assigning treatment conditions to experimental subjects, and incorporating measured outcomes that can

be used to identify causal effects between variables, as depicted in Figure 1.

After reading the job advert, participants were asked to respond to the same set of questions related to organizational attractiveness. The experiment started with a warm-up statement that helped participants familiarize themselves with the overall scope of the study. Participants were then advised to read a hypothetical job advert for a police officer position, which was located either in

TABLE 3 Descriptive data for UK sample.

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Total	χ^2/df , p-value
Gender	Female	92	109	102	303	3.364/4
	Male	110	92	99	301	$p = .499$
	None gender specific	2	3	2	7	
	Total	204	204	203	611	
Age	18–24	22	16	25	63	19.710/10
	25–34	30	37	37	104	$p = .032$
	35–44	41	40	31	112	
	45–54	48	28	28	104	
	55–64	35	52	59	146	
	Over 65	28	31	23	82	
	Total	204	204	203	611	
Ethnicity	White	169	174	164	507	9.802/10
	Asian	17	21	20	58	$p = .458$
	Black African	6	1	6	13	
	Black Caribbean	5	2	7	14	
	Any other black background (including mixed)	6	6	4	16	
	Arab	1	0	2	3	
	Total	204	204	203	611	
Employment	Full-time student	11	11	12	34	16.575/12
	Full-time employment	84	72	86	242	$p = .166$
	Part-time employment	26	30	11	67	
	Furloughed	4	8	7	19	
	Retired	34	45	42	121	
	Self-employed	17	20	23	60	
	Unemployed	28	18	22	68	
Total	204	204	203	611		
Contract	Non-permanent	67	60	77	204	3.361/2
	Permanent	137	144	126	407	$p = .186$
	Total	204	204	203	611	
Length of Employment	< 1 year	48	34	52	134	12.896/12
	1–3 years	41	56	49	146	$p = .377$
	4–6 years	35	26	34	95	
	7–9 years	15	19	14	48	
	10–14 years	27	22	21	70	
	15–20 years	12	18	10	40	
	> 20 years	26	29	23	78	
	Total	204	204	203	611	

the US or UK (depending on participants' location), and to answer the survey questions as if they were applying for the position. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the three treatment groups (A, B, or C), which presented identical organizational descriptions and benefits offered but manipulated the passive gender representation for three police departments. Similar to experimental studies investigating gender representativeness in the police context (see Riccucci et al., 2014), the study manipulated the job advert with a male-dominated (Group A),

gender-balanced (Group B), and female-dominated (Group C) representation for the hypothetical police department. The gender identity of the participants, that is whether “female”, “male” or “non-gender specific”, were independent variables.

Data were collected using an online survey via Prolific during March 2021. Prolific is a popular online platform that has been internationally used to collect data from representative samples (see Mellis & Bickel, 2020). It has been commented that Prolific is more ethical compared

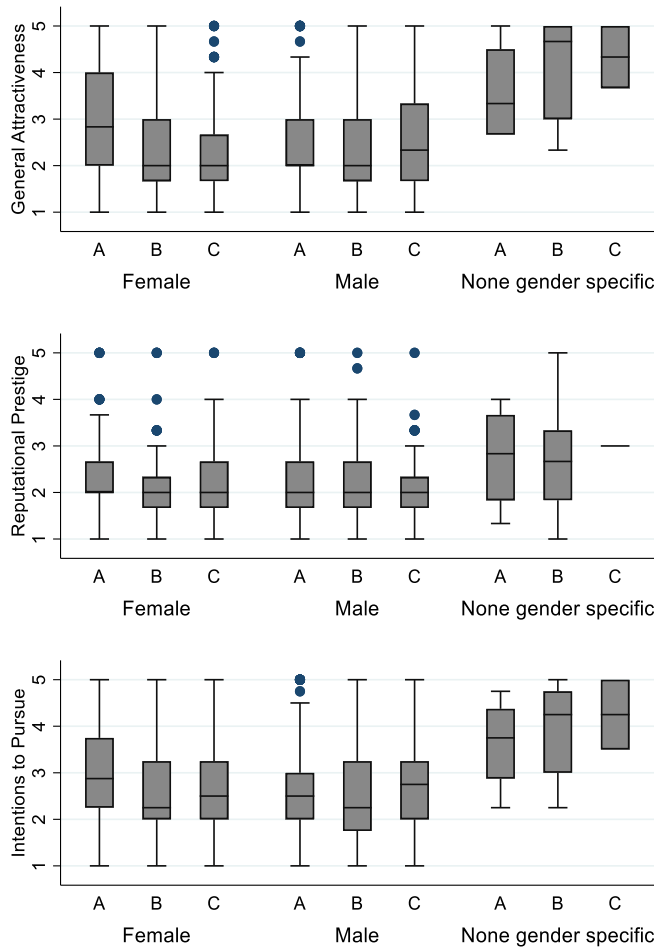


FIGURE 2 Distributions of responses by gender identity and gender representation, US Sample.

to other online platforms because a minimum pay for participants is agreed upon in advance (Palan & Schitter, 2018), which provides higher quality data (Peer et al., 2017). Participants were drawn from the general population, given that the police in the US and UK have recruitment programs to attract diverse applicants from the general population. Participants received a nominal payment for completing the survey, i.e., GBP 0.88 or USD 1.20 per five minutes participation. In this study, Prolific enabled the recruitment from the US and UK by linking participants to two online surveys hosted on Qualtrics, one for US-based participants and another for UK-based participants. The same experimental design and questions were used for all participants with the exception of ethnic and race categorizations. These categorizations were in accordance with respective countries' national census surveys. Age was a further demographic question in the survey, and questions on employment status and length of service were also included in the survey given that the experiment involved issues of employment. In line with previous experiments in public management research (Ricucci et al., 2014; Ricucci et al., 2016; Ricucci et al., 2018; Van Ryzin et al., 2017), the minimum

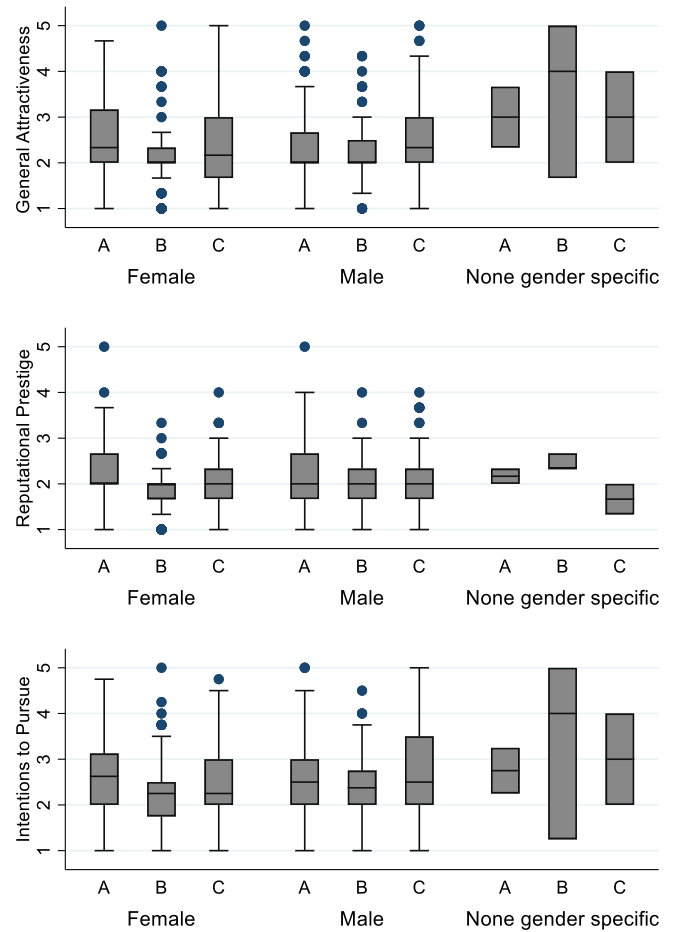


FIGURE 3 Distributions of responses by gender identity and gender representation, UK Sample.

number of participants per treatment group should be 200, therefore 200 participants per three experimental treatments is 600 participants per study, and across two studies the number of participants should be at least 1200 participants in total. We received 634 complete responses for the US sample and 611 complete responses for the UK sample, thus 1245 total responses.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SPSS Amos 26 was performed to evaluate the fit of the three-factor model measuring organizational attractiveness and showed that the three-factor model had the best goodness-of-fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999) compared to alternative models (see Table 1), supporting that the three scales of organizational attractiveness are distinct.

RESULTS

There was participant gender parity between the US (see Table 2) and UK (see Table 3) samples. As Table 2 demonstrates, the US participants were predominantly white (74.3%) and most between the ages of 25 and 34 (37.2%) in permanent (55.5%) full-time employment

TABLE 4 Tobit regression results for US sample.

Variables	General attractiveness	Reputational prestige	Intentions to pursue
Male	-0.049 (0.173)	0.011 (0.125)	0.010 (0.162)
None gender specific	1.962*** (0.468)	0.697** (0.327)	1.534*** (0.432)
Female # Group A	0.657*** (0.173)	0.360*** (0.124)	0.528*** (0.163)
Female # Group C	-0.117 (0.170)	0.169 (0.122)	0.011 (0.160)
Male # Group A	0.0911 (0.170)	0.282** (0.123)	0.092 (0.160)
Male # Group C	0.193 (0.173)	0.020 (0.126)	0.133 (0.164)
None gender specific # Group A	-0.693 (0.770)	0.032 (0.541)	-0.505 (0.710)
None gender specific # Group C	0.329 (1.039)	0.281 (0.697)	0.508 (0.972)
Age	-0.069* (0.0364)	-0.018 (0.0263)	-0.067* (0.0343)
Constant	2.613*** (0.152)	2.058*** (0.110)	2.730*** (0.143)
Observations	634	634	634

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

*** $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

* $p < .1$.

(44.6%) for less than 3 years (56.2%). The UK participants (see Table 3) were predominantly white (83%) and in permanent (66.6%) full-time employment (39.6%) for less than 3 years (45.8%). There was successful randomization by gender, and by country, thereby demonstrating the internal validity of the study with the passive representation of gender randomized across all treatment groups and samples.

Overall, the majority of participants did not find the police an attractive organization. In both the US and UK samples, reputational prestige received the lowest score with an average of 2.199 (SD = 0.810) for the US sample and 2.064 (SD = 0.636) for the UK sample. General attractiveness and intentions to pursue both received slightly higher scores with an average of 2.585 (SD 1.111) and 2.717 (SD = 1.059), respectively, for the US sample, and an average of 2.357 (SD = 0.849) and 2.515 (SD = 0.818), respectively, for the UK sample.

Figures 2 and 3 show the distribution of average responses to general attractiveness, prestige, and intentions to pursue scales by women, men, and none gender-specific participants in the male-dominated (Group A), gender-balanced (Group B), and female-dominated (Group C) police departments in the US and UK samples. In both samples, women participants in the male-

dominated department (Group A) rated the police higher than women in the gender-balanced department (Group B). In the UK sample, women in the female-dominated department (Group C) rated the police higher than women in the gender-balanced department (Group B). Overall, responses by men participants appeared more similar across gender representations, compared to responses by women participants. Responses by none gender-specific participants were more in agreement compared to responses by women and men participants. However, the pattern of responses for none gender-specific participants was rather volatile due to the very small number of participants in this category, and therefore the results are not further reported upon.

Tables 4 and 5 present the results of tobit regression analyses using STATA 17, with average responses to general attractiveness, prestige, and intentions to pursue scales as dependent variables. "Female" was used as a baseline for the comparison between genders across all passive gender representations. The gender-balanced department (Group B) was used as a baseline to capture the effect of passive gender representation on general attractiveness, prestige, and intentions to pursue a career by women, men, and none gender-specific participants.

TABLE 5 Tobit regression results for UK sample.

Variables	General attractiveness	Reputational prestige	Intentions to pursue
Male	0.062 (0.124)	0.177* (0.0973)	0.199* (0.117)
None gender specific	1.527*** (0.521)	0.600 (0.398)	1.290*** (0.491)
Female # Group A	0.358*** (0.124)	0.319*** (0.0973)	0.416*** (0.117)
Female # Group C	0.238** (0.120)	0.234** (0.0946)	0.277** (0.114)
Male # Group A	0.059 (0.123)	0.074 (0.0967)	0.165 (0.116)
Male # Group C	0.377*** (0.126)	0.113 (0.0988)	0.289** (0.119)
None gender specific # Group A	-0.577 (0.799)	-0.214 (0.620)	-0.681 (0.755)
None gender specific # Group C	-0.672 (0.799)	-0.769 (0.620)	-0.516 (0.755)
Age	-0.095*** (0.0225)	-0.054*** (0.0177)	-0.085*** (0.0213)
Constant	2.479*** (0.122)	2.026*** (0.0963)	2.524*** (0.116)
Observations	611	611	611

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

* $p < .1$.

The overall insignificant coefficients of the “male” variable confirm no difference in responses between women and men participants across all passive gender representations of police departments. For women in the US sample (see Table 4), responses to general attractiveness, prestige, and intentions to pursue scales were all significantly higher for the male-dominated department (Group A) compared to the gender-balanced department (Group B), whereas there was no significant difference in general attractiveness between the female-dominated (Group C) and the gender-balanced department (Group B). For men in the US sample, passive gender representation did not have a significant effect on both general attractiveness and intentions to pursue; however, reputational prestige was significantly higher in the male-dominated department compared to the gender-balanced department.

For women in the UK sample (see Table 5), general attractiveness, reputational prestige, and intentions to pursue significantly increased for the male-dominated department (Group A), compared to the gender-balanced department (Group B). They also significantly increased for the female-dominated department (Group C) compared to the gender-balanced department. For men in the UK sample, there was no difference between the male-dominated department (Group A) and the gender-balanced department (Group B); in contrast, the female-

dominated department (Group C) was found to be generally more attractive than the gender-balanced department and also positively contribute to intentions to pursue a career in the police.

DISCUSSION

In response to the research question—does the gender representation of the police affect the extent to which women find the police attractive as an employer?—the results show that passive representation of women in the police did affect the extent to which women as potential applicants found the police attractive as an employer. However, the effect of passive representation of women was not as expected, and therefore the proposition of the study did not hold true. In other words, overall, women did not find a police department that was more passively representative of women or more organizationally attractive. Overall, the results showed that in the US and UK samples, the police department with majority of men passively represented (i.e., Group A) was more attractive to women as an organization for potential employment. This is contradictory to the theory of representative bureaucracy. As demonstrated by extant research, passive representation can lead to symbolic representation (Gade & Wilkins, 2013; Riccucci & Van

Ryzin, 2017; Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2009). A possible explanation for the results could be bureaucratic reputation, which is discussed below.

Dantas Cabral et al. (2021) argue that bureaucratic reputation could explain the findings that the police are perceived as a less attractive employment option. A public organization's reputation is shaped by individuals' reactions and associated behaviors (Carpenter & Krause, 2012). Bureaucratic reputation is informed by lived experiences whether through actual or vicarious experiences (Headley et al., 2021). The theory of representative bureaucracy is premised on individual identities within sociodemographic groups, but identities are shaped by lived experiences (Headley et al., 2021). Thus, understanding identity and lived experiences of an individual, their perceptions and expectations when coming into contact with a bureaucracy, and how they are treated by the bureaucracy may help understand symbolic representation effects (Headley et al., 2021).

According to Headley et al. (2021: 4) "The important consideration in terms of the limitations of symbolic representation is that the result of this encounter becomes a lived experience for the individual and thus creates a feedback process between how the individual felt about the encounter (in terms of fairness, equity, and so forth) and the person's identity and, more importantly, the person's future expectations." For example, Lee and van Ryzin (2020) found that public organizations had better reputations than others, which was tied to demographic (age, race, and gender), socioeconomic, geographic, and ideological characteristics of the citizen. Their study showed that women were more likely to view the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as having good reputations. Lee and van Ryzin (2020) argue that gender influences judgments of policy issues such as social welfare, environmental protection, public safety, and education. However, they found women are less likely to rate the Department of Education (DOE) as having a good reputation (Lee & Van Ryzin, 2020). They speculate that this may be influenced by the greater involvement of women in local schools, which in the US have tended to be critical of education policies (Lee & Van Ryzin, 2020). Thus, women's lived experience of the DOE may have influenced the reputation of the public organization.

There has been limited research on the impact of bureaucratic reputation on symbolic representation and how bureaucratic reputation influences a public organization's attractiveness as a potential employer. Maor (2016) identifies areas of future research, which include manipulating or varying information about an organization to understand audiences, various attributes, and the importance attached to a bureaucracy. One of the few studies to identify bureaucratic reputation as having an impact on symbolic reputation, by Dantas Cabral et al. (2021), acknowledged that future studies should examine whether a bad reputation could be a priming effect,

which undermines the effects of symbolic representation. The results of the current study demonstrated that overall participants did not find the police organizationally attractive, which suggests that the reputation of the police may impact the extent to which citizens find an organization attractive. The reputation of the police may be a boundary condition to symbolic representation (see Headley et al., 2021; Van Ryzin et al., 2017).

The nuanced results that women participants in both samples found the male-dominated police department more organizationally attractive, while both men and women participants found the female-dominated police department more organizationally attractive in the UK sample, are inexplicable, and we are cautious in offering explanations for the puzzling results. Similar to Lee and van Ryzin (2020), we would argue that gender influences perceptions and judgments about public organizations. Therefore, a possible explanation may lie in the social construction of gender with policing being associated with masculinity (Simpson & Croft, 2021). In other words, the preference of a male-dominated police department may be more congruent with societal mores of policing being a male space (Franklin, 2005). For example, Artz and Taengnoi (2016) found that there was a negative relationship between women's job satisfaction and having female supervisors. They suggest that this may be due to leadership being "closely associated with male traits" and that women in leadership positions are viewed as incongruent (Artz & Taengnoi, 2016:195). Thus, the male-dominated police department may be more organizationally attractive because it conforms to the social construction of gender, and the reputation of the police as masculine may be a boundary condition. The puzzling results for the UK sample may be a response to or protestations of police masculinity given the murder of Sarah Everard at the time of data collection. The dataset of the study is therefore offered to the public administration scholarly community for further analysis and to further investigate the boundary conditions of symbolic representation. It is suggested that future research involve qualitative studies to understand the public's perception of the police and investigate whether the passive representation of sociodemographic identities, attitudes (e.g., liberal vis-à-vis conservative), or political values (see Jackson et al., 2022) would have any effects on the extent to which job applicants would find the police organizationally attractive, and to further understand boundary conditions of symbolic representation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have added to the research on representative bureaucracy by, firstly, exploring the link between passive and symbolic representation, as previous studies have tended to focus on understanding the link between passive and active representation. Few studies

have explored symbolic representation and the conditions under which it occurs. Studies on symbolic representation have shown mixed results (see Van Ryzin et al., 2017) with researchers calling for further studies to understand conditions under which symbolic representation occurs (Headley et al., 2021; Van Ryzin et al., 2017). Thus, a second contribution of this study is that boundary conditions of bureaucratic reputation may mitigate the effects of passive representation translating into symbolic representation. In other words, the mere presence of a passively representative bureaucracy does not necessarily result in the linearity of symbolic representation, but boundary conditions exist. A third contribution of the study is the focus on gender from a comparative country perspective. While many studies on symbolic representation have focused on race, a few studies have explored symbolic gender representation. Also, few have included cross-country samples, and in this study, the US and UK have been included. Finally, there is an important societal and public administration implication of the study. As previous studies have demonstrated, representative bureaucracy has beneficial outcomes for citizens, public organizations, and communities. If symbolic representation is lacking, then this impacts efforts to improve the passive representation of a public organization and ultimately the active representation of women and minorities.

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APPENDIX A

Construct	Item
General attractiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This organization is attractive to me as a place for employment • I am interested in learning more about this organization • I think I could fit into this organization
Intentions to pursue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would accept a job offer from this organization • I would make this organization one of my first choices as an employer • I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this organization
Reputational prestige	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would recommend this organization to a friend looking for a job • Employees are probably proud to say they work at this organization • There are probably many who would like to work at this organization • The organization offers the possibility of working together with different people

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