

ASU Center for Organization
Research and Design
Arizona State University

CORD presents a brown bag lunch talk by:



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Thursday, January 31, 2019

UCENT 480

Downtown Phoenix Campus

12:00-1:00 pm

Does Representative Bureaucracy Theory Deserve All the Limelight? Comparing Frameworks for Understanding Organizational Racial Dynamics

Abstract

Representative bureaucracy theory is currently the dominant framework for understanding how personnel demographics affect bureaucratic outputs and outcomes. I consider representative bureaucracy theory alongside two alternative theoretical approaches (rainbow coalitions and organizational diversity) and develop hypotheses based on each approach. I then test these hypotheses using two large panel datasets, which each contain outcome measures for five different racial groups. The strongest effects, by far, appear to be those created by a same-race match in clients and bureaucrats, which is consistent with the logic of representative bureaucracy theory. There is little evidence of rainbow coalitions forming, but diversity does appear to generally help minority clients while harming white clients. While the predictions of representative bureaucracy theory are generally confirmed, results consistently cut against expectations for one racial group (African Americans), and nonlinear effects do not always conform with theoretical expectations.

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