Will I succeed here? The impact of management racial representativeness and manager

sponsorship on racial minorities' workplace expectations and attitudes

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Abstract

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Despite their increased presence in entry-level and junior roles in the professional

workforce in the U.S., individuals with marginalized racial identities continue to be significantly

underrepresented in managerial and executive roles in the upper echelons. The first goal of this

paper was to conceptualize such prevalent hierarchical representation gaps with the construct of

management racial representativeness—which refers to the level of congruence in racial

compositions among entry-level employees vis-à-vis upper management within the same

organization—and investigate how perceived management racial representativeness influences

underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes. The second goal

was to explore the extent to which *sponsorship behaviors*—which refer to a specific set of

instrumental behaviors aimed at amplifying employees' chances for advancement—enacted by

individual managers may moderate the impact of perceived management racial

representativeness on underrepresented racial group members.

The study findings demonstrate that perceived lack of management racial

representativeness led underrepresented racial group members to hold negative expectations

regarding their own advancement prospects in their organization, and that these negative

expectations, in turn, resulted in negative workplace attitudes (e.g., low levels of job satisfaction

and organizational identification). Moreover, while manager sponsorship behaviors did not serve

to mitigate the negative impact of low management racial representativeness, they independently

positively influenced underrepresented racial group members' expectations of advancement and subsequently their attitudes.

These findings illustrate that there exist two independent—and equally impactful—levers for fostering an organizational environment in which upward job mobility is perceived as accessible to all racial groups and is intentionally pursued at multiple levels. On the one hand, management racial representativeness functions as a contextual signal that provides a general idea regarding the extent to which advancement may be achievable within the organization. On the other hand, manager sponsorship affects underrepresented racial group members at a more proximal level in a more relational and direct way, as it takes place within interpersonal manager-employee relationships and involves targeted behaviors that tangibly support employees' career progression. Accordingly, it is critical for organizations to engage in a two-pronged approach for diversity management by implementing long-term systemic diversification efforts aimed at reducing hierarchical representation gaps, coupled with proactive sponsorship enacted by individual managers in the interim in employees' local work unit environment.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

iii

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

For the past decades, the primary goal of many organizations' diversity, equity, and inclusion (i.e., DEI) initiatives has been to increase the entry of traditionally underrepresented employees in their workforce according to legal and policy requirements (Bartels et al., 2013; Harrison et al., 2006; Kalev et al., 2006; Thomas & Ely, 1996). More recently, in response to critical events such as the murder of George Floyd, organizations have showcased their renewed sense of commitment to fostering a racially just workplace by publicly displaying their pledges and initiatives. Some organizations hired Chief Diversity Officers for the first time (Mallick, 2020). Others commissioned enterprise-wide DEI advisory groups (Moore, 2020). Many marked Juneteenth an annual paid holiday (Duffy, 2020).

Old and new, various DEI efforts put forth by organizations have consistently been met with skepticism that they are merely deigned as a quick fix, paying lip service to racial justice and, thus, are insufficient to dismantle the deep-rooted racial inequities in organizations (Banks & Harvey, 2020; Dowell & Jackson, 2020; Roberts & Grayson, 2021). This skepticism stems, in part, from witnessing decades of organizations' failed attempts at promoting and, more importantly, sustaining diverse demographic representation across all levels of the organizational hierarchy (Kalev et al., 2006). In particular, despite the increased entry of individuals with traditionally marginalized racial identities into the lower echelons of the professional workforce, they continue to be significantly underrepresented in the upper career levels that are imbued with the most power (Mercer, 2020).

Recent diversity statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Mercer, 2020) demonstrate that, whereas 13% of the U.S. professional workforce is comprised of Black professionals, they represent 6% of non-managerial professional roles (e.g., entry-level employees) and only 2% of

executive roles in the private sector. Similarly, while Asian professionals constitute 11% of employee roles, their representation decreases to 6% at the executive level. While racial minority group members are represented in incrementally smaller percentages as they ascend the hierarchical career ranks, White professionals' representation increases from 72% to 85% from the employee level to the executive level. These statistics suggest that racial minority group members, but not their White counterparts, continue to struggle with upward job mobility into high-power and high-paid managerial and executive roles.

In the context of such prevalent and persistent racial disparities, underrepresented racial group members are prompted to scan their organizational environment for representation signals that could be relevant and informative as they attempt to make sense of the experiences that they encounter in the workplace (Avery, 2003; Shon et al., 2023; Wilton et al., 2020). Existing social psychology research illustrates that underrepresented racial group members' workplace perceptions, experiences, and expectations—such as their perceptions of an organization's behavioral integrity, their experiences of trust and comfort in the organization, their expectations of social fit as well as task performance—are significantly influenced by their assessments of an organization's overall minority representation (e.g., Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008) as well as representation at a specific hierarchical level (e.g., at the senior executive level) (Sohn et al., 2023; Windscheid et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, what remains underexamined in the extant literature is how underrepresented racial group members may be affected by more nuanced patterns of racial disparities in representation at lower versus upper hierarchical career levels (i.e., hierarchical representation gaps) (Unzueta & Binning 2012). The first goal of this paper is to fill this gap and extend past research by investigating the extent to which and through what mechanism underrepresented

racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes may be shaped by perceived hierarchical representation gaps within their organization. To do so, this paper will conceptualize hierarchical representation gaps with the construct of *management racial representativeness* (Lindsey et al., 2017), which refers to the extent to which the racial composition at the entry level is perceived as being congruent with the racial composition at the upper management level within the same organization.

Perceived management racial representativeness likely serves as a meaningful signal for underrepresented racial group members, as it provides nuanced information regarding differential attrition, retention, and advancement patterns of various racial groups as they ascend the hierarchical ranks (Lindsey et al., 2017; Mercer, 2020; Unzueta & Binning 2012). Thus, underrepresented racial group members may use this signal to form subjective expectations regarding the extent to which there may be opportunities for them to achieve status and power through upward mobility within their organization (Cox, 1993). Furthermore, this process of inferring their own advancement prospects based on perceived management racial representativeness may, in turn, have significant implications for their workplace attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational identification (Avery, 2003; Brockner & Sherman, 2019; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Wilton et al., 2020).

For instance, consider an organization whose diverse racial composition at the entry level is not mirrored in the racial composition at the upper management level, as a result of selective attrition of racial minority groups and advancement of their White counterparts. Based on perceived lack of congruence in the entry-level vis-à-vis upper management racial compositions (i.e., low management racial representativeness), underrepresented racial group members may expect to encounter significant barriers to their upward job mobility in their current organization.

As they form negative expectations regarding their career trajectory based on perceived low management racial representativeness of their organization, such expectations may lead to reduced levels of satisfaction with their current job and identification with their organization.

Accordingly, in addition to exploring the impact of perceived management racial representativeness on expectations of success, this paper seeks to elucidate how these expectations may serve as a mediating mechanism through which perceived hierarchical representation gaps influence important attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational identification) among underrepresented racial group members.

The second goal of this paper is to investigate what role individual managers may play to disrupt the potential negative effects of perceived lack of management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members. Existing research demonstrates that, as they operate at the boundary between upper management and employees' work unit environment, work group managers play a pivotal role in translating, communicating, and even interrupting organizational-level signals (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Mor Barak et al., 2022). In particular, managers have the opportunity and ability to shape employees' psychological process of meaning construction through specific behaviors that they enact in the day-to-day interactions with their employees (Jaser, 2021; Rouleau, 2005; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Zohar & Luria, 2010;).

This paper aims to contribute to this body of research by focusing specifically on *manager sponsorship behaviors* as a potential intervention for moderating the impact of perceived management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes. Manager sponsorship behaviors refer to a set of instrumental behaviors that serve a targeted and strategic developmental function of amplifying work group members' chances of advancing into the upper echelons of the organizational

hierarchy (Chanland & Murphy, 2018; Randel et al., 2021). In the extant literature, sponsorship behaviors are largely categorized into three types of behaviors: (1) proactively providing work group members with challenging yet highly visible and career-enhancing work assignments, (2) increasing their exposure to and connection with influential individuals in the organizational network, and (3) publicly displaying strong advocacy for their promotion (Hewlett, 2013; Hewlett et al., 2010; Ibarra et al., 2010).

Based on such manager sponsorship behaviors that help affirm, enhance, and display individual competence, underrepresented racial group members may expect to lead a successful career in their organization and hold positive workplace attitudes—even in spite of perceived attrition of their racial ingroup members as they ascend the managerial ranks. In such ways, sponsorship behaviors that individual managers enact in the local work unit environment may have a buffering effect against the negative impact of perceived low management racial representativeness on underrepresented work group members as they navigate their professional journey across the hierarchical ranks (Randel et al., 2021; Thomas, 2001).

All in all, this paper aims to introduce management racial representativeness as an organizational signal that has significant implications for underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes, and examine the potential role manager sponsorship behaviors may play in moderating the impact of perceived management racial representativeness. By illustrating specific ways in which perceived management racial representativeness may significantly influence underrepresented racial group members, this paper aims to establish a robust case for organizations to not only recruit and hire but also develop and retain a racially diverse talent pool across the hierarchical career ranks. Moreover, by studying manager sponsorship behaviors as a potential intervention, this paper aims to

elucidate what specific behaviors individual managers may enact to "undo" the potentially

negative effects of an organization's representation signal while the organization works towards

building a sustainable talent pipeline.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the first part of the literature review, signaling theory (Spence, 1973, 2002) will be introduced to illustrate that, among multiple signals communicated in an organizational context, there is a specific set of signals that convey information about how an organization approaches diversity (i.e., diversity signals). This set of signals includes an organization's expressed diversity statements as well as its demographic representation. Incorporating signaling theory with the existing social psychology literature on diversity signals, this paper will demonstrate why demographic representation is a relatively more efficacious signal compared to expressed statements, as well as why demographic representation is a particularly meaningful signal for underrepresented racial group members in their upward mobility journey across the hierarchical ranks. After establishing the case for demographic representation as an efficacious and meaningful organizational signal for underrepresented racial group members, this paper will highlight the importance of conceptualizing demographic representation in terms of representation gaps that exist between lower and higher hierarchical career levels. In particular, this paper will discuss how perceived hierarchical representation gaps may provide underrepresented racial group members with identity-relevant information regarding their advancement prospects, thereby shaping their workplace expectations and attitudes. Lastly, demography literature will be reviewed to introduce the relational demography construct of management racial representativeness as a way of operationalizing and empirically investigating the effects of perceived hierarchical representation gaps on underrepresented racial group members.

The second part of the literature review will shift the focus to exploring what can be done by individual managers to mitigate the impact of organizational representation signals in

organizations that are currently characterized by significant racial disparities in hierarchical representation. To do so, this paper will first discuss the significant role managers play in shaping employees' workplace experiences through the day-to-day behaviors that they enact in the local work unit environment. Then, sponsorship behaviors will be introduced as a specific set of instrumental behaviors that managers may enact to amplify underrepresented racial group members' advancement prospects, thereby positively influencing their subjective expectations regarding their career trajectory as well as their workplace attitudes—and thus potentially offsetting the impact of perceived hierarchical representation gaps within their organization.

Organizational-level Signals

According to signaling theory (Spence, 1973, 2002), information is available to varying degrees to different parities in an organizational context. As a result, asymmetries arise between those who hold information on the one hand, and those who do not but could potentially benefit from having access to the information on the other hand. In hierarchical organizations, for instance, upper management is comprised of individuals who "plan, direct and formulate policies, set strategy and provide the overall direction of organizations" (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 2022). As they oversee organizational governance and management from the highest levels of the organizational hierarchy, these individuals (e.g., executive and senior managers) are likely to be privy to private information about their organization (Connelly et al., 2011). Based on their access to private information, they are able to develop an understanding regarding the underlying qualities of their organization that are otherwise inaccessible and unobservable (Certo et al., 2001; Lindsey et al., 2017).

An important premise of signaling theory is that such insiders function as signalers in that they communicate certain information about organizational attributes by sending signals to

relevant stakeholders (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Existing studies demonstrate specific ways in which signalers use various kinds of organizational signals to influence perceptions and/or decision-making processes among job applicants (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005; Highhouse et al., 2007), consumers (Carter, 2006), and potential investors (Certo, 2003; Cohen & Dean, 2005; Higgins & Gulati, 2006). For example, hiring organizations may explicitly showcase their *Fortune* ranking and family-friendly policies as signals of their organizational prestige and respectability, respectively, in order to enhance potential job applicants' attraction to the organization (Highhouse et al., 2007). Similarly, organizations undertaking initial public offerings are dependent on the decisions of potential investors for a successful public offering. Hence, they may use their board's human capital credentials to signal organizational legitimacy, thereby positively influencing the investors' investment decisions and the organization's overall stock performance (Cohen & Dean, 2005).

Among various kinds of signals communicated in an organizational context, there exist a particular set of signals that provide a glimpse into how an organization approaches diversity (Avery et al., 2007; Avery & Johnson, 2008; Miller & Triana, 2009; Wilton et al., 2020). In particular, organizations have increasingly put forth public pledges to signal their commitments to creating a racially diverse and inclusive workplace (Banks & Harvey, 2020). These pledges often take the form of a diversity statement that endorses specific diversity values (Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Gündemir et al., 2017; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). For instance, some organizations communicate their dedication to fostering a workplace that celebrates intergroup differences associated with diverse social identities (Plaut, 2002; Wolsko et al., 2000). Other organizations express that they are committed to providing all employees with equal and fair access to opportunities for advancement, thereby attempting to signal that employees' social identity group

membership will not present an obstacle in their professional journey across the hierarchical career ranks (Apfelbaum et al., 2016).

While organizations deliberately craft such diversity statements to convey specific desired messages, there also exist inadvertent diversity signals that are not as easily and directly manipulable in the short term, such as an organization's demographic representation. Importantly, the inadvertent signal of demographic representation may send a contradictory message from publicly espoused diversity statements. Specifically, directly contradicting what is espoused in countless diversity pledges, organizations have persistently failed to promote and, more importantly, sustain diverse demographic representation across all levels of the organizational hierarchy (Fitzhugh et al., 2020; Roberts & Grayson, 2021). In particular, despite their increased entry into the professional workforce, individuals with marginalized racial identities continue to be significantly underrepresented in corporate America—especially in managerial and executive roles in the upper echelons (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Accordingly, while organizations attempt to express their commitments to valuing racial diversity and equity with their public messages, the prevalent and significant racial disparities in representation may send a contradictory signal regarding the extent to which they are indeed enacting their expressed commitments (Windscheid et al., 2016).

Representation as an Efficacious Signal

While a number of distinct signals coexist in any given organizational context, signals vary in their efficacy along a number of distinct features (Connelly et al., 2011). First, the efficacy of signals depends on their observability and frequency (Brammer & Millington, 2005; Janney & Folta, 2003). Specifically, signals are efficacious insofar as they are conveyed visibly on a frequent basis to the signal recipients. On the one hand, an organization's expressed

diversity messages are often drafted as a response to critical events and are sporadically communicated via its promotional materials (Banks & Harvey, 2020; Roberts & Grayson, 2021). For instance, the murder of George Floyd prompted many organizations to hastily showcase their pledges for racial justice to the public—the momentum of which has since drastically dwindled (Carter & Johnson, 2022). On the other hand, past research demonstrates that demographic representation tends to be a highly visible type of signal to a range of organizational stakeholders (Certo, 2003; Higgins & Gulati, 2006; Miller & Triana, 2009; Tsui et al., 1992). In particular, incumbent employees are directly and frequently exposed to the demographic characteristics of their organization as they interact with other organizational members (including direct reports, colleagues, managers, and executives) in the workplace (Lindsey et al., 2017). Therefore, demographic representation is likely to be a particularly observable—and, therefore, efficacious—signal in an organizational context.

Furthermore, observability and frequency are necessary but insufficient features of efficacious signals (Connelly et al., 2011). In addition to being visible, efficacious signals help indicate the level of honesty of the signaler. Consider, for example, an organization that claims to value providing all employees with equal opportunities for advancement. If racial minorities are significantly underrepresented across the organizational hierarchy, then their lack of representation, which is misaligned with the espoused claim, may signal "a form of hypocrisy" (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008, p. 618) of the organization. In contrast, if the organization is indeed characterized by equitable representation of all employees across the managerial ranks, then such representation patterns will likely signal that the organization may be trusted with its words. Past empirical research indeed demonstrates that demographic representation serves as an efficacious signal of organizational trustworthiness by illustrating the extent to which an

11

organization adheres to what it espouses (Lindsey et al., 2017; Wilton et al., 2020; Windscheid et al., 2016).

For instance, in their investigation of demographic representation as an organizational signal, Lindsey et al. (2017) examined how the congruence in ethnic compositions of managers and employees influenced individuals' assessments of an organization's behavioral integrity—or, perceived alignment between the organization's words and deeds (Simons, 2002; Simons et al., 2015). Their results demonstrate that high levels of congruence in compositions served to signal that the organization is genuinely committed to valuing diversity, whereas low levels of congruence led to perceptions that the organization is merely paying lip service to racial justice for the sake of preserving a positive public reputation. Similarly, in Wilton et al.'s (2020) empirical studies, Black individuals considered the evidenced-based diversity signal of racial representation of an organization (as indicated in its organizational chart) when inferring the extent to which the organization is honest in supporting and valuing racial diversity. The lack of diverse racial representation led to their beliefs that the organization's approach to diversity is specious and insincere, which, in turn, were negatively correlated with their workplace expectations such as the expected level of work performance.

In sum, in the context of information asymmetries, various kinds of signals are used to communicate the underlying characteristics of an organization that are otherwise imperceptible to a range of organizational stakeholders. Applying signaling theory to the realm of diversity research, the existing literature illustrates that an organization's demographic representation serves as a particularly efficacious signal. Specifically, compared to other forms of signals (e.g., expressed diversity statements), demographic representation is more directly and frequently observable to the relevant stakeholders in an organizational context. In addition, representation

signals are not easily manipulable but rather evidence-based, thereby elucidating the present

demographic characteristics of an organization and providing a glimpse into how the

organization approaches and manages diversity. This paper will build on this stream of research

and explore *for whom* and *how* representation signals may significantly influence workplace

outcomes.

Representation as an Efficacious Signal for Racial Minorities

On the receiving end of organizational signals, signal receivers rely on available signals

to reduce information asymmetries and construct an understanding of the character of the

organization of interest (Connelly et al., 2011). While past research has primarily explored how

signals are received by external stakeholders who are likely to have minimal information about

the internal characteristics of an organization (e.g., Carter, 2006; Certo, 2003; Ehrhart & Ziegert,

2005), incumbent employees also constitute an important group of receivers and interpreters of

signals (Lindsey et al., 2017). As is the case with organizational outsiders, internal employees are

subject to some level of information asymmetries within their organization. For example,

information about how promotion decisions are made is significantly more accessible to those

who are directly involved in decision making (e.g., executives and senior managers) than to the

recipients of external decision making (e.g., employees). Hence, employees are prompted to use

signals in their organizational context in order to form subjective perceptions and expectations

regarding their organizational experiences (Sohn et al., 2023; Wilton et al., 2020).

Importantly, not all signal receivers will attend to signals in the same manner (Connelly

et al., 2011). In other words, receivers vary in the extent to which they are attuned to signals in

the environment, and the varying levels of receiver attention, in turn, significantly influence

signal effectiveness (Gulati & Higgins, 2003). In particular, the extant literature demonstrates

that, compared to their dominant counterparts, individuals that belong to historically underrepresented and marginalized racial groups are particularly attuned to demographic representation signals in an organizational context (Davis & Burnstein, 1981; Perkins et al., 2000; Thomas & Wise, 1999).

On the one hand, White individuals—particularly White men—are overrepresented in high-power, high-paid roles (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) and are stereotypically perceived as being a good fit for leadership (Koenig et al., 2011; Rosette et al., 2008). As members of a historically dominant and privileged group across organizations, White professionals are unlikely to vigilantly look for and rely on representation signals when making sense of their experiences in the workplace (Avery et al., 2004; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Specifically, representation signals (e.g., numerical representation of racial minorities) have been shown to influence neither White individuals' feelings of trust, comfort and attraction toward their organization (Avery, 2003; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), nor their projections about their own likelihood of succeeding and advancing in the organization (Sohn et al., 2023).

On the other hand, from the point of entry into the organization, underrepresented racial group members continue to confront and experience systemic disparities in representation, treatment, and upward mobility (Bell et al., 2013; Elvira & Zatzick, 2002; Mercer, 2020; Ray, 2019). In the context of the prevalent and persistent racial disparities, underrepresented racial group members are prompted to scan their organizational environment for representation signals that could be relevant and useful as they attempt to make sense of the experiences that they encounter in their organization (Wilton et al., 2020; Sohn et al., 2023).

In examining the significance of organizational racial representation for underrepresented racial group members, past social psychology research has investigated how perceived racial

representation of an organization influences various individual-level outcomes among underrepresented racial group members. Specifically, in this stream of research, researchers have primarily conducted experimental vignette studies to manipulate racial minority individuals' perceptions of overall minority representation in an organization and examine how these varying perceptions affect their workplace perceptions, experiences, and expectations (Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Wilton et al., 2020).

For instance, Apfelbaum et al. (2016) varied aggregate percentages of racial minority representation in a hypothetical organization to be either high (40%) or low (5%), and assessed how high versus low levels of percentages would differentially affect racial minority individuals' task performance. When a social group is significantly underrepresented, members of that underrepresented group are likely to perceive their identity as being distinctive in the given context (Pollak & Niemann, 1998), and this perceived distinctiveness can result in increased performance apprehension (Sekaquaptewa et al., 2007). Consistent with such insights from past research, the results from Apfelbaum et al.'s (2016) investigation illustrate that Black individuals' task performance was significantly lower when they perceived their organization as being characterized by a low (versus high) level of overall racial minority representation.

Similarly, Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008) and Wilton et al. (2020) provided a sample of Black participants with photographs of a group of individuals in a hypothetical company, with varying numbers of people of color, and examined how high versus low presence of people of color may influence their workplace experiences and expectations. The results from Purdie-Vaughns et al.'s (2008) and Wilton et al.'s (2020) studies demonstrate, respectively, that Black individuals' perceptions of low minority representation in an organization negatively influenced their trust of and comfort toward the organization, while amplifying their concerns about fitting

15

in, authentically expressing their racial identity, and performing well relative to their true potential in the organization.

Expanding on these studies that were focused on the effects of perceived overall representation of racial minorities, Sohn et al. (2023) explored how underrepresented racial group members may be influenced by perceived minority representation at a specific hierarchical level—namely, at the senior executive level. Specifically, Sohn et al.'s (2023) investigation aimed to examine the extent to which varying the perceived level of racial representation at the senior executive level (i.e., high versus low executive diversity) influences racial minority group members' expectations regarding their own career trajectory within their organization.

When the executive team of an organization was perceived as consisting of predominantly White professionals, and thus lacking racially diverse representation, underrepresented racial group members negatively evaluated their likelihood of achieving professional success in their organization by performing well and advancing into the upper echelons. This finding echoes previous research that suggests that individuals construct a repertoire of possible professional selves based on role models in their organization, particularly those with whom they share demographic similarities (Ibarra, 1999). Accordingly, in an organization characterized by significant racial disparities in representation in the upper echelons, the underrepresentation of their racial ingroup members in high power roles may serve to constrain racial minorities' view of who they might be able to become professionally in the future (e.g., a senior leader) (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Slay & Smith, 2011).

The Case for Studying Hierarchical Representation Gaps

All in all, the aforementioned research collectively demonstrates that underrepresented racial group members are particularly attuned to and impacted by representation signals in their

organization context. Yet, there exist areas of inquiry that present opportunities for further contribution to this body of research. First and foremost, what remains largely unexamined in the extant literature is how underrepresented racial group members may be influenced by more nuanced patterns of representation disparities across the hierarchical career levels—namely, whether or not they perceive significant *gaps* in representation at lower versus upper hierarchical career levels (i.e., hierarchical representation gaps) (Unzueta & Binning 2012).

Recent diversity statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Mercer, 2020) illustrate that, while racial representation has become increasingly diversified at the entry level, racial minorities continue to struggle with advancing into the higher hierarchical levels that are imbued with more power (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Representation of Racial Groups by Hierarchical Career Level
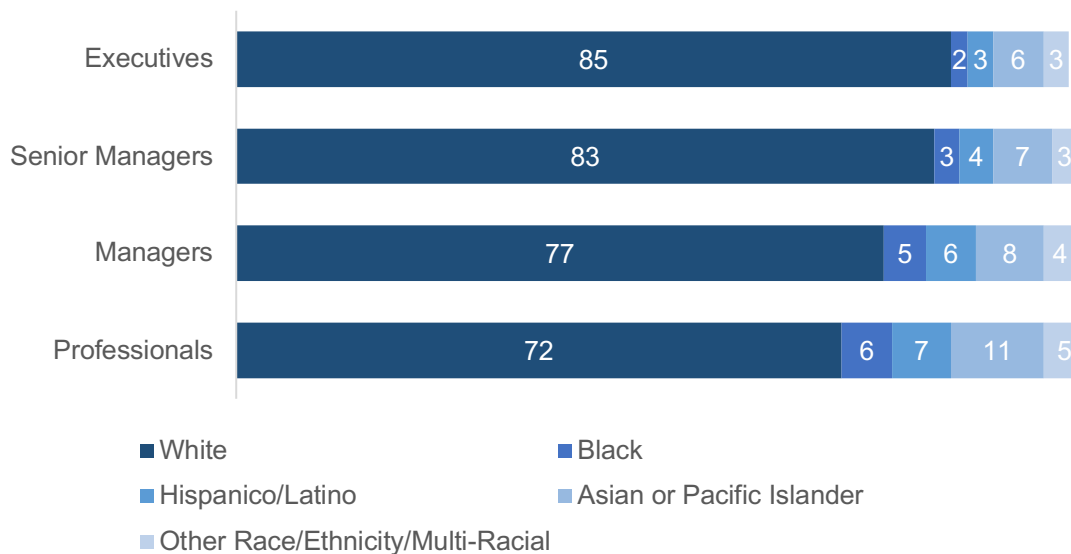
Note. The numerical values indicate the percentages of racial groups represented at four distinct hierarchical career levels in private sector organizations in the U.S.

Specifically, whereas 13% of the U.S. general workforce is comprised of Black professionals, they represent 6% of non-managerial professional roles (e.g., entry-level employees) in the private sector, 4% of senior manager roles, and only 2% of executive roles. Similarly, while Asian professionals constitute 11% of non-managerial employee roles, their representation decreases to 7% at the senior manager level and even further to 6% at the executive level. Compared to 67% and 45% decline in representation of Black and Asian professionals, respectively, White professionals' representation steadily increases from the employee level (i.e., 72%) to the executive level (i.e., 85%).

When racial representation is conceptualized either in terms of overall representation or representation at a single hierarchical level, it fails to capture such prevalent patterns of hierarchical distributional imbalance that remain prevalent in the U.S. private sector (Cox, 1991; Avery, 2003). On the one hand, in both empirical studies (e.g., Apfelbaum et al., 2016) and the popular press (e.g., Mercer, 2020), racial representation is often captured by reporting on the overall percentages of different racial groups within an organization. These percentages reflect the aggregated presence of each racial group across all hierarchical career levels (i.e., from entry- to executive-levels). When representation is reported in this manner, the increasingly diversified racial representation at the entry level may inflate the overall percentages of racial minority groups, thereby masking the substantial underrepresentation of racial minorities that persist in the upper echelons. On the other hand, focusing exclusively on representation at the most senior level of the organizational hierarchy (e.g., Sohn et al., 2023; Windscheid et al., 2016) fails to reveal the extent and the nature of racial discrepancies in the entry-level versus the executive-level representation.

18

Accordingly, this paper aims to extend the extant literature by conceptualizing representation in terms of hierarchical representation *gaps.* Hierarchical representation gaps may serve as a particularly meaningful signal for underrepresented racial group members, as they provide a nuanced understanding of differential attrition, retention, and advancement patterns of various racial groups across the hierarchical ranks (Lindsey et al., 2017; Mercer, 2020; Unzueta & Binning 2012). Underrepresented racial group members may use this signal to assess the extent to which there are opportunities for them to achieve status and power through upward mobility within their organization (Cox, 1993). Specifically, if the diverse racial representation at the entry level is sustained through the organizational hierarchy and is largely mirrored in the representation at the upper management level, then this similarity in representation may signal to underrepresented racial group members that their organization is behaviorally committed to valuing a racially diverse pool of employees throughout their career trajectory (Sigelman & Taylor, Jr., 2021). Conversely, if the diverse racial representation undergoes significant changes across the managerial ranks as a result of selective attrition of underrepresented racial groups, then the resulting gaps in representation may signal to underrepresented racial group members that there exist significant barriers to their upward mobility within the organization, thereby negatively influencing their expectations regarding their own chances for advancement.

Furthermore, this paper seeks to explore how this process of forming expectations about one's potential for advancement may serve as a mediating mechanism through which perceived hierarchical representation gaps influence important attitudinal outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational identification, among underrepresented racial group members.

Past research illustrates not only that an organization's representation signals may have adverse effects on individuals' perceptions of their own likelihood of succeeding in their

organization (Sohn et al., 2023; Wilton et al., 2020), but also that these self-perceptions may significantly shape their workplace attitudes (Brockner & Sherman, 2019). Accordingly, underrepresented racial group members' negative assessments of their advancement prospects, resulting from perceived hierarchical representation gaps, may, in turn, negatively influence the extent to which they feel satisfied with their job, identified with and attracted to their organization, as well as the extent to which they intend to stay and pursue their career in their current organization (Avery, 2003; Avery et al., 2004; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Wilton et al., 2020; Windscheid et al., 2016).

The next section will turn to the existing demography literature in order to review and discuss how hierarchical representation gaps may be operationalized through the relational demography construct of management racial representativeness (Lindsey et al., 2017).

Management Racial Representativeness: An Organizational-Level Relational Demography Construct

A relational approach to demography involves a comparison of demographic characteristics, and is focused on examining how the level of similarity (i.e., congruence) in demographics influences outcome variables of interest. For instance, past research has explored how an individual's relative demographic similarity to another individual (e.g., their current or potential supervisor; Avery, 2003; Avery et al., 2012), to their work group colleagues (e.g., Chattopadhyay, 1999; Kristof-Brown et al., 2014; Riordan & Wayne, 2008), or to their organization's composition (e.g., Hoffman & Woehr, 2005; Kristof, 1996; Umphress et al., 2007), influences individual-level workplace outcomes such as extra-role behavior, organizational attractiveness, task performance, and withdrawal.

More recently, some demography researchers have begun to apply the relational demography approach to the organizational level of analysis, in order to explore the effects of relative similarity in overall demographic compositions between different stakeholder groups, or at different hierarchical career levels within the same organization. By doing so, their overarching contribution has been to elucidate specific ways in which the level of congruence in demographic compositions influence organizational outcomes.

For instance, Richard et al. (2017) used existing data from a large retailer and the U.S. Census Bureau to calculate the level of congruence between the racial composition of the retailer's various store-units and that of various consumer communities that the store-units serve. They then assessed the impact of the varying levels of congruence on each store-unit's sales performance. Their results indicate that sales performance was the highest among those store-units whose diverse racial composition was congruent with that of the consumer communities that they serve. In other words, when racially diverse store-units operate in racially diverse communities, the high level of racial diversity congruence served to positively influence the store-units' sales performance.

While Richard et al.'s (2017) investigation was focused on interorganizational racial diversity congruence between store-units and consumer communities, Richard et al. (2021) explored the effects of *intra*organizational congruence between racial compositions at two distinct hierarchical career levels within the same organization. Specifically, they drew on organizational data of a sample of tech firms to calculate the level of congruence between the racial composition of upper management and that of lower management within each of the firms. With the calculated levels of congruence, the authors illustrate that high levels of congruence between the upper and lower management racial compositions resulted in significantly higher

levels of firm productivity compared to low levels of congruence, potentially because high levels of congruence indicate that the two management levels are aligned on important business perspectives, knowledge, and goals.

Lindsey et al. (2017) also employed the relational demography approach to introduce the construct of *management ethic representativeness*, which captures the level of congruence between ethnic compositions of two distinct stakeholder groups at two distinct hierarchical levels within the same organization—namely, managers and employees. Meanwhile, their study differs from the aforementioned studies by Richard et al. (2017) and Richard et al. (2021) in three meaningful ways. First, both Richard et al. (2017) and Richard et al. (2021) used objective data to operationalize the level of congruence in racial compositions. In contrast, Lindsey et al. (2017) not only calculated the level of congruence using existing organizational data, but also measured their participants' subjective perceptions of congruence. Second, whereas both Richard et al. (2017) and Richard et al. (2021) examined the effects of the calculated level of congruence on organizational-level outcomes, Lindsey et al. (2017) investigated the impact of actual and perceived congruence on individual-level outcomes among ethnically dissimilar employees, including their perceptions of the organization's behavioral integrity as well as their experiences of workplace interpersonal mistreatment. In other words, Lindsey et al.'s (2017) investigation illustrates that perceived relational demography at the organizational level—operationalized as management ethic representativeness—may significantly influence various subjective, psychological workplace outcomes at the individual level. Lastly, what remains largely underexamined in the existing demography literature are potential mediating mechanisms through which organizational-level demography variables affect individual-level workplace outcomes (Shon et al., 2023; Lawrence, 1997). Lindsey et al. (2017) have begun to fill this gap

by examining perceived behavioral integrity as a mediator for the relationship between the organizational-level signal of management racial representativeness and ethnic minority employees' individual-level experiences of interpersonal mistreatment at work.

The first goal of this paper is to extend Lindsey et al.'s (2017) contributions by incorporating the construct of management racial representativeness and examining its impact as an organizational representation signal on underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes. It is important to note that some level of baseline diversity (i.e., heterogeneity) in the entry-level racial composition is necessary for management racial representativeness to signal to underrepresented racial group members that an organization is committed to developing and retaining racially diverse internal talent (Lindsey et al., 2017). That is, if an organization has racially homogeneous (i.e., predominantly White) entry-level workforce, then the organization could have representative (i.e., similarly homogeneous) management and still signal that it is not committed to valuing racial diversity and that there exist barriers to underrepresented racial group members' professional journey in the organization.

In the past decades, many organizations have been focused on increasing the entry of traditionally underrepresented employees in their workforce according to legal and policy requirements (Bartels et al., 2013; Harrison et al., 2006; Kalev et al., 2006; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Given that the entry-level workforce has indeed been increasingly diversified (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022), this paper seeks to reflect this reality and conceptualize management racial representativeness as the extent to which the baseline heterogeneity in the entry-level composition is perceived as being congruent with the upper management composition by racial categories. With this conceptualization, this paper will investigate how the perceived level of

management racial representativeness may act as a particularly impactful signal for underrepresented racial group members as they attempt to make sense of whether or not there may be opportunities for upward mobility in their organization. Moreover, this paper will explore underrepresented racial group members' subjective expectations regarding their own career trajectory as a potential mediating mechanism for elucidating how and why perceived management racial representativeness may influence their workplace attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment).

Manager Behaviors

The second goal of this paper is to explore potential role individual managers may play in mitigating the effects of perceived management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members. In particular, if the heterogeneous racial composition at the entry level is perceived as being incongruent with the upper management racial composition within an organization, what specific behaviors may individual managers enact to disrupt the potentially negative effects of perceived low management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members' expectations of success and workplace attitudes? To explore this question, the next part of the literature review will begin by illustrating the important role middle managers play in translating, communicating, and even interrupting organizational-level signals as they work at the boundary between upper management and employees' local work unit environment.

The Role of Middle Managers

While upper management is comprised of individuals who "plan, direct and formulate policies, set strategy and provide the overall direction of organizations" from the highest ranks of the organizational hierarchy, there exist a separate group of managers who "implement policies,

programs and directives of upper management" (EEOC, 2022). In the management literature, these managers are referred to as middle managers as they are situated in the middle of an organization's hierarchical layers and work at the boundary between upper management and their respective work units (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Schubert & Tavassoli, 2020; Yan & Louis, 1999). Specifically, they receive directions from upper management and convey those directions to their respective work units, thereby taking up important tasks of translation, communication, and implementation across the organization's hierarchical levels (Jaser, 2021; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Raes et al., 2011; Richard et al., 2021).

As they operate at the boundary, middle managers are tasked not only with effectively implementing upper management's policies, programs and directives, but also with behaviorally enacting and communicating the organization's expressed values to their employees in their local work unit environment (Gündemir & Kirby, 2022; Nishii & Leroy, 2022). In other words, as they work in close proximity to their employees, middle managers convey important information regarding what is valued and expected in the organization through their day-to-day actions and interactions (Rouleau, 2005; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Zohar & Luria, 2004, 2010).

Importantly, existing research illustrates that what is communicated by manager behaviors is not necessarily aligned with what is communicated by organizational-level signals, and that manager behaviors can moderate the impact of organizational-level signals. For instance, Zohar and Luria (2010) investigated how individual work group managers may positively influence their work group members' experiences when their organization displays limited commitment to employee safety. In their study, work group managers were able to "buffer" the negative effect of the lack of organization's commitment to safety on their work group members' experiences by displaying transformational supervisory behaviors (Zohar &

Luria, 2010). Specifically, transformational supervisory behaviors prioritize individualized consideration of members' psychological and physical needs (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kovjanic et al., 2012; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). Hence, such behaviors served to signal to work group members that their wellbeing and safety are valued, despite what is formally communicated (or not) by organizational-level signals. Similarly, in an organization that fails to live up to its expressed commitment to inclusion, Mor Barak et al. (2022) suggest that middle managers may behaviorally enact their prioritization of inclusion through inclusive practices, such as seeking out and incorporating diverse perspectives in their work group's decision-making. In doing so, they may be able to positively influence employees' perceptions and expectations regarding what is deemed normative and valued within their organization, thereby offsetting the potentially negative impact of lack of enacted inclusion at the organizational level.

In both instances, while organization-level signals suggest that an organization is weakly committed to the specific values of safety and inclusion, manager behaviors send a contradictory message that those values are and should be prioritized in the work environment. In their conceptual model, Mor Barak et al. (2022) referred to this gap between organizational-level practice and manager behaviors—specifically, managers exhibiting stronger value behaviors than organizational practice indicates—as *positive decoupling*, and proposed that positive decoupling positively influences individual members' workplace experiences. Accordingly, middle managers, with their discretion in their supervisory roles, have the opportunity and ability to significantly influence the incumbent employees' psychological process of meaning construction toward "a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442) by enacting certain behaviors in their local work unit environment.

This paper aims to contribute to this stream of literature by proposing sponsorship behaviors as a specific set of instrumental manager behaviors that may help disrupt the potentially harmful effects of an organization's lack of management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members' expectations regarding their own potential for advancing and succeeding professionally in their organization.

Manager Sponsorship Behaviors

One way through which individual managers may positively influence underrepresented racial group members' expectations of success, as well as their workplace attitudes, is by serving an instrumental function in their professional relationships. In social networks literature, professional relationships that serve an instrumental function are referred to as instrumental ties, as they involve the exchange of resources that are critical for job effectiveness, including information, expertise, and professional advice (Ibarra, 1993). With their explicit focus on the exchange of job-related resources, instrumental ties differ from expressive ties that are less strictly tied to formal work roles and tasks (Lincoln & Miller, 1979). Instead, expressive ties primarily involve the exchange of psychosocial support and are characterized by a strong sense of closeness and trust (Fombrun, 1982; Lincoln & Miller, 1979).

Past research demonstrates that the kinds of resources provided by individual managers in instrumental versus expressive ties, in turn, have differential impact on employees' experiences in the workplace (Sparrowe et al., 2001; Umphress et al., 2003). For instance, employees' increased access to their manager's social support in expressive ties are associated with heightened satisfaction with social aspects of their job, such as their experiences of the social climate at work (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Porter et al., 2018). In contrast, work-related resources provided in instrumental ties serve to facilitate employees' satisfaction with

27

instrumental aspects of their job, such as their sense of job security (Flap & Volker, 2001). Moreover, compared to expressive ties, instrumental ties have a stronger impact on employees' job performance. Specifically, in instrumental ties, managers provide their employees with increased access to valuable work-related information and professional advice—both of which may be leveraged by employees to perform their tasks more effectively (Ibarra, 1993; Porter et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, some management researchers and practitioners alike have increasingly shifted their focus away from instrumental resources that are primarily useful for enhancing employees' satisfaction with and performance in their current roles. Instead, they have emphasized the importance of exploring specific behaviors that individual managers may enact within their instrumental ties to have a more tangible and direct impact on employees' career advancement beyond the middle management level (Chanland et al., 2018; Hewlett et al., 2010; Ibarra et al., 2010; Thomas, 2001). These behaviors are referred to as *sponsorship behaviors*. Sponsorship behaviors extend beyond merely providing employees with instrumental resources for accomplishing their current work activities. They serve a more targeted and strategic developmental function of increasing employees' prospects for upward mobility into high-paid, high-power roles in the upper echelons of the organizational hierarchy (Hewlett, 2013; Randel et al., 2021).

In the extant literature, sponsorship behaviors are largely categorized into three types of behaviors: (1) increasing employees' exposure to and connection with influential and powerful individuals in the organizational network, (2) offering challenging yet highly visible, career-enhancing work opportunities, and (3) displaying strong and public advocacy for employees' promotion (Hewlett et al., 2010; Ibarra, 1993; Ibarra et al., 2010). Through these sponsorship

behaviors enacted by their managers, employees gain tangible opportunities to not only enhance their competence but also display it to an expanded professional network of individuals with the power to influence their advancement trajectory. In addition, as they ascend the hierarchical managerial ranks, employees are able to affirm their competence through their sponsor's explicit investment, advocacy and endorsement.

A meta-analysis conducted by Allen et al. (2004) illustrates that, relative to psychosocial support behaviors (e.g., providing friendship and closeness), instrumental behaviors targeted specifically at career advancement are more strongly related to objective measures of career success, such as higher compensation and increased promotion. Relatedly, in Singh et al.'s (2009) longitudinal investigation, instrumental behaviors focused on the target individual's career development accounted for significant increases in both objective and subjective measures of career success. Specifically, career development-focused instrumental behaviors positively affected not only whether the target individual received promotion, but also the extent to which they predicted future advancement. Moreover, the predictive value of career development-focused instrumental behaviors on actual and predicted advancement was significant above and beyond the effects of the target individual's human capital (e.g., educational level), agentic capital (e.g., managerial aspirations) as well as developmental network capital (e.g., lateral career support from coworkers). These results collectively suggest that manager sponsorship behaviors are critical in helping junior employees not only envision but also achieve professional success within their organization by ascending the hierarchical career ranks.

Importantly, the instrumental value of sponsorship behaviors for advancement is likely to be particularly strong for historically marginalized and underrepresented racial group members, who are disproportionately and systemically disadvantaged in upward job mobility (Hewlett et

29

al., 2010; Ibarra, 2005; Ibarra et al., 2010; Randel et al., 2021). Specifically, when managers engage in sponsorship behaviors—such as assigning their employees on high visibility projects, increasing their exposure to influential individuals in upper management, as well as displaying strong advocacy for their promotion—these tangible developmental behaviors can help underrepresented racial group members affirm, enhance, and display their competence as they navigate their organization's hierarchical system. Thus, based on sponsorship behaviors enacted by their managers, underrepresented racial group members may develop positive expectations regarding their chances for becoming successful within their organization and subsequently hold positive workplace attitudes—even in spite of perceived attrition of their racial ingroup members as they ascend the managerial ranks.

In sum, this paper aims to contribute to existing research by empirically investigating the role of manager sponsorship behaviors in helping "undo" the negative effects of lack of management racial representativeness of the organization by positively shaping underrepresented racial group members' subjective expectations regarding their advancement prospects and their workplace attitudes.

Present Research

The goal of this paper is to extend the extant literature in three meaningful ways. First, incorporating signaling theory with existing social psychology research, the literature review of this paper has established that perceived racial representation of an organization serves as a salient and potent signal that has significant implications for underrepresented racial groups' workplace expectations and attitudes. In particular, past empirical studies illustrate that underrepresented racial group members' perceptions of overall racial minority representation in an organization significantly influence their workplace perceptions, experiences, and

expectations (e.g., perceived behavioral integrity of the organization, experienced sense of trust and comfort in the workplace, expected and actual task performance) (Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Wilton et al., 2020; Sohn et al., 2023).

This paper aims to build on and extend this body of research by exploring how underrepresented racial group members are influenced by more nuanced patterns of attrition, retention, and advancement of various racial groups across the organizational hierarchy—as captured by representation gaps between specific hierarchical career levels. To do so, this paper will incorporate the relational demography construct of management racial representativeness (Lindsey et al., 2017) and conceptualize hierarchical representation gaps in terms of the extent to which the entry-level racial composition is perceived as being congruent with the upper management racial composition. For underrepresented racial group members, perceived management racial representativeness is likely to serve as a particularly potent, identity-relevant signal as it provides information with regards to the extent to which there may be opportunities for them to achieve status and power within the organizational system through upward mobility (Cox, 1993; Unzueta & Binning 2012).

For instance, consider an organization whose entry-level racial composition undergoes significant changes across the hierarchical ranks as a result of selective attrition of underrepresented racial groups. From the resulting incongruence in the compositions among entry-level employees vis-à-vis upper management (i.e., low management racial representativeness), underrepresented racial group members may infer that that their organization is not committed to developing and retaining its diverse talent pool across the organizational hierarchy and that there exist systemic barriers for underrepresented racial groups' upward job mobility. Accordingly, perceived low management racial representativeness may directly and

negatively impact the extent to which underrepresented racial group members expect a successful career trajectory, the extent to which they feel satisfied with their job, identified with and attracted to their organization, as well as the extent to which they intend to stay and pursue their career in their current organization (Avery, 2003; Avery et al., 2004; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Wilton et al., 2020; Windscheid et al., 2016; Sohn et al., 2023).

The first hypothesis (*H1*) will explore potential main effects of perceived management racial representativeness of an organization on underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes:

> *H1*: When an organization is perceived as having low (versus high) management racial representativeness, underrepresented racial group members will report significantly lower levels of expected success, job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, as well as intentions to stay in the organization.

Second, in both social psychology and relational demography literature, there exists a significant dearth of research on potential mediating mechanisms through which perceived organizational-level representation signals may influence individual-level workplace outcomes (Shon et al., 2023; Lawrence, 1997). Yet, past research suggests that subjective ways in which individuals perceive and understand themselves in an organizational context may have a significant impact on their attitudes (Brockner & Sherman, 2019). Accordingly, the second goal of this paper is to investigate the extent to which underrepresented racial group members' subjective understanding of their own potential for achieving professional success may serve as a mediator that helps explain why and how perceived management racial representativeness of an organization influences important workplace attitudes.

Specifically, when underrepresented racial group members form an expectation, based on their organization's representation signals, that it will be difficult for them to advance into higher hierarchical ranks within their current organization, this negative expectation regarding their own advancement potential may negatively influence the extent to which they feel satisfied with their job, as well as the extent to which they feel identified with and attracted to their organization as an employer. Similarly, their negative belief in their own capacity to succeed and advance in their organization may have an adverse impact on their intentions to stay and continue to pursue their career in the current organization.

Thus, the second hypothesis (*H2*) will explore underrepresented racial group members' subjective expectations of success as a potential mediating mechanism through which perceived management racial representativeness may impact their workplace attitudes:

H2: Underrepresented racial group members' low expectations of success resulting from perceived lack of management racial representativeness will, in turn, negatively influence their job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, as well as their behavioral intentions to stay in the organization.

For a visual representation of the hypothesized mediation effects, see Figure 2.

Figure 2

Hypothesized Mediation
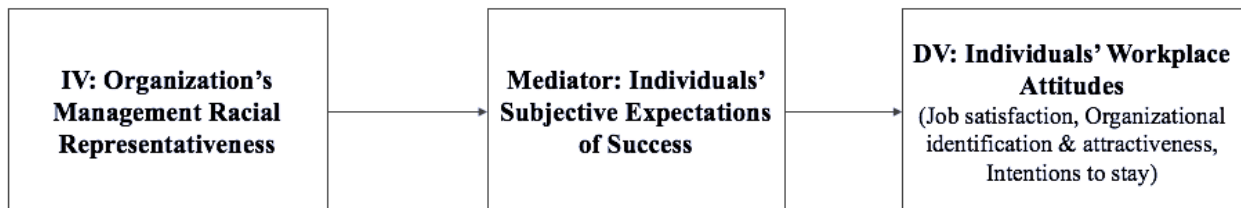
In addition to elucidating the extent to which and through what mechanism the perceived organizational signal of management racial representativeness affects underrepresented racial group members, the third contribution that this paper seeks to make is to identify and explore what specific manager behaviors may moderate the hypothesized effects of low management racial representativeness on expectations of success and workplace attitudes. In particular, this paper will focus on instrumental sponsorship behaviors that middle managers (e.g., work group supervisors) may enact in the local work unit environment, such as increasing their employees' exposure to highly visible career-enhancing work assignments as well as to influential individuals in the upper management.

As underrepresented racial group members navigate their organization's hierarchical system, such sponsorship behaviors will provide them with tangible opportunities for affirming, enhancing, and/or displaying their competence, while also signaling that their managers are proactively invested in advocating for their long-term developmental journey to the upper echelons of the organization. Accordingly, based on sponsorship behaviors enacted by their managers, underrepresented racial group members may expect to advance into high-power roles and, therefore, hold positive workplace attitudes—even in spite of the lack of management racial representativeness. In other words, instrumental sponsorship behaviors enacted by managers are hypothesized to have a buffering (i.e., moderating) effect against the potentially harmful impact of low management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members.

Specifically, the third hypothesis (*H3*) is as follows:

H3: When a manager displays sponsorship behaviors, the negative impact of low

management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members'

expectations of success and attitudes will be diminished. In contrast, when a manager

does not display sponsorship behaviors, the negative impact of low management racial

representativeness on underrepresented racial group members will remain significant.

For a visual representation of the hypothesized moderated mediation effects, see Figure 3.

Figure 3

Hypothesized Moderated Mediation
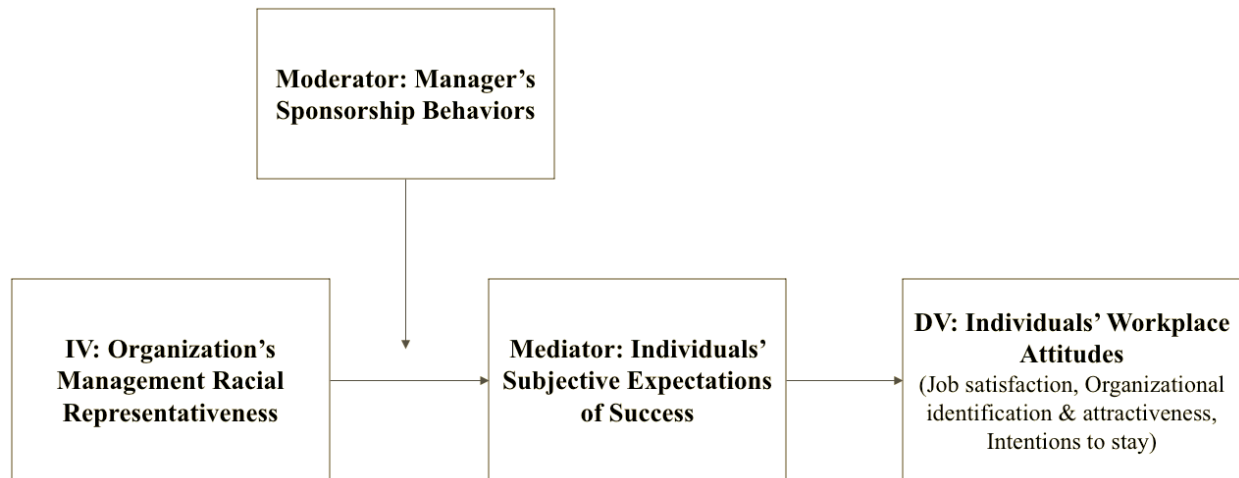
By examining the influence of perceived management racial representativeness as an

organizational signal on underrepresented racial group members, this paper seeks to establish a

robust case for organizations to expand their diversity management efforts beyond the entry-level

recruiting and hiring efforts and, instead, increase their investment in retaining and developing

their diverse talent pool, thereby building a sustainable talent pipeline across the organizational

hierarchy (Sigelman & Taylor, Jr., 2021). In addition, by studying manager sponsorship

behaviors as a potential intervention that may be enacted in the local work unit environment, this

paper will also elucidate what can be done by individual managers in organizations that are

currently characterized by low management racial representativeness.

Chapter 3: Methods

Design

An experimental vignette study was designed to empirically test the aforementioned hypotheses. Specifically, the study consisted of a 2 (Independent variable: Management racial representativeness—*high*, *low*) × 2 (Moderator: Manager sponsorship behaviors—*presence*, *absence*) between-participants factorial design.

Participants

The primary objective of this paper was to explore specific ways in which underrepresented racial group members are influenced by their organization's management racial representativeness as well as their manager's sponsorship behaviors. Accordingly, we aimed to have our sample consist only of individuals who identify as belonging to traditionally underrepresented racial groups in the U.S. (i.e., Black, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, biracial or multiracial). Furthermore, we also aimed to limit our sample to participants with at least two years of professional work experience. Given that the study materials pertain to employee experiences in the workplace, the rationale for using work experience as a filter is to increase the likelihood that the materials provided during the study appear more relevant and have more face validity to participants.

Based on an a priori power analysis assuming a smaller effect size, $f(\sim.18)$, 80% power, $\alpha = .05$, a numerator df of 1, and four groups, our goal was to have a minimum of 245 participants in our analytic sample. With the aforementioned filters in place, a total of 260 participants were recruited through Prolific, an online research participant recruitment platform, in exchange for $2.50. From the initial sample of 260 participants, nine participants were excluded for failing the

attention checks, while four participants were excluded for identifying their race as non-Hispanic White. The final analytic sample included 247 participants (47% male, 50% female; M_{age} = 35.60, SD_{age} = 10.62). All participants resided in the United States and consisted of 38% Black, 35% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 2% American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 23% biracial or multiracial.

Procedure

The study began with a cover story that informed participants that the goal of this study is to examine how people of color respond to, and form impressions about, different types of organizations. Participants were instructed to imagine that they have recently joined a management consulting firm called Jensen & Hay Consulting as an entry-level employee. With this hypothetical scenario, they were then instructed that they would be presented with a set of onboarding materials that Jensen & Hay Consulting has prepared for its new employees. This cover story was constructed in order to provide participants with a foundational context regarding why they are being asked to complete the study, which would then serve as an anchor for them throughout the study as they review the experimental manipulation materials and complete dependent variable (DV) measures.

Following the cover story, participants were presented with Onboarding Material Part 1: Introduction to Jensen & Hay Consulting. In this section, Jensen & Hay Consulting was introduced as a private sector organization—specifically, "a global management consulting firm that serves a broad mix of private, public, and social sector institutions." In describing their work, it was also stated that Jensen & Hay Consulting partners with "top executives to help them make better decisions, convert those decisions to actions, and make lasting improvements to their companies' performance." Lastly, additional information was presented "by the numbers"—

including that they have offices in 80+ cities, 10K employees worldwide, as well as a history of 40+ years of consulting experience. Such background information was designed to help the hypothetical organization appear more realistic in order to create a relevant psychological state for participants prior to introducing them to the manipulation materials and DV measures. The background materials about Jensen & Hay Consulting are presented in Appendix A.

After reviewing the background information, participants were presented with the manipulation materials for management racial representativeness and manager sponsorship behaviors. Then, they were asked to complete the DV measures, manipulation checks, as well as demographic questionnaires.

Manipulations

Management Racial Representativeness

The manipulation materials for management racial representativeness were presented to participants as Onboarding Material Part 2: U.S. Workforce at Jensen & Hay Consulting, which had ostensibly been prepared by Jensen & Hay Consulting to demonstrate the current state of the demographics across its U.S. offices. Specifically, the level of management racial representativeness (*high* versus *low*) was manipulated by varying the degree of congruence between the racial composition of the entry-level workforce vis-à-vis and that of the upper management at Jensen & Hay Consulting. Accordingly, in both *high* and *low* management racial representativeness conditions, participants were presented with two demographic charts: one depicting the entry-level racial composition and the other depicting the upper management racial composition.

The entry-level racial composition was designed to remain consistent across the two conditions so that it serves as a benchmark against which participants can compare the upper

management racial composition. Across private sector industries, organizations have diversified their entry-level racial composition by increasing the entry of traditionally underrepresented racial group members into their workforce (Bartels et al., 2013; Kalev et al., 2006). In order to ensure that the representativeness manipulation materials have ecological validity, the entry-level racial composition at Jensen & Hay Consulting was constructed to mirror such increasingly racially heterogeneous entry-level compositions across U.S. private professional services firms (e.g., the *Big Five* management consulting firms) based on publicly available demographic data.

What organizations continue to struggle with, however, is to sustain this baseline heterogeneity of their entry-level racial composition through the hierarchical managerial ranks by retaining and developing their existing pool of diverse employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Mercer, 2020). Accordingly, the level of management racial representativeness was manipulated by varying the extent to which the baseline heterogeneity in the entry-level racial composition is reflected in the upper management racial composition at Jensen & Hay Consulting.

In the *low* management racial representativeness condition, the upper management racial composition was designed to appear significantly incongruent from that of the entry-level workforce, with a significantly higher representation of White professionals at the upper management level (i.e., 83%) vis-à-vis at the entry level (i.e., 51%) and a significantly lower representation of racial minority groups at the upper management level (e.g., 4% Black professionals) vis-à-vis at the entry level (e.g., 13% Black professionals). Such patterns of incongruence were constructed based on publicly available demographic data (e.g., the *Big Five* management consulting firms) in order to resemble the prevalent patterns of selective attrition of underrepresented racial groups across the hierarchical ranks in the U.S. private sector.

In contrast, In the *high* management racial representativeness condition, the racial composition of upper management was constructed to appear relatively congruent to that of entry-level employee workforce, with various racial groups represented at congruent levels in the upper management (e.g., 55% White professionals; 12% Black professionals) vis-à-vis in the entry-level workforce (e.g., 51% White professionals; 13% Black professionals). The demographic charts used in the *high* and *low* management racial representativeness conditions are presented in Appendix B.

Manager Sponsorship Behaviors

The manipulation materials for manager sponsorship behaviors were presented to participants as Onboarding Material Part 3: Insight into Your Manager. In this section, participants were instructed that Jensen & Hay Consulting has collected anonymous feedback from an employee of color about a manager named John with whom they have been assigned to work at the organization. Manager sponsorship behaviors (*presence* versus *absence*) were manipulated through vignettes depicting how an anonymous employee of color describes the hypothetical manager.

In both the *absence* and *presence* conditions, the vignette described how long John has been with Jensen & Hay Consulting, as well as what type of consulting work he specializes in. While the vignette in the *absence* condition presented only these introductory descriptions, the vignette in the *presence* condition also outlined the manager's sponsorship behaviors. These behaviors included increasing the hypothetical employee's connection with other influential and powerful individuals (e.g., senior partners) in the organization, strongly advocating for their promotion, as well as opening up highly-visible, career-enhancing opportunities (Hewlett et al.,

2010; Ibarra et al., 2010). The vignettes used in the *absence* and *presence* conditions are presented in Appendix B.

Dependent Measures

All dependent measures in their entirety are presented in Appendix C.

Expectations of Success

Participants' expectations of success were assessed with a 7-item scale ($\alpha = .95$) that consisted of adapted versions of Wilton et al.'s (2020) work performance scale and Sohn et al.'s (2023) predicted success scale. These two scales include items that are intended to assess individuals' expected performance, expected advancement, expected fulfillment of potential, as well as expected reward. All items started with the following stem: "As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting, I believe:" and were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Sample items adapted from Wilton et al.'s (2020) scale include the following: "I would be able to perform well" (expected performance), "I would be able to advance as quickly as I would like to" (expected advancement), and "I would be able to live up to my full potential" (expected fulfillment of potential). Similarly, sample items adapted from Sohn et al.'s (2023) scale include the following: "I would earn a high salary" (expected reward), and "I would achieve my potential" (expected fulfillment of potential).

Job Satisfaction

Participants' expected job satisfaction was assessed with an adapted version of the three-item Job Satisfaction subscale of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire ($\alpha = .88$) (Bowling et al., 2008; Cammann et al., 1983). All items started with the following stem: "As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting," and were rated on a 7-point Likert scale

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). A sample item includes, "All in all, I believe I would be satisfied with my job."

Organizational Attractiveness

A five-item attitudinal scale ($\alpha = .95$) (Highhouse et al., 2003) was used to assess the extent to which participants feel attracted to Jensen & Hay Consulting. Sample items include, "Jensen & Hay is attractive to me as a place for employment," and "A job at Jensen & Hay is very appealing to me." Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agree with each item, on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).

Identification with Organization

Participants' expected identification with organization was assessed with the four-item Identification subscale adapted from the Sense of Social Fit scale (Maghsoodi et al., 2023; Walton & Cohen, 2007). This subscale ($\alpha = .91$) was intended to capture the extent to which individuals feel a sense of affiliation and integration with an organization as a whole (Maghsoodi et al., 2023). All items started with the following stem: "As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting, I believe:" and were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). A sample item includes, "I would belong at the firm."

Intentions to Leave Organization

An adapted version of O'Reilley et al.'s (1991) behavioral intention scale ($\alpha = .82$) was used to assess the extent to which participants expect to leave Jensen & Hay Consulting. All items started with the following stem: "As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting," and were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). A sample item includes, "I believe I would think seriously about changing organizations."

Manipulation Checks

With regards to the management racial representativeness manipulations, participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) the extent to which they agree with a couple of statements about Jensen & Hay Consulting based on the racial composition data that they have reviewed earlier. A sample item adapted from Lindsey et al.'s paper (2017) includes, "There are similar percentages of people of different racial backgrounds represented in upper management and the entry-level workforce."

With regards to the manager sponsorship manipulations, participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) the extent to which they agree with a couple of statements about their hypothetical manager, John, based on anonymous employee insight that they have reviewed earlier. Sample items include, "John is known to be a sponsor for his employees," "John is known to be supportive of his employees' career advancement."

All manipulation checks in their entirety are presented in Appendix D.

Attention Checks

Attention checks were embedded throughout the study to ensure that participants were paying attention to the study materials. Both in the recruitment materials on Prolific as well as in the participant consent form on Qualtrics, participants were informed that there would be periodic attention checks and that they would not receive compensation if they fail to pass these attention checks. A sample item includes, "For this question, please select "Disagree" to demonstrate that you are paying attention." The attention checks in their entirety are presented in Appendix D.

Demographics Questionnaire

Participants' demographic information, including gender, race, and age, as well as information on their highest level of education, their current employment status, and the number of years of full-time work experience, was collected. The demographic questionnaire in its entirety is presented in Appendix E.

Chapter 4: Results

Manipulation Checks

With regards to the management racial representativeness manipulations, results from one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicate that the manipulation materials yielded significant effects on participants' perceptions of how similar the racial composition of upper management is to that of the entry-level workforce at Jensen & Hay Consulting. In particular, participants were significantly more likely to agree that the racial composition of upper management is similar to the racial composition of the entry-level workplace in the high representativeness condition ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.46$) than in the low representativeness condition ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.81$), $F(1, 245) = 200.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .45$. Similarly, participants were significantly more likely to agree that there are similar percentages of different racial backgrounds represented in upper management and the entry-level workforce in the high representativeness condition ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.63$) than in the low representativeness condition ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.66$), $F(1, 245) = 192.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .44$.

With regards to the manager sponsorship behavior manipulations, one-way ANOVA results indicate that the manipulations yielded significant effects on the extent to which participants perceived the hypothetical manager at Jensen & Hay Consulting as a sponsor for his employees. In particular, participants were significantly more likely to agree that their hypothetical manager is known to be a sponsor for his employees in the sponsorship presence condition ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 1.12$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.31$), $F(1, 245) = 77.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .24$. Similarly, participants were significantly more likely to agree that their hypothetical manager is supportive of his employees' advancement in the

sponsorship presence condition ($M = 5.97$, $SD = .93$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 245) = 97.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$.

Main Effect of Management Racial Representativeness on DVs

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and inter-item correlations between all DVs.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-Item Correlations Between All DVs

DVs		1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1	Expectations of success	—					4.95	1.23
2	Job satisfaction	.81	—				4.95	1.23
3	Organizational attractiveness	.79	.88	—			5.00	1.34
4	Organizational identification	.74	.79	.80	.72	—	4.63	1.34
5	Intention to leave	−.70	−.75	−.77	−.61	−.70	3.86	1.40

Note. $N = 247$. All correlations are significant at p < .001.

First, one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the impact of perceived high versus low management racial representativeness of an organization on underrepresented racial group members' expectations of success as well as on their workplace attitudes. ANOVA results indicate that the impact of management racial representativeness was significant on all outcome variables. Specifically, participants' expectations of success were significantly lower in the low representativeness condition ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.28$) than in the high representativeness condition ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.06$), $F(1, 245) = 23.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Their expected job satisfaction was significantly lower in the low representativeness condition ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.30$) than in the

high representativeness condition ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.10$), $F(1, 245) = 11.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

Similarly, the extent to which they felt attracted to Jensen & Hay Consulting as an employer (i.e.,

organizational attractiveness) was significantly lower in the low representativeness condition (M

$= 4.68$, $SD = 1.44$) than in the high representativeness condition ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.12$), $F(1,$

$245) = 16.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. They also reported significantly lower levels of identification

with the organization in the low representativeness condition ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.38$) than in the

high representativeness condition ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.27$), $F(1, 245) = 4.28$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

Lastly, participants reported significantly higher levels of anticipated intention to leave the

organization in the low representativeness condition ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.49$) than in the high

representativeness condition ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.24$), $F(1, 245) = 9.68$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$.

These results collectively provide support for Hypothesis 1 which predicted that, when

underrepresented racial group members perceive an organization as being characterized by low

(versus high) management racial representativeness, they would be significantly less likely to

expect success, be satisfied with their job, feel attracted to and identify with the organization, and

intend to stay in the organization.

Mediating Role of Expectations of Success

After establishing the direct impact of management racial representativeness on

participants' expectations of success and attitudes, mediation analyses were conducted using the

PROCESS macro (Model 4) developed by Hayes (2018) to investigate whether individuals'

expectations of success may serve as a mediating mechanism through which perceived

management racial representativeness influences each of the attitudinal outcome variables. The

analyses utilized 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate the confidence intervals of the indirect

effects. Table 2 presents the results from the mediating analyses on total, direct, and indirect

effects of management racial representativeness.

Table 2

Mediation Analyses on the Total, Direct and Indirect Effects of Management

Racial Representativeness

	DVs		
	Job satisfaction		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	*−.53*	*.15*	*[−.83, −.22]*
Direct effect	.07	.10	[−.12, .26]
Indirect effect via expected success	*−.60*	*.13*	*[−.85, −.35]*
	Organizational identification		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	*−.35*	*.17*	*[−.68, −.02]*
Direct effect	*.26*	*.12*	*[.03, .50]*
Indirect effect via expected success	*−.61*	*.13*	*[−.87, −.37]*
	Organizational attractiveness		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	*−.67*	*.17*	*[−1.00, −.34]*
Direct effect	−.05	.11	[−.26, .17]
Indirect effect via expected success	*−.62*	*.14*	*[−.90, −.37]*
	Intent to leave		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	*−.54*	*.18*	*[.20, .89]*
Direct effect	−.04	.13	[−.30, .22]
Indirect effect via expected success	*.59*	*.13*	*[.35, .85]*

Note. $N = 247$. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. Significant effects are italicized.

First, the total effect of management racial representativeness on expected job satisfaction

was significant, $b = −.53$, $SE = .15$, $t(244) = −3.41$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[−.83, −.22]$, indicating that

perceived lack of management racial representativeness predicted low levels of job satisfaction.

However, when controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of representativeness on job satisfaction was not significant, $b = .07$, $SE = .10$, $t(244) = .73$, $p = .47$, 95% CI [−.12, .26]. That is, management racial representativeness did not directly predict job satisfaction once the influence of expectations of success was accounted for. Meanwhile, there was a significant indirect effect of management racial representativeness on job satisfaction via expected success (i.e., management racial representativeness → expectations of success → job satisfaction), $b = -.60$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [−.85, −.35]. This finding indicates that expectations of success fully mediated the effect of representativeness on job satisfaction, such that participants in the low (compared to high) representativeness condition reported significantly lower levels of expectations of success, which in turn resulted in significantly lower levels of expected job satisfaction.

Second, the total effect of management racial representativeness on expected organizational identification was significant, $b = -.35$, $SE = .17$, $t(244) = -2.07$, $p = .04$, 95% CI [−.68, −.02], indicating that perceived lack of management racial representativeness predicted low levels of organization identification. The direct effect of representativeness on organizational identification remained significant even when controlling for expectations of success, $b = .26$, $SE = .12$, $t(244) = 2.20$, $p = .03$, 95% CI [.03, .50]. Moreover, there was a significant indirect effect of management racial representativeness on organizational identification via expected success (i.e., management racial representativeness → expectations of success → organizational identification), $b = -.61$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [−.87, −.37]. The presence of both significant direct and indirect effects indicates that there exist two distinct pathways—one direct and another mediated—through which an organization's management racial representativeness affects individuals' organizational identification. Specifically, management racial representativeness

may directly shape the extent to which individuals feel identified with their organization, or indirectly do so by influencing their expectations regarding their likelihood of advancing into the upper echelons of the organizational hierarchy.

Third, the total effect of management racial representativeness on organizational attractiveness was significant, $b = -.67$, $SE = .17$, $t(244) = -4.04$, $p = < .001$, 95% CI [-1.00, $-.34$], indicating that perceived lack of management racial representativeness predicted low levels of organization attractiveness. When controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of representativeness on organizational attractiveness was not significant, $b = -.05$, $SE = .11$, $t(244) = -.42$, $p = .67$, 95% CI [$-.26$, $.17$]. On the other hand, there was a significant indirect effect of management racial representativeness on organizational attractiveness via expected success (i.e., management racial representativeness $\rightarrow$ expectations of success $\rightarrow$ organizational attractiveness), $b = -.62$, $SE = .14$, 95% CI [$-.90$, $-.37$]. The nonsignificant direct effect, in tandem with significant indirect effect, demonstrate that individuals' expectations of success fully mediated the impact of management racial representativeness on the extent to which they feel attracted to their organization as a place of employment.

Lastly, the total effect of management racial representativeness on intention to leave the organization was significant, $b = .54$, $SE = .18$, $t(244) = 3.11$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [$.20$, $.89$], indicating that perceived lack of management racial representativeness predicted high levels of intention to leave. When controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of representativeness on intention to leave was not significant, $b = -.04$, $SE = .13$, $t(244) = -.30$, $p = .76$, 95% CI [$-.30$, $.22$]. On the other hand, there was a significant indirect effect of management racial representativeness on intention to leave via expected success (i.e., management racial representativeness $\rightarrow$ expectations of success $\rightarrow$ intention to leave), $b = .59$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI

[.34, .84]. The nonsignificant direct effect, in tandem with significant indirect effect, demonstrate that individuals' expectations of success fully mediated the impact of management racial representativeness on the extent to which they would harbor intentions to leave their current organization.

These results collectively provide support for Hypothesis 2 which predicted that expectations of success would mediate the impact of perceived management racial representativeness on a number of important attitudinal outcomes among underrepresented racial group members. Specifically, those in the low (compared to high) management racial representativeness condition reported significantly lower levels of expectations of success, which in turn resulted in significantly lower levels of expected job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, and significantly high levels of intention to leave the organization.

Moderating Role of Manager Sponsorship Behaviors

PROCESS macro (Model 7) was used to test for the hypothesized moderated mediation—specifically, the role manager sponsorship behavior may potentially play in moderating the aforementioned indirect effects of management racial representativeness on the attitudinal outcomes via expectations of success. The analyses utilized 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate the confidence intervals of the moderation effects.

First, tests of the highest order unconditional interaction between management racial representativeness and manager sponsorship indicated that the interaction did not significantly predict expectations of success, $F(1, 243) = 0.11$, $p = .74$. In other words, the effects of management racial representativeness on the mediator of expectations of success were not significantly moderated by manager sponsorship behaviors.

Moreover, the index of moderated mediation was not statistically significant for any of the indirect mediated pathways (i.e., management racial representativeness → expectations of success → attitudinal DVs) (see Table 3), indicating that the mediation pathways were not conditional on the presence or absence of manager sponsorship behaviors. In other words, the results do not provide support for Hypothesis 3 which predicted that manager sponsorship behaviors would serve as a moderator that mitigates the negative effects of low management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members' expectations of success and subsequently their workplace attitudes.

Table 3

Moderated Mediation Analyses

	Moderated mediation index		
DVs	*b*	*SE*	95% CI
Job satisfaction	−.08	.24	[−.55, .39]
Organizational identification	−.08	.24	[−.56, .38]
Organizational attractiveness	−.08	.25	[−.58, .41]
Intent to leave	.08	.23	[−.37, .54]

Note. $N = 247$. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

While manager sponsorship behaviors may not serve as a moderator for mitigating the negative effects of low management racial representativeness, it is possible that they act as a distinct, independent predictor of underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes. Thus, a series of post-hoc analyses were conducted to investigate the direct and indirect ways in which manager sponsorship behaviors may influence underrepresented racial group members.

52

Post-hoc Analyses

Main Effect of Manager Sponsorship Behaviors

First, one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the impact of presence versus absence of manager sponsorship behaviors on underrepresented racial group members' expectations of success as well as on their workplace attitudes. ANOVA results indicate that the impact of manager sponsorship behaviors was significant on all outcome variables.

Specifically, participants' expectations of success were significantly higher in the sponsorship presence condition ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.15$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.25$), $F(1, 245) = 12.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Their expected job satisfaction was significantly higher in the sponsorship presence condition ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.25$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.19$), $F(1, 245) = 6.67$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Similarly, the extent to which they felt attracted to Jensen & Hay Consulting (i.e., organizational attractiveness) was significantly higher in the sponsorship presence ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.27$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.35$), $F(1, 245) = 10.85$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. They also reported significantly higher levels of identification with the organization in the sponsorship presence condition ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.29$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.34$), $F(1, 245) = 10.36$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Lastly, participants reported significantly lower levels of anticipated intention to leave the organization in the sponsorship presence condition ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.40$) than in the sponsorship absence condition ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.34$), $F(1, 245) = 10.61$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$.

These results demonstrate that underrepresented racial group members were significantly more likely to expect success, be satisfied with their job, identify with and feel attracted to the organization, and intend to stay in the organization, when their manager enacted specific

sponsorship behaviors (e.g., increasing their employees' access to highly visible and career-enhancing work assignments) in support of their advancement into the upper echelons, compared to when their manager did not enact sponsorship behaviors.

Mediating Role of Expectations of Success

After establishing the direct impact of manager sponsorship behaviors on participants' expectations of success and attitudes, mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro (Model 4) to investigate whether expectations of success may serve as a mediator mechanism through which sponsorship behaviors influence each of the attitudinal outcome variables. The analyses utilized 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate the confidence intervals of the indirect effects.

Overall, the results indicate that manager sponsorship behaviors had non-significant direct effects on the attitudinal outcomes, but instead had significant indirect effects on those outcomes via expectations of success (see Table 4). Nonsignificant direct effects, in tandem with significant indirect effects, indicate that expectations of success fully mediated the effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on underrepresented racial group members' workplace attitudes.

Specifically, the total effect of sponsorship behaviors on expected job satisfaction was significant, $b = -.40$, $SE = .16$, $t(244) = -2.58$, $p = .01$, 95% CI $[-.71, -.10]$, indicating that the presence of sponsorship behaviors predicted high levels of job satisfaction. However, when controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of sponsorship on job satisfaction was not significant, $b = .03$, $SE = .10$, $t(244) = .33$, $p = .74$, 95% CI $[-.16, .22]$. On the other hand, there was a significant indirect effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on job satisfaction via expected success (i.e., manager sponsorship behaviors → expectations of success → job satisfaction), $b = -.43$, $SE = .12$, 95% CI $[-.68, -.20]$.

Similarly, the total effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on expected organizational identification was significant, $b = -.54$, $SE = .17$, $t(244) = -3.22$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [$-.87$, $-.21$], indicating that the high level of manager sponsorship behaviors predicted high levels of organization identification. However, when controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of sponsorship on organizational identification was not significant, $b = -.11$, $SE = .12$, $t(244) = -.97$, $p = .34$, 95% CI [$-.34$, .12]. On the other hand, there was a significant indirect effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on organizational identification via expected success (i.e., manager sponsorship behaviors → expectations of success → organizational identification), $b = -.43$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [$-.68$, $-.18$].

Third, the total effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on organizational attractiveness was significant, $b = -.55$, $SE = .17$, $t(244) = -3.29$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [$-.88$, $-.22$], indicating that the high level of sponsorship behaviors predicted high levels of organization attractiveness. When controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on organizational attractiveness was not significant, $b = -.10$, $SE = .11$, $t(244) = -.91$, $p = .36$, 95% CI [$-.31$, .11]. Moreover, there was a significant indirect effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on organizational attractiveness via expected success (i.e., manager sponsorship behaviors → expectations of success → organizational attractiveness), $b = -.45$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [$-.72$, $-.20$].

Lastly, the total effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on intention to leave the organization was significant, $b = .57$, $SE = .17$, $t(244) = 3.26$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.23, .91], indicating that the high level of sponsorship predicted low levels of intention to leave. When controlling for expectations of success, the direct effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on intention to leave was not significant, $b = .15$, $SE = .13$, $t(244) = 1.16$, $p = .25$, 95% CI [$-.11$,

.41]. Moreover, there was a significant indirect effect of manager sponsorship behaviors on intention to leave via expected success (i.e., manager sponsorship behaviors → expectations of success → intention to leave), $b = .42$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [.18, .67].

Table 4

Mediation Analyses on the Total, Direct and Indirect Effects of Sponsorship

	DVs		
	Job satisfaction		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	−.40	.16	*[−.71, −.10]*
Direct effect	.03	.10	[−.16, .22]
Indirect effect via expected success	−.43	.12	*[−.68, −.20]*
	Organizational identification		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	−.54	.17	*[−.87, −.21]*
Direct effect	−.11	.12	[−.34, .12]
Indirect effect via expected success	−.43	.13	*[−.68, −.18]*
	Organizational attractiveness		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	−.55	.17	*[−.88, −.22]*
Direct effect	−.10	.11	[−.31, .11]
Indirect effect via expected success	−.45	.13	*[−.72, −.20]*
	Intent to leave		
	b	*SE*	95% CI
Total effect	.57	.17	*[.23, .91]*
Direct effect	.15	.13	[−.11, .41]
Indirect effect via expected success	.42	.13	*[.18, .67]*

Note. $N = 247$. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. Significant effects are italicized.

All in all, underrepresented racial group members' expectations of success fully mediated the impact of manager sponsorship behaviors on their workplace attitudes. In particular, participants in the manager sponsorship presence (versus absence) condition reported

significantly higher levels of expectations of success, which were in turn associated with significantly higher levels of expected job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, as well as with significantly lower levels of intention to leave the organization.

Relative Strength of Representativeness versus Sponsorship as Independent Predictors

The aforementioned findings illustrate that an organization's management racial representativeness and an individual manager's sponsorship behaviors do not interact with one another, but rather act independently to shape underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes.

Supplementary regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the relative effects of management racial representativeness and manager sponsorship behaviors as independent predictors on the outcome variables. The results indicate that while each predictor significantly influenced each of the outcome variables, there was no significant difference in their relative strength as predictors (see Table 5 for standardized beta coefficients and z-scores).

Table 5

Relative Strength of Representativeness and Sponsorship as Independent Predictors

DVs	Standardized beta coefficients (β) and z-scores		
	Representativeness β	Sponsorship β	z-score
Expectations of success	−.30***	−.22***	−.39
Job satisfaction	−.21***	−.16**	−.24
Organizational identification	−.13*	−.20**	.30
Organizational attractiveness	−.25***	−.21***	−.19
Intent to leave	.19**	.20**	−.04

Note. $N = 247$. β denotes the standardized effect size of a predictor on a DV; z-score denotes whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in β of two predictors. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

Despite the increased entry of traditionally marginalized racial group members into the U.S. professional workforce, they continue to be significantly underrepresented in the upper echelons of the organizational hierarchy (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Mercer, 2020). In other words, there continues to exist distributional imbalance of racial minorities at lower versus higher hierarchical career levels—with their concentrated presence in entry-level and junior roles, coupled with their scarcity in high-power managerial and executive roles.

Confronted with such persistent and prevalent racial disparities in representation, underrepresented racial group members are prone to experience heightened levels of uncertainty regarding their career trajectory within their organization (Hewlett, 2012; Roberts & Mayo, 2019). One way in which they may attempt to reduce such sense of uncertainty is by relying on specific representation signals in their organizational context that provide relevant and useful information (Connelly et al., 2011).

The first goal of this paper was to conceptualize representation in terms of hierarchical representation gaps using the relational demography construct of *management racial representativeness* (Lindsey et al., 2017), and explore its impact as an organizational representation signal on underrepresented racial group members. In particular, this paper hypothesized that, from perceived lack of management racial representativeness, underrepresented racial group members would infer existence of systemic barriers to their upward mobility and hold negative expectations regarding their own advancement prospects within their organization. This paper also hypothesized that these negative expectations of advancement would, in turn, result in negative workplace attitudes.

58

The second goal of this paper was to examine what can be done by individual managers in the local work unit environment to interrupt the impact of perceived management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members. To do so, this paper introduced *sponsorship behaviors* as a specific set of instrumental behaviors that managers may enact to amplify their employees' chances for advancement (Chanland et al., 2018; Hewlett et al., 2010; Ibarra et al., 2010; Thomas, 2001), thereby positively influencing underrepresented racial group members' expectations and attitudes—and potentially offsetting the negative effects of perceived hierarchical representation gaps.

The study results illustrate that underrepresented racial group members indeed held negative expectations regarding their upward job mobility trajectory and reported negative workplace attitudes, when they perceived low management racial representativeness in an organization—specifically, when the heterogeneous entry-level racial composition of an organization was perceived as being incongruent with the upper management racial composition. In addition to illustrating the direct effects of management racial representativeness, the results also elucidate that individuals' subjective expectations regarding their own advancement prospects served as a significant mediating mechanism. In particular, those in the low (compared to high) management racial representativeness condition reported significantly lower levels of expectations of success, which in turn resulted in significantly lower levels of expected job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, and significantly higher levels of intention to leave the organization.

Meanwhile, in the present study, manager sponsorship behaviors did not serve to moderate the negative effects of low management racial representativeness on underrepresented racial group members' expectations and attitudes. Instead, sponsorship behaviors acted as an

independent predictor that yielded both significant direct and indirect effects on the outcome variables. In particular, underrepresented racial group members reported significantly higher levels of expectations of success in the manager sponsorship presence (compared to absence) condition, and their expectations of success, in turn, resulted in significantly higher levels of expected job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, as well as significantly lower levels of intention to leave the organization.

In summary, these findings demonstrate that that an organization's management racial representativeness and a manager's sponsorship behaviors function as two independent drivers shifting underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes.

Theoretical Implications

This paper extends, and contributes to, the existing research on organizational representation in the following ways. First, past social psychology research has primarily conceptualized representation in terms of overall minority representation, and examined how perceived overall representation impacts workplace outcomes among racial minorities. This paper incorporated the relational demography construct of management racial representativeness (Lindsey et al., 2017), which enabled an exploration of the impact of more nuanced hierarchical representation patterns—namely, the level of *congruence* in racial compositions among entry-level employees vis-à-vis upper management within the same organization. By doing so, this paper highlights that it is important not only to consider overall, aggregated presence of various racial groups, but also to take into account their representation gaps between lower and higher hierarchical career levels, when studying the role of representation in shaping organizational experiences among underrepresented racial group members. In particular, even when the overall representation of racial minority groups is high, if their representation is concentrated in the

60

lower ranks of the organizational hierarchy, then racial minority professionals may interpret perceived representation incongruence—between their overrepresentation at the junior levels and their underrepresentation at the senior managerial and executive levels—as signaling that their competence will be undervalued, and their advancement potential unrealized, if they were to remain in the organization.

Second, this paper used signaling theory (Spence, 1973, 2002) as a theoretical basis for establishing the case of management racial representativeness as an organizational representation signal that underrepresented racial group members are particularly attuned to and impacted by throughout their upward mobility journey. By illustrating management racial representativeness functions as an organizational-level signal that has significant implications for subjective, psychological outcomes at the *individual level*, this paper offers a multi-level model and extends the existing demography research that has been focused on the impact of organizational-level demography variables on objective outcomes at the organizational level (e.g., firm productivity; Richard et al., 2020). Furthermore, both social psychology and demography research have primarily investigated the direct effects of organizational representation on various outcome variables of interest (Shon et al., 2023). This paper offers an extended conceptual model that includes an indirect (i.e., mediating) mechanism through which perceived management racial representativeness of an organization influences individual-level outcomes. Specifically, the process of forming expectations regarding one's one likelihood of advancing and succeeding within the organization emerged as an important mediator that explains how and why perceived representativeness may influence important workplace attitudes.

Lastly, this paper demonstrates that manager sponsorship behaviors functioned not as a moderator but, rather, as an independent predictor of workplace expectations and attitudes

among underrepresented racial group members. In the literature on *sensegiving*—defined as "the process of attempting to influence the meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442)—managers are positioned as individuals who are able to initiate and control the process of sensegiving of their proximal organizational stakeholders through their day-to-day interactions and behaviors (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Rouleau, 2005; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). This paper contributes to this body of literature by identifying a set of specific instrumental sponsorship behaviors that managers may enact to engage in positive sensegiving—in other words, to positively influence underrepresented racial group members' outlook regarding their career trajectory as well as their workplace attitudes.

Importantly, the post-hoc analyses results indicate that management racial representativeness and sponsorship behaviors did not differ significantly on their relative predictive strength. Thus, this paper's final contribution is to illustrate that there exist two independent—and equally impactful—levers for diversity management that operate at two distinct levels of analysis. On the one hand, management racial representativeness functions as a contextual signal at the broadest level of analysis (i.e., organizational level), providing underrepresented racial group members with a general idea regarding the extent to which advancement may be achievable within the organization. On the other hand, manager sponsorship influences underrepresented racial group members at a more proximal level in a more relational and direct way, as it takes place within interpersonal manager-employee relationships in the local work unit environment and involves targeted, strategic instrumental behaviors that tangibly support employees' career progression. Accordingly, these findings demonstrate that these two levers need not interact to be impactful. Instead, they operate at

different levels of the organizational system and exert strong, autonomous influence in isolation on employees' workplace attitudes and expectations.

Practical Implications

Based on these findings, this paper offers a number of important practical suggestions for diversity management in organizations. These suggestions include what can be done by organizations in the long run to systemically address the existing hierarchical representation gaps, as well as what can be done by individual managers in the interim to positively influence underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes.

In the past decades, the primary focus of organizational DEI initiatives has been to increase the entry of racial minority employees in their workforce in compliance with legal and policy requirements (Harrison et al., 2006; Thomas & Ely, 1996). To this end, various diversity management practices (e.g., targeted recruitment, diversity training programs; Avery & McKay, 2006; Bartels et al., 2013) have been implemented, resulting in greater diversification of entry-level and junior roles. However, individuals with traditionally marginalized racial identities continue to be significantly underrepresented in top managerial and executive roles that are imbued with the most power (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Mercer, 2020).

According to the results presented in this paper, underrepresented racial group members are adversely affected by such prevalent hierarchical representation gaps resulting from selective attrition of racial minorities across the organizational hierarchy. Therefore, the first key practical suggestion is that organizations move beyond short-term, limited recruiting and hiring efforts for entry-level roles. Instead, it is important that they invest in reducing hierarchical representation gaps by retaining, developing, and promoting their internal diverse talent pool across the career ranks (Sigelman & Taylor, Jr., 2021).

63

In organizations that are currently characterized by significant hierarchical representation gaps (i.e., low management racial representativeness), it will take time and resources to carry out the aforementioned system-wide intervention of building a sustainable hierarchical talent pipeline. While organizations engage in long-term, systemic efforts to rectify hierarchical representation gaps, the findings from this paper underscore the important role individual managers may play in the interim in shaping their employees' organizational experiences through behaviors they enact in their day-to-day interactions. In particular, the second suggestion stemming from these findings is that managers enact instrumental sponsorship behaviors in the local work unit environment, such as assigning their employees to high-visibility, career-enhancing work projects, connecting them with influential individuals in the organizational network, and publicly advocating for their promotion during performance review cycles.

Through such sponsorship behaviors, managers can signal their commitment to advancing the developmental journey of not only the traditionally privileged but also marginalized racial group members, thereby counteracting the implicit belief that upward job mobility is reserved for a select few. In addition to serving a signaling function, these behaviors provide tangible opportunities for underrepresented racial group members to affirm, enhance, and/or display their competence as they navigate their organizational system. Based on these opportunities, underrepresented racial group members are increasingly able to envision potential pathways to advancement and experience enhanced sense of satisfaction and belonging and reduced turnover intentions. Lastly, by actively engaging in sponsorship, individual managers are able to set a model of instrumental developmental practices that can be adopted by their peers and high-level leaders in the organization. Over time, this model may serve as a foundation for building a culture of equitable talent development that extends beyond individual work units. In

other words, manager sponsorship efforts, although individually enacted, may collectively contribute to narrowing hierarchical representation gaps and position the organization as one genuinely invested in cultivating a diverse talent pipeline.

At the same time, the findings from this paper provide practical guidelines for employees to also take up a proactive role in seeking sponsorship opportunities within their professional network. For instance, underrepresented racial group members can approach their manager to request challenging work assignments that would help showcase their skills, ask for introductions to other managers and executives, and/or seek advice on how best to prepare for advancement. By doing so, underrepresented racial group members, as employees, contribute to creating mutually reinforcing dynamics towards promoting equitable development and career progression within their organization. Specifically, when employees take the initiative in seeking sponsorship opportunities and managers respond with targeted instrumental behaviors, these mutual efforts can ultimately foster an organizational culture where career support is accessible, inclusive, and intentionally pursued at multiple levels.

Lastly, while it is important that managers and employees individually engage in and seek out sponsorship, organizations could also play a critical role in formalizing and reinforcing sponsorship as a key developmental practice. For example, organizations could design and implement structured programs that incentivize managers to sponsor the diverse junior talent that they manage within their work units. Specifically, they might provide educational resources that identify specific instrumental behaviors that constitute effective sponsorship, incorporate sponsorship objectives into performance evaluations, and formally recognize and reward those who actively sponsor diverse talent. By establishing such programs, organizations can motivate managers to go beyond informal sponsorship, which often arises within existing social networks

shaped by implicit homophily dynamics (Chanland & Murphy, 2018; McPherson et al., 2001). Furthermore, organizations could offer career development workshops that encourage employees to actively seek sponsorship and equip them with specific, actionable strategies for building supportive developmental networks. These initiatives will help not only bolster individual efforts but also embed sponsorship as a key organizational practice, thereby further reinforcing a culture wherein career support is equitably promoted across the organizational system.

All in all, this paper establishes a robust case that a two-pronged approach—systemic longitudinal diversification efforts across the organizational hierarchy, coupled with proactive sponsorship enacted by individual managers within employees' local work unit environment—will be essential for cultivating an organizational environment in which diverse talent is recognized, retained, developed, and advanced across the hierarchical career ranks.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this paper is that it involved a vignette study with an onboarding scenario and controlled experimental materials. Specifically, participants were instructed to imagine themselves as an entry-level employee while reviewing a set of fictitious onboarding materials about a hypothetical organization and manager. These materials were designed in a controlled way to provide targeted information regarding the organization's hierarchical representation patterns and the manager's sponsorship behaviors. Notably, to reduce potential confounding variables, demographic characteristics of the manager—such as racial identity and age—were intentionally excluded from the manager behavior vignettes in both the sponsorship absence and presence conditions. While this controlled design allows for isolating the effects of manager sponsorship behaviors on participants' expectations and attitudes, it fails to reflect the real-world complexities of employee-manager dynamics.

In particular, in a real organization context, employees continuously gather a rich set of data about their manager as they interact with them in close proximity. This set of data, in turn, significantly influences their workplace expectations and attitudes. In particular, past research illustrates that individuals belonging to underrepresented racial groups pay close attention to the demographic characteristics of their manager when forming expectations regarding their own likelihood of achieving professional success. For instance, they consider their relative demographic similarity to their manager when forming impressions about the level of organizational support for diversity (Avery et al., 2007; Avery et al., 2012). Specifically, from the perceived demographic similarity with their manager, underrepresented racial group members infer that their organization is supportive of their career development and advancement, which, in turn, can reduce their absenteeism (Avery et al., 2007). Furthermore, individuals construct a repertoire of possible professional selves based on role models with whom they share demographic similarities (Ibarra, 1999). Thus, when underrepresented racial group members have their racial ingroup members in the senior ranks within the organization, they are able to develop a more expansive view of who they might be able to become professionally in the future (e.g., a senior leader) (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Slay & Smith, 2011).

Accordingly, the magnitude of the impact of manager sponsorship behaviors as an independent predictor may vary according to the extent to which underrepresented racial group members perceive demographic similarity with their manager. Specifically, the positive influence of manager sponsorship behaviors observed in the present research may be amplified when underrepresented racial group members perceive their manager as sharing a similar demographic background. In other words, while this paper suggests manager sponsorship serve as an independent predictor with comparable predictive power as management racial

67

representativeness, the inclusion of additional demographic information about the manager in future research could alter this balance in their predictive power and offer a more nuanced understanding of what role demographic identity alignment plays in workplace sponsorship.

Another limitation of the present research is that all participants were collapsed into a monolithic category of racial minorities. This categorization is consistent with past research that studied racial differences, for example, in terms of Whites and non-Whites (e.g., Rosette et al., 2008), and was aligned with the primary goal of this paper to explore ways in which underrepresented racial group members are influenced by their organization's management racial representativeness and their manager's sponsorship behaviors. Nevertheless, an increasing body of research calls for the need to move beyond the monolithic characterizations of social identity groups (Hall et al., 2019; Knowles et al., 2022). In other words, racial minorities constitute not a singular minority group but, instead, represent a "heterogeneous array of social groups who often possess nonoverlapping interests" (Knowles et al., 2022, p. 769) and are associated with a distinct set of characteristics (Fiske et al., 2002).

Accordingly, the extent to which an organizational representation signal and manager sponsorship influence underrepresented racial group members, may be further determined by the specific racial identities that they hold. For example, in Wong et al.'s (1998) investigation, Asian American participants rated themselves as being more motivated and more likely to obtain future career success than not only other students of color but also their White counterparts, and these self-perceptions were shared by both Whites and racial minorities. These findings have been reflected in subsequent studies (e.g., Fiske et al., 2002; Ho & Jackson, 2001) that consistently demonstrate that Asian Americans are perceived as particularly competent and skilled compared to other racial minorities. Based on such widespread (self-)perceptions of Asian Americans as

the hardworking and successful model minorities (Hurh & Kim, 1989; Kitano & Sue, 1973), Asian American professionals may be particularly attuned to, and influenced by, diversity signals that are not aligned with their expectations of performing well and achieving professional success (e.g., low management racial representativeness).

While this paper makes the meaningful contribution of establishing a foundational understanding of the impact of management racial representativeness and manager sponsorship behaviors as two distinct predictors, future research should more carefully acknowledge and explore nuanced inter-group differences in how these predictors shape workplace perceptions and expectations among various racial minority group members.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this paper was two-fold. First, this paper conceptualized racial representation in terms of hierarchical representation gaps using the relational demography construct of management racial representativeness, and examined its role as an organizational-level signal in shaping underrepresented racial group members' workplace expectations and attitudes. Second, this paper explored the role of manager sponsorship behaviors as a potential intervention for mitigating the negative impact of low management racial representativeness. All in all, this paper demonstrates that an organization's management racial representativeness and a manager's sponsorship behaviors function as independent—and equally impactful—predictors of underrepresented racial group members' expectations of advancement. Furthermore, this process of forming subjective expectations regarding their own advancement prospects emerged as a mediating mechanism through which each predictor influenced the attitudinal outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational identification and attractiveness, as well as turnover intentions.

These findings establish a robust case for a two-pronged approach to diversity management. On the one hand, given the significance of management racial representativeness as an organizational signal, this paper suggests that organizations move beyond simplistic, myopic, and reactionary approaches to diversity management—such as focusing solely on entry-level recruiting and hiring efforts and/or hiring a token minority individual into a leadership role (e.g., Chief Diversity Officer) for window-dressing purposes (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Mallick, 2020). Instead, it is critical that organizations invest in long-term, systemic diversification efforts aimed at retaining, developing, and promoting their internal talent across the hierarchical career ranks. In parallel with these systemic efforts, this paper suggests that individual managers also take up a proactive role of enacting instrumental sponsorship behaviors that support the professional development and advancement of not only traditionally privileged but also marginalized racial group members. Through sponsorship behaviors, managers are able to contribute to disrupting the status quo diversity dynamics and fostering an organizational culture where career support is accessible, inclusive, and intentionally pursued at multiple levels.

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Appendix A

Background Materials

Instructions:
- This research aims to examine how people of color respond to, and form impressions about, different types of organizations.
- You will be asked to imagine that you have recently joined a management consulting firm, Jensen & Hay Consulting, as an entry-level consulting professional.
- With this hypothetical scenario in mind, you will be presented with a set of background materials about Jensen & Hay Consulting.
- These materials have been prepared by Jensen & Hay Consulting as part of the onboarding program for its new employees.

JENSEN & HAY CONSULTING

We are a global management consulting firm that serves a broad mix of private, public, and social sector institutions.

We work with top executives to help them make better decisions, convert those decisions to actions, and make lasting improvements to their organizations' performance.

With nearly half a century of experience, we have built the expertise uniquely equipped to this task.

BY THE NUMBERS

80+
cities
with Jensen & Hay
Consulting offices

10K
employees
worldwide

40+
years
of consulting
experience

21%
revenue
growth
in the past 4 years

# Appendix B

Manipulation Materials

Management Racial Representativeness

Instructions:
- At Jensen & Hay Consulting, workforce composition is one of the key metrics to gauge the effectiveness of our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts.
- To demonstrate the current state of the demographics across our U.S. offices, we share the racial compositions of entry-level employees and upper management on the next page.
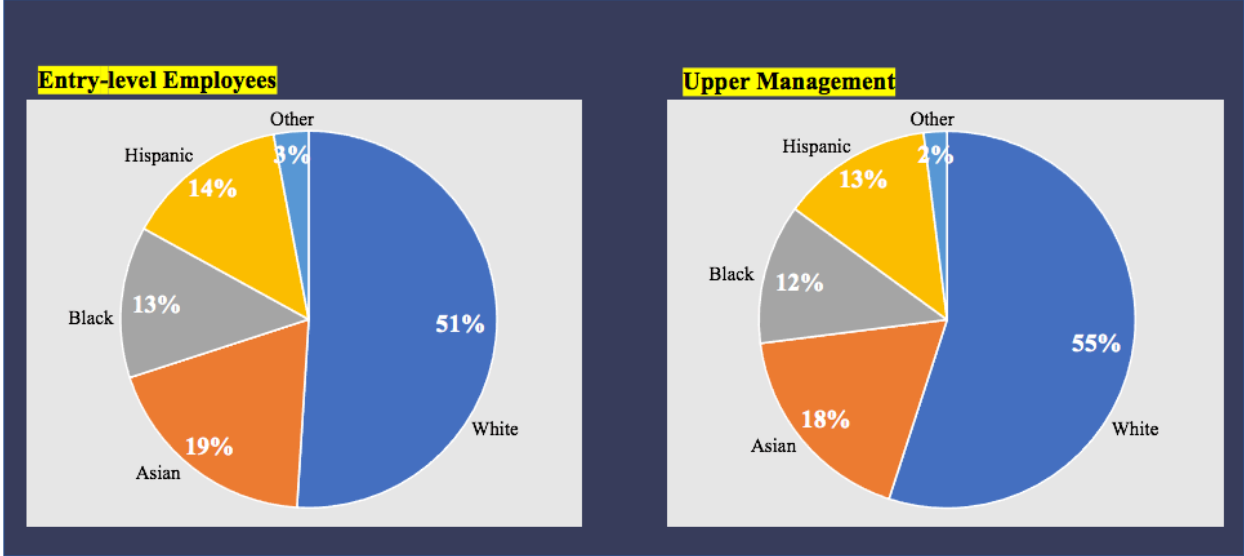
Low Management Racial Representativeness Condition

Jensen & Hay Consulting US Workforce Racial Composition: View by Career Level (%)
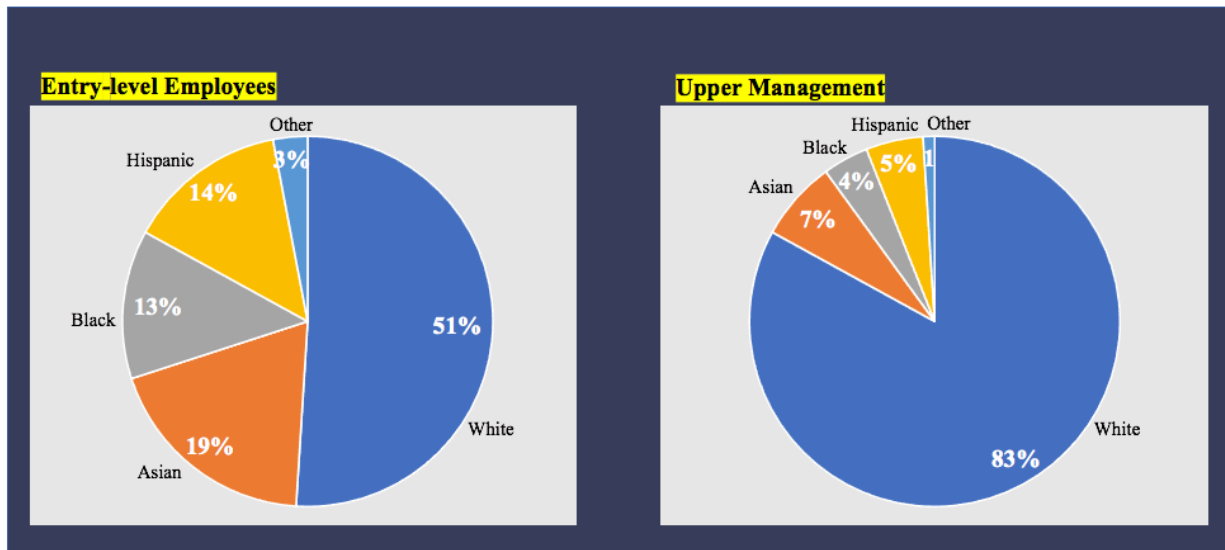
High Management Racial Representativeness Condition

Jensen & Hay Consulting US Workforce
Racial Composition: View by Career Level (%)

Manager Sponsorship Behaviors

Instructions:
- While racial composition is a key DEI metric, we believe that it is also important to capture the day-to-day experiences of employees of color, including their experiences with their manager.
- To provide a snapshot of your manager at Jensen & Hay Consulting, we have collected feedback about him from your colleague who identifies as a person of color.

Sponsorship Absence Condition

Insight into your manager, John:

- John has been with Jensen & Hay Consulting for the past seven years. He specializes in advising financial and professional services institutions on navigating large-scale transformational change.

This comment was endorsed by 95% of John's employees

**Anonymous Employee of Color
Junior Associate at Jensen & Hay**

Sponsorship Presence Condition

Insight into your manager, John, and his sponsorship behaviors:

- John has been with Jensen & Hay Consulting for the past seven years. He specializes in advising financial and professional services institutions on navigating large-scale transformational change.
- John supports all his employees' career advancement. For example, he strongly advocates for his employees' promotion during annual performance review cycles.
- Also, he has connected me and others on his team with his colleagues and senior partners as well as with important clients.
- With his support, these connections have opened up career-enhancing opportunities, such as getting staffed on high-profile client projects.

This comment was endorsed by 95% of John's employees

**Anonymous Employee of Color
Junior Associate at Jensen & Hay**

Appendix C

Dependent Measures

Instructions:
- So far, you have reviewed a set of onboarding materials prepared by Jensen & Hay Consulting.
- With those materials in mind, please imagine that you are an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting and rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Expectations of success

As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting, I believe:
- I would be able to perform well.
- I would be able to advance as quickly as I would like to.
- I would be able to advance as quickly as others.
- I would be able to live up to my full potential.
  Wilton et al. (2020)
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)
- I would be able to be successful.
- I would be able to earn a high salary.
- I would be able to achieve my potential.
  Sohn et al. (2023)
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Job satisfaction

As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting,
- All in all, I believe I would be satisfied with my job.
- In general, I believe I would not like my job (reverse-coded).
- In general, I believe I would like working at the firm.
  Cammann et al. (1983)
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Organizational attractiveness

- For me, Jensen & Hay Consulting would be a good place to work.
- I would not be interested in Jensen & Hay Consulting except as a last resort (reverse-coded).
- Jensen & Hay Consulting would be attractive to me as a place for employment.
- I would be interested in learning more about Jensen & Hay Consulting.
- A job at Jensen & Hay Consulting is would be very appealing to me.
  Highhouse et al. (2003)
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Identification with organization

As an entry-level employee, I believe:

- I would feel like an outsider at Jensen & Hay Consulting (reverse-coded).
- I would feel alienated from Jensen & Hay Consulting (reverse-coded).
- I would belong at Jensen & Hay Consulting.
- I would feel comfortable at Jensen & Hay Consulting.
  Maghsoodi et al. (2023)
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Intentions to leave organization

As an entry-level employee at Jensen & Hay Consulting,

- I would prefer another more ideal organization than Jensen & Hay Consulting.
- I would think seriously about changing organizations.
- If I have my own way, I would be working for Jensen & hay Consulting three years from now (reserve-coded).
  O'Reilly et al. (1991)
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Appendix D

Manipulation & Attention Checks

Manipulation Checks

Representativeness manipulation checks

Instructions:
Based on Jensen & Hay Consulting's racial composition data that you have reviewed earlier, please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:
- The racial composition of upper management is similar to the racial composition of the entry-level workforce.
- There are similar percentages of people of different racial backgrounds represented in upper management and the entry-level workforce.
- The upper management is similarly racially diverse as the entry-level workforce.
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Manager sponsorship behaviors manipulation checks

Instructions:
Based on the feedback on your hypothetical manager, John, that you have reviewed earlier, please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:
- John is known to be a sponsor for his employees.
- John is known to be supportive of his employees' career advancement.
- John is known to strongly advocate for his employees' promotion.
  (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Attention Checks
- For this question, please select "Somewhat agree" to demonstrate that you are paying attention.
- For this question, please select "Somewhat disagree" to demonstrate that you are paying attention.

Appendix E

Demographics

Instructions:

Finally, we ask you that you complete a few demographic questions for informational purposes.

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other

2. What is your age?

3. How would you describe your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply.
   a. White or Caucasian
   b. Black or African American
   c. Asian
   d. American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander
   e. Biracial or Multiracial

4. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?
   a. Yes, I am of Hispanic or Latino origin
   b. No, I am not of Hispanic or Latino origin

5. What is your highest level of education?
   a. Less than a high school diploma
   b. High school degree or equivalent
   c. Some college, no degree
   d. Associate degree
   e. Bachelor's degree
   f. Master's degree
   g. Professional degree
   h. Doctorate

6. What is your current employment status?
   a. Employed full-time
   b. Employed part-time
   c. Not employed
   d. Retired

7. How many years of experience have you had working in an organizational setting?
   a. Less than 5 years
   b. 5-10 years
   c. 10-15 years
   d. More than 15 years

8. What is your current job level?
   a. Entry-level professional
   b. Mid-level professional
   c. Senior-level professional
   d. Manager
   e. Middle manager
   f. Senior manager
   g. Executive
   h. Other (please specify):