Mirrors or Misalignments:
Management Ethnic Representativeness and Interpersonal Mistreatment

Abstract
Preliminary research suggests that employees use the demographic makeup of their organization to make sense of diversity-related incidents at work. We build on this work by examining the impact of management ethnic representativeness - the degree to which the ethnic composition of managers in an organization mirrors or is misaligned with the ethnic composition of employees in that organization. To do so, we integrate signaling theory and a sense-making perspective into a relational demography framework to investigate why and for whom management ethnic representativeness may have an impact on interpersonal mistreatment at work. Specifically, in three complementary studies, we examine the relationship between management ethnic representativeness and interpersonal mistreatment. First, we analyze the relationship between management ethnic representativeness and perceptions of harassment, bullying, and abuse the next year, as moderated by individuals' ethnic similarity to others in their organizations in a sample of 60,602 employees of Britain's National Health Service. Second, a constructive replication investigates perceived behavioral integrity as an explanatory mechanism that can account for the effects of representativeness using data from a nationally representative survey of working adults in the United States. Third and finally, online survey data collected at two time points replicated these patterns and further integrated the effects of representativeness and dissimilarity when they are measured using both objective and subjective strategies. Results support our proposed moderated mediation model in which management ethnic representation is negatively related to perceived mistreatment through the mediator of perceived behavioral integrity, with effects being stronger for ethnically dissimilar employees. Theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.

Bio
Alex Lindsey is an Assistant Professor of Psychology in the School of Science at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis, where he also earned his Bachelor of Science in Psychology in 2011. Alex recently graduated with his Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from George Mason University. His program of research investigates fair and equitable solutions to mitigate diversity-related challenges such as prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. Because seemingly trivial instances of disadvantage can create substantial inequity over time in the workplace, it represents a ripe context in which to study manifestations of disadvantage and potential solutions to these serious problems. Alex’s research seeks to generate effective strategies that targets of prejudice, their allies, and organizations can use to reduce inequality and promote inclusion in the workplace. Specifically, his work has addressed diversity training effectiveness, impression and identity management strategies, and diverse team and organizational dynamics.