Intersectionality on the path to leadership: The role of identity management in influencing hiring outcomes

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The current work examines the effectiveness of verbal identity management strategies in leadership interviews in light of individuals' intersecting gender and ethnicity categories. We integrate intersectionality with role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) to explore two areas not yet fully understood: (1) the effectiveness of identity management strategies for individuals pursuing various types of leadership roles (i.e., male-dominated and female-dominated) and (2) the unique effects that result when applicants' gender and ethnicity are considered in tandem. The current sample of 819 participants completed a randomized experiment in a 4 (intersectionality category: African American female, African American male, Caucasian female, Caucasian male) x 3 (Identity management category: agentic, communal, neutral) x 2 (Job type: male-dominated, female-dominated) between subjects design. Results indicated notable differences both between and with gender groups, offering support for an intersectional perspective. We also observed differences depending on job type, offering support for our consideration of context. There was a significant three-way interaction between intersectionality category, identity management condition, and job type in the prediction of hiring ratings: African American women were seen as more hirable than Caucasian women with the use of an agentic strategy in applying for a male-dominated role; Both groups of women received more positive hiring ratings than both groups of men with the use of a communal strategy for a female-dominated role; The pattern of best-to-worst identity management strategy differed between intersectionality categories and job types. This work provides novel evidence that contributes to the current knowledge base and offers both theoretical and practical implications.