Stereotype Threat and Interscholastic Athletic Leadership

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Women have historically been underrepresented in positions of power within athletic administration. Stereotype threat, or the realization that there is a possibility that one is being judged as confirming or being reduced to a stereotype, can negatively impact the recruitment and retention of women leaders in sport. This study developed and validated a new scale, the Gender Stereotype Threat in Athletic Administration, and elicited responses from high school athletic directors in two U.S. states. Using multiple analysis of variance, correlation analysis, and structure equation modeling, five hypotheses were tested and supported based on the respondents’ feelings of group identification, belonging uncertainty, extra pressure to succeed, and group reputation threat. The present work extends the findings on stereotype threat in the sport leadership domain and provides a useful instrument to study this phenomenon in future research.

On May 22, 2019, the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) sent an email “to 40,000 high school principals, superintendents, and school board members” (NIAAA, personal communication, May 22, 2019) across the United States, declaring that high school athletic directors (ADs) are “working hard for you!” The message called ADs “unsung heroes” and led with a graphic of a Clark Kent lookalike, ripping off his dress shirt revealing a whistle around his neck and a Superman-style logo with the initials “AD.” The tagline read, “He is actually a superhero disguised as an athletic director.” In a profession that is historically dominated by men, the messaging to the woman AD cannot have been well received. This type of communication validates the inherent masculinity that occurs in leadership roles (Burton et al., 2009; Hovden, 2010), perpetuating sexism in sport, both overtly as well as embedded (Fink, 2016). Equally lamentable is the confirmation that gendering continues to be a problem in sport leadership. The cartoon of a man AD preserves a stereotype that women do not work in athletic leadership.

Historically, women have been underrepresented in positions of power within athletic administration (e.g., only 14% of all high school ADs are women; Dombek, 2018), are often marginalized (Whisenant et al., 2002), and are more likely to face antagonistic workplaces (Cunningham, 2008) leaving them potentially vulnerable to the effects of gender stereotype threat (ST). A stereotype is, “a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing” (Oxford, n.d.), while ST is defined as “the event of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs becoming self-relevant, usually as a plausible interpretation for something one is doing, for an experience one is having, or for a situation one is in, that has relevance to one’s self-definition” (Steele, 1997, p. 616). According to Steele and Aronson (1995), “the existence of . . . stereotype means that anything one does . . . make[s] [the] stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one’s own eyes” (p. 797).

The purpose of this study is to breakdown the construct of ST and to assess its effect on women in interscholastic athletic administration, also known as U.S. high school athletics.

Interscholastic athletic administrators are an ideal sample for this study for multiple reasons. First, there is a dearth of research on ST in sport outside of how it affects athlete performance. A study in sport administration is necessary if sporting organizations are going to grow opportunities for women leaders. Second, women are a significant minority in interscholastic athletic leadership positions, which is comparable to the dearth of women in similar positions in intercollegiate athletics. Only 11% of Division I college ADs are women (Chasing Equity, 2020), thus making the interscholastic athletic context an ample setting for exploration and future comparison with college leadership. Third, interscholastic athletic administration lacks a governing body with the authority to make institutional mandates like the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). That is, while the NCAA requires every intercollegiate athletic department place a woman in a senior leadership position as a potential solution to have more women in decision-making positions (i.e., the senior woman administrator, or SWA), individual high school districts make independent decisions outside of a national governing body (NIAAA) based on their philosophy of providing leadership opportunities to underrepresented groups. Thus, interscholastic ADs provide a greater source of knowledge to both develop a scale to measure ST in sport leadership, and through explanatory modeling, inform our understanding of women in athletic administration leadership.

Literature Review

Men and women in sport are aware of stereotypes aligned with ability and performance. The realization that there is a possibility that one is being judged as confirming or being reduced to a stereotype can trigger a reaction that inhibits performance, identification, and engagement (Smith & Martiny, 2018; Von Hippel et al., 2011). Accordingly, for women participating in sport, simply drawing attention to a commonly held stereotype such as “you throw like a girl” or “girls can’t play football” can elicit psychological effects that lead to poor performance, thus confirming said stereotype in the athlete’s mind (Hively & El-Alayi, 2014). Smith and Martiny (2018) point out that stereotyping is pervasive in sport and because of it, “. . . addressing ST is an important challenge facing various stakeholders in sport settings, such as athletes,
coaches, and sport psychologists” (p. 311). Moreover, ST has been found to extend off the playing field as it also manifests in sport leadership (Grappendorf & Burton, 2017; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017).

ST was first explicitly described by Steele and Aronson (1995) as they investigated whether the psychological effect of negative stereotypes might be the cause of poor performance among undergraduate African American students in academic testing. The authors found a cognitive and emotional response that consistently led to underperformance when students were confronted with or were in danger of affirming a negative stereotype. Aronson et al. (1998) theorized that understanding this response through the lens of the target provides a deeper understanding of ST and low academic achievement surrounding minorities and women. They noted that the cognitive and emotional response to ST creates a heightened discomfort as the individual becomes aware “... they are at risk of fulfilling a negative stereotype about their group” (p. 85).

In a variety of contexts, if the individual identifies with and prescribes a high degree of salience to the domain, a ST may be felt resulting in triggered responses that inhibit performance and capacity (Aronson et al., 1998). More specifically, a ST is situationally induced and contextual rather than individual; it arises when people become aware that they are negatively stereotyped in one or more aspects of their identity in current activities (Shih et al., 2011). STs have been found to disrupt performance, as they distract from the task and increase cognitive load, thus reducing working memory capacity accentuated by an emotional and physical response (Sunny et al., 2016; Von Hippel et al., 2011). This increases stress, active monitoring, and efforts to suppress intrusive thoughts and anxiety, which causes performance to be disrupted (Cortland & Kinias, 2019). Chronic underperformance in the face of ST could lead to devaluation and disidentification with the domain resulting in disconnection (Smith & Martiny, 2018; Spencer et al., 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Tomasetto & Appoloni, 2013).

To break down how STs work, Smith and Martiny (2018) describe three categories of mechanisms that explain the impact of them on performance: attention, emotion, and motivation. Attention is employed when individuals are made aware of a negative stereotype regarding their ability. In the context of interscholastic leadership, a stereotype example could be that women cannot lead an athletic department, based simply on the belief that sport is a male-dominated space (see the opening paragraph). Once aware, the individual faces uncertainty concerning applicability. Attention is then given to the stereotype and situations where it might be applied (e.g., a woman AD must fire the coach of a football team, a sport predominately played and coached by men). STs can be triggered with the mere notion that someone is judging the individual against the stereotype (Griffin, 2017; e.g., “what does a woman athletic director know about football, as she has never played the sport”). When the stereotype is salient, stigmatized people experience anxiety that their personal failure will result in confirming the stereotype (Tomasetto & Appoloni, 2013; e.g., “what if they are right and I cannot make this decision?”). Chronic exposure to environments that are perceived as threatening can lead to continual monitoring for cues (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Kaiser et al., 2006; Purduie-Vaughns et al., 2008, Tomasetto and Appoloni, 2013). Scanning and monitoring of the environment by the individual can result in fear, negative thoughts, and heightened anxiety as the individual works to suppress the negative thoughts and anxiety associated with the stereotype (Aramovich, 2014; Cortland & Kinias, 2019; Griffin, 2017; Shih et al., 1999). As a result, some experience increasing pressure to succeed and are motivated to outperform peers while others are driven to merely avoid performing worse than their counterparts (Smith & Martiny, 2018).

While early research was conducted in academic testing settings, recent scholarship has explored the construct in professional environments confirming ST in business, law, digital gaming, medicine, and athletics (Cortland & Kinias, 2019; Griffin, 2017; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Pennington et al., 2018; Hovden, 2010). These studies have focused on gender, leadership, job satisfaction, and participation. Von Hippel et al. (2011) conducted three studies looking at ST and consequences for women at all levels within the organization employed in an international consumer goods business. Their results showed women who engaged in social comparison with men experienced higher ST, and that feelings of ST were associated with identity separation. The authors noted that separation of women and job identities in the workplace led to a lack of feelings of belonging and diminished confidence in achieving career goals which often led to psychological distancing, loss of satisfaction, and intention to leave the organization.

Hoyt and Murphy (2016) reviewed literature exploring the process and implications of ST for women focusing on cues, consequences, moderators, and responses in the context of task and domains connected to leadership. The authors identified several signals/cues that might trigger ST responses including exposure to explicit cues like sexist remarks and subtle exposure to cues that arise when one is in the numerical minority. According to the authors, simply reminding women about the lack of women in the organization or asking them to perform in a domain where there is a well-known stereotype pervading the environment invites ST responses. Moreover, ST has the greatest impact on women motivated to perform well, who identify with their gender, and who are most aware of the stigmas around women in the workplace.

In the sport context, McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017) completed an intersectional analysis of the workplace experiences of 10 African American woman ADs from NCAA Division I, II, and III intercollegiate athletic departments. Their findings revealed that the intersection of race and gender identities, in conjunction with occupational and societal stereotypes, caused the ADs to face challenges to their identity and authority. The authors noted gender and occupational stereotyping was a prominent part of the experience for the group, “As a result of explicit verbal discourses and differential treatment, nine of the 10 women were cognizant that their status as African American women was incongruent with the prototypical image of an athletic director at their institution” (p. 398). Nine out of the 10 women reported experiencing ST on a regular basis, resulting in situations where they had to negotiate identity conflicts. More specifically, they noted making changes to their approach at work or some personal trait/quality to decrease the likelihood of it happening.

Women operating in roles dominated by men face a continual awareness that their treatment may be based on their sex as, “People have ... preconceived notions of what it means to be a leader, termed implicit leadership theories, and people evaluate their leaders and potential leaders in reference to them” (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016, p. 388). This can lead to negative performance impacts that accrue over time, disengagement, decreased leadership aspirations and separation from the field before reaching full capacity for leadership (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). This is exacerbated by ST’s direct link to identity separation which diminishes
one’s sense of belonging in the workplace, resulting in lower satisfaction and perceived likelihood to reach career goals (Von Hippel et al., 2011). Thus, ST decreases job satisfaction and increases intention to quit for those in leadership positions. Those aspiring to the role, when made aware of ST, may elect to avoid it by taking on supportive roles instead (Desombre et al., 2005) thus perpetuating gender inequality.

While there is widespread acknowledgement of negative outcomes related to gender stereotyping and ST in leadership outside of sport, very few studies have addressed the prevalence or impacts in sport leadership, more specifically interscholastic athletic administrators. Research on ST in sport has focused almost exclusively on sport participation (e.g., Beilock & McConnell, 2004; Grabow & Kuhl, 2019; Hively & El-Alayi, 2014; Smith & Martiny, 2018). Grappendorf and Burton (2017) identify numerous stereotypes and biases women sport leaders face in the workplace, as well as the negative impacts these have on the success in these roles, but there is no study on a measure of how stereotypes truly affect women in their sport leadership positions.

The context of athletic leadership, specifically high school athletics, is unique and worthy of exploration related to gender for a variety of reasons. First, women are a numeric minority, thus creating a prime environment to study the effects of ST relative to social comparison, the challenging of one’s identity, and the perceived lack of belonging to the dominant group (i.e., men). Second, high school athletic departments are often an office of one, so the athletic department is viewed by a community as the sole representative of athletics, which could increase feelings of ST. Finally, since a high school AD may be the sole representative of their office, a support structure within the school district may be lacking, thus contributing to a lack of belonging and diminished confidence.

Steele (1997) suggested several key elements of ST including an awareness of the stereotype, identification with the group being stereotyped, and relevance of the stereotype to the individual’s performance in a given situation. These elements were utilized to identify and develop the four constructs that are featured in the survey instrument developed for this study. The authors were led to explore more deeply gender stereotype perceptions in men and women ADs and the impacts of those perceptions on feelings of group identification, belonging, pressure to succeed, and reputation threat, and variations of each at given levels of experience. The following section addresses the four constructs developed from Steele (1997), with supporting research.

**Group Identification**

Prior research has found ST effects are strongest when individuals identify with the group that is being threatened (Steele et al., 2002). In Steele’s (1997) work, students who identified in the group that was stereotyped not to excel in school (i.e., African American, woman, economically disadvantaged) did worse on standardized tests compared with the assumed successful group, as their intellectual identity was inextricably tied to their performance. Wout et al. (2008) added that “pressure to disconfirm the stereotype should be most strongly felt by individuals who are highly identified with the negatively stereotyped group because they derive personal meaning and value from their group membership” (p. 793). For the purpose of identifying gender stereotype in interscholastic athletic administration, it is essential for a scale to measure participants’ group identification or the degree to which individuals identify themselves as a member of a certain group, in this case, gender.

Specific to women’s performance on a math exam, Steele (1997) identified “belongingness and acceptance in a domain they (women) identify with (p. 619)” as a factor in performing successfully. Steele identifies the “negative stereotype about their math ability that is disseminated throughout society (p. 620)” as a threat to their success. Davies et al. (2005) proposed that “vulnerability to stereotype threat requires individuals to have knowledge of the stereotypes linked to their stigmatized social identities” (p. 277). Von Hippel et al. (2011) conducted three studies looking at ST and consequences for working women finding that ST has a direct link to identity separation and perceived likelihood to reach career goals. The authors found that women who engaged in social comparison to men experienced higher ST, and that feelings of ST were associated with identity separation. Therefore, it becomes important for the scale in this study to measure the degree to which individuals feel they fit in or are accepted in their athletic administration environment based on their gender.

**Extra Pressure to Succeed**

Steele (1997) stated the societal pressures associated with groups that are adversely affected by stereotypes can cause suboptimal performance. Wout et al. (2008) points out that ST is a “. . . broad phenomenon consisting of multiple threats. While all these threats center on a concern of having a negative stereotype applied, they differ whether the concern is that the stereotype will be applied to oneself or to one’s social group” (p. 798). Wout et al. (2008) investigated the impact on math performance in a group of undergraduate women when faced with a concern of confirming a negative stereotype about themselves or their gender. Women in the self-concept threat condition performed worse overall. Women in the group threat condition performed worse the more they identified with their gender. The extra effort expended to ST led to working memory reduction when an individual perceived judgment through the lens of a negative stereotype based on their group’s reputation (Schmader, 2010). Extra pressure to succeed, also known as group threat from Schmader (2010), was defined as the degree to which a person is motivated to avoid confirming a negative stereotype of their group. With these findings, it is important to understand the pressures felt by women in interscholastic athletic administration.

Steele (1997) proposed that individuals are not vulnerable to ST from internal doubts of their performance or ability. Rather they are vulnerable due to a concern that they will be negatively judged and stereotyped by their group identification. These effects can be felt even if individuals do not believe the stereotype applies to them. Recognizing the impact of stereotyping and intersectionality as compounding factors that create situations where individuals are at risk for experiencing ST in a variety of contexts is essential (McDowell & Carter-Francisque, 2017).

Moreover, individuals can experience a variety of threats based on the intersection between the target and source. As such, the threat experienced depends on who the threat reflects upon and who is judging the actions (Desombre et al., 2019 Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2013). The target of the threat is identified by the individual as they determine whether their actions have the potential to reflect negatively on themselves or their group (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). The source of the threat is determined by figuring out who is judging these actions; those in the group, those external to the group, or the self (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). In a study utilizing a multiframework model, Desombre et al. (2019) investigated how sources of ST impact
performance when individuals experience self-based threats. The authors found decreases in performance stronger for individuals facing self-concept threat triggered by self-evaluation in comparison to those who faced own-reputation threat triggered by public evaluation by members of the stereotyped group. Threat to self (Wout et al., 2008), is invoked in contexts that highlight the dependence of one’s personal image on their group’s negative stereotype. Therefore, group reputation threat, for the purpose of this study, was defined as the degree to which a person is concerned that a negative stereotype of their gender membership will harm the individual’s professional career.

Considering these four factors of ST, the landscape of interscholastic athletic administration, and barriers women face in this field, it is beneficial to understand the role and effects of ST for women in interscholastic leadership. As noted, limited research has been conducted to specifically examine ST for women in sport leadership, let alone in interscholastic athletic administration. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to add to the literature of ST and sport leadership, let alone in interscholastic athletic administration. Additionally, using this measure, five hypotheses relative to the four constructs are posited to analyze the effect of ST on high school ADs.

Hypotheses 1: There is a significant difference between men and women in their perceptions of gender stereotypes.

Hypotheses 2: There is a significant relationship between an athletic administrator’s feeling of belonging, and their perceptions of reputation threat and pressure to succeed.

Hypotheses 3: There is a significant relationship between an athletic administrator’s group identification, and their perceptions of their group’s reputation threat and pressure to succeed.

Hypotheses 4: The athletic administrator’s group identification and perception of belonging will significantly impact their reputation threat and pressure to succeed.

Hypotheses 5: There is a significant difference between athletic administration’s perceptions of belonging, reputation threat, and pressure to succeed based on their years of experience in the field.

Methods

Instrument

To address the proposed hypotheses, the Gender Stereotype Threat in Athletic Administration instrument was created. In forming the instrument, an in-depth review of literature on ST was performed, yielding four distinct factors gleaned from Steele (1997). Definitions of the four factors are listed in Table 1.

Following the factor identification, attitudinal statements were created that addressed various unique comments of each factor, with a minimal of four statements per factor. In total, 29 unique items were created.

Once the items were complete, a panel of scholars with experience researching women in athletic administration and ST were sent the instrument in full and asked to review it for content and face validity. The original scale was first sent to two scholars who are experts in issues in sport and gender. Recommendations on how the language of the items aligned with each construct definition were accepted, and a revised set of items were sent to two additional scholars and one practitioner for further validation. The panel of scholars reviewed the items, ranking each item in terms of its fit to one of the four constructs, their certainty of their fit response, and the items’ relevance to the construct. Upon receiving feedback from the panel, the quantitative data were compiled and reviewed. In total, 10 items were removed following analysis.

Finally, the qualitative feedback was evaluated to determine how changes could be made to the wording of items. Minor adjustments were made to the instrument to comport with their suggestions and more adequately measure the defined constructs. The terms “female/male” were supported in the items, as the participants may experience ambiguity in identifying other genders. The result of all modifications was a 19-item instrument with established content and face validity.

After establishing the content and face validity of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted to measure the instrument’s reliability and establish construct validity. Accordingly, the instrument was sent to 1,332 collegiate athletic administrators at the NCAA Division I level via email resulting in a total of 208 usable surveys returned. After inputting data into SPSS software, an exploratory factor analysis was run to determine the number of constructs being measured and how each item loaded onto the ascribed construct. Hair et al.’s (1998) definition of an acceptable factor loading ($\beta > 0.60$) was employed due to the exploratory nature of the research. Unlike the instrument, which was designed to measure four distinct constructs, the pilot study exploratory factor analysis revealed only two constructs. The first construct, labeled Belonging Uncertainty, contained four items with an interitem correlation of .409 ($SD = .105$), and a Cronbach’s alpha of .736 while the second construct was labeled Gender Roles and had an interitem correlation of .613 ($SD = .084$) and a Cronbach’s alpha of .949.

As the result of the outcomes of the pilot study, changes were made to wording of the items that failed to load appropriately onto the ascribed constructs. Furthermore, four items were added to help measure various aspects of the constructs that the pilot study revealed were missing. Such changes resulted in an updated Gender Stereotype Threat in Athletic Administration, which included 23 items on a 6-point Likert-type scale with anchors of 1—strongly disagree and 6—strongly agree. The 23 items related

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Conceptual Factors and Definitions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group identification</td>
<td>The degree to which an individual identifies him/herself as a member of a certain group, in this case, gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging uncertainty</td>
<td>The degree to which an individual feels he/she fit in or is accepted by others in his/her work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra pressure to succeed</td>
<td>The degree to which a person is motivated to avoid confirming a negative stereotype of his/her group membership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group reputation threat</td>
<td>The degree to which a person is concerned a negative stereotype of his/her group membership will harm his/her professional career.</td>
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to measuring group identification (four items; e.g., “Being a male/female contributes to my self-confidence at work”), belonging uncertainty (nine items; “I belong in athletic administration”), extra pressure to succeed (five items; e.g., “I worry that if I make a mistake at work my colleagues will think males/females are not cut out for careers in athletic administration”), and group reputation threat (five items; “Being a male/female negatively affects how my abilities are judged at work”).

To test the reliability of the new 23-item instrument, a confirmatory factor analysis was run after the primary data collection. Following this, the Cronbach’s alpha (α) for each construct was calculated. Analysis found all items to load appropriately onto their ascribed constructs and all constructs to be reliable (Table 2).

In addition to the Likert-scale items, demographic questions (e.g., years of experience, highest level of education, and playing and coaching experience) were also included in the instrument. Participants were asked if they identify as a man/male, woman/female, or if another term better identifies their gender.

**Procedures**

Due to the researchers’ access to ADs in two states, a purposeful sampling methodology was used. More specifically, the target for this study was current ADs at high schools in the states of Louisiana and Ohio. Emails were collected from each state’s governance association, and a Qualtrics survey was sent to 1,288 addresses. Seventy-six email addresses were invalid, so the survey reached 1,012 ADs. The survey was sent in the fall of 2019, and a follow-up was sent 3 weeks later. Two hundred and eighty-two ADs opened the survey link, and out of those who opened it, 195 surveys were deemed usable for a response rate of 19.3%.

**Table 2**  **Factors, Items, Factor Loadings (β), and Cronbach Alphas (α) for Observed Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>I belong in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel comfortable contributing as an athletic administrator.</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I see myself as a part of the athletic administration community.</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I fit in well with others I work with in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am similar to the kind of people that succeed in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People in athletic administration think like me.</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel comfortable working in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I get along well with others I work with in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other athletic administrators are a lot like me.</td>
<td>0.662</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group ID</td>
<td>Overall, being a female/male has a lot to do with how I feel about myself at work.</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being a female/male influences how I feel about myself at work.</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Being a female/male contributes to my self-confidence at work.</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, being a female/male is an important part of my self-image.</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Group reputation threat</td>
<td>Because I am a female/male, I worry that my job performance will be judged more negatively than a female/male performing similar work.</td>
<td>0.916</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I worry because I am a female/male, I will not be considered for leadership positions within athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.914</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I believe others are critical of my job performance in athletic administration because I am a female/male.</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being a female/male negatively affects how my abilities are judged at work.</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I worry that my colleagues will not believe that I am committed to a career in athletic administration because I am a female/male.</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra pressure to succeed</td>
<td>I worry that my behavior at work will cause my colleagues to think stereotypes about female/male in athletic administration are true.</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>I am concerned that my colleagues will judge females/males working in athletics as a whole based on my job performance.</td>
<td>0.875</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In athletic administration, I am concerned that female/male colleagues will draw general conclusions of my gender based on how I perform tasks at work.</td>
<td>0.873</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I worry that if I make a mistake at work, my colleagues will think females/males are not cut out for careers in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.855</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I worry that my job performance could confirm the negative stereotypes others have of females/males in athletic administration.</td>
<td>0.762</td>
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</table>
Participants

On average the individuals who participated were 45.98 (SD = 9.607) years old (with a range of 22–70) and had 10.88 (SD = 8.599) years of experience in athletic administration (with a range of 1–42 years). Most of the participants were White (182, 92.4%) and identified as a man/male (160, 81.2%) who had obtained a master’s degree (142, 72.1%) and worked in Ohio (172, 87.3%). Other groups were represented though, as a small portion reported being Black or African American (7, 3.6%), “other” (5, 2.5%), and Native American or Pacific Islander (1, 0.5%). Additionally, 36 (18.3%) respondents reported being woman/female and 23 (11.7%) stated they worked in Louisiana. No respondents identified by another term other than man/male or woman/female. In terms of the highest degree achieved, 47 (23.9%) participants had a bachelor’s degree, four (2.0%) had a doctoral degree, and two (1.0%) had a high school diploma or General Educational Development test. Almost all of participants played sports at either a high school (76, 38.6%) or college level (106, 53.8%), with five (2.5%) playing professionally, five (2.5%) playing at the youth/middle school level, and three having not played organized sports at all. In addition to playing experience, the majority of the study’s participants also coached sports at the high school (140, 71.1%) or college level (37, 18.8%). Another 10 (5.1%) reported coaching youth/middle school sports, seven (3.6%) did not coach at all, and one (0.5%) coached a professional sport team. A majority (117, 59.4%) coached both genders, with 50 (25.4%) coaching only boys/males, and 21 (10.7%) coaching only girls/females. Finally, 108 (54.8%) reported completing some NIAAA Leadership Training Institute courses, and 87 (44.2%) noted they had not, with two (1.0%) not responding.

Data Analysis

In performing initial data analysis, and in testing Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5, SPSS Statistics 25 software was used. In running the data, listwise deletion was employed to address the issue of data “missing completely at random (MCAR)” (Schumaker & Lomax, 2004, p. 43). Hypotheses 1 and 5 were tested using multiple analysis of variance, while Hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested using correlation analysis. More specifically, multiple analyses of variance were employed to determine if a significant difference existed between the ascribed groups while correlations tested whether there was a significant relationship between variables.

Finally, to test Hypothesis 4, structure equation modeling (SEM) was utilized. In doing so, a correlation matrix (Table 3) was first produced and then inputted into LISREL software (Scientific Software International) so the proposed relationships could be examined.

Within LISREL, the relationships were tested using the maximum likelihood method of estimation. In evaluating the hypothesis, the pathway between each variable was first assessed through analyzing the $t$ values of each parameter in accordance with Schumacker and Lomax (2004). When a $t$ value was found to be nonsignificant the pathway was removed, and the model was rerun to include the noted change. With only statistically significant pathways remaining, the overall fit of the model was evaluated using five measures commonly cited within SEM literature (Iacobucci, 2010; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). These measures included: $\chi^2/df$, goodness-of-fit (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Additionally, all suggested changes in the output were evaluated regarding the conceptualized framework of the study and potential improvement in model fit. When the change was deemed to be both theoretically justifiable and improved model fit, it was made. However, only a single change was made at a time. After each change was made the model was rerun and reevaluated. This process continued until the model was determined to be acceptable and/or no more changes were deemed just.

Results

Addressing Hypothesis 1, the multiple analysis of variance found a significant difference between men and women in relation to their sense of belonging ($F = 17.366, p < .001$), group identity ($F = 22.622, p < .001$), group reputation threat ($F = 139.625, p < .001$), and pressure to succeed ($F = 57.892, p < .001$), thus supporting the hypothesis. In relation to belonging, men ($\mu = 5.218, SD = 0.568$) reported a significantly higher sense of belonging in athletic administration than women ($\mu = 4.691, SD = 1.052$). It is important to note that both groups’ summated averages fell above the midpoint of the scale, meaning that while there was a significant difference between the men and women, both sets of individuals, on average, felt they belonged in the field.

Outside of belonging, men and women were also found to be significantly different in their perceptions of how their gender was tied to their work identity. In terms of gender identity and salience, women responded slightly in the affirmative ($\mu = 3.208, SD = 1.163$), noting their gender was a part of their athletic administration work identity, while men ($\mu = 2.321, SD = 0.971$) noted their gender was not. Likewise, women ($\mu = 3.510, SD = 1.381$) reported their gender affected their reputation and how they were viewed at work and men ($\mu = 1.706, SD = 0.636$) noted their gender did not play a factor. Finally, as with group identification and reputation, women ($\mu = 3.189, SD = 1.261$) worried their gender affected how others viewed their job performance and, thus brought increased pressure on them to succeed. Men ($\mu = 1.955, SD = 0.764$) again did not believe their gender affected the appraisal of their work.

Evaluations of Hypothesis 2 revealed a negative significant relationship between athletic administrators sense of belonging and the threat their gender played on their reputation ($r = -.368, p < .001$) and feelings of pressure to succeed ($r = -.328, p < .001$). That is, the greater an individual’s perception of belonging the less their gender was perceived as a threat to their reputation and the less they felt pressure due to their gender to succeed. However, analysis of Hypothesis 3 found a positive significant relationship between an individual’s group identification and the threat their gender played on their reputation ($r = .562, p < .001$) and their pressure to succeed ($r = .652, p < .001$). Thus, when an individual identified highly with their gender, they also perceived higher levels of threat brought about by that gender as well as increased pressure to succeed in their job. Given these findings, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported.

Examining these hypotheses more in-depth, the gender of the respondents was controlled. When doing this, a significant difference was observed amid the connection between belonging and reputation threat and pressure to succeed. Respondents who identified as men reported a significant negative relationship between belonging and reputation threat ($r = -.182, p = .023$), while women were found to have a nonsignificant relationship ($r = -.319, p = .058$). Conversely, women were found to have a significant negative relationship between belonging and pressure to succeed ($r = -.414, p = .012$), whereas men had no such significant relationship ($r = -.093, p = .247$). These findings show when men in athletic administration felt they belonged in their job, they believed...
|     | 1     | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  |
|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | Belonging | .73** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 2   | Belonging | .58** | .71** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 3   | Belonging | .54** | .57** | .46** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 4   | Belonging | .54** | .52** | .42** | .67** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 5   | Belonging | .50** | .47** | .42** | .45** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 6   | Belonging | .50** | .44** | .30** | .55** | .59** | .36** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 7   | Belonging | .40** | .43** | .43** | .56** | .52** | .48** | .52** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 8   | Belonging | .53** | .61** | .43** | .56** | .52** | .48** | .52** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 9   | Group ID1 | −.07 | −.05 | −.03 | −.04 | .01 | −.01 | −.05 | .10 | .08 | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 10  | Succeed 1 | −.19** | −.10 | −.20** | −.27** | −.22** | −.20** | −.21** | −.15* | −.18* | .33** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 11  | Threat 1 | −.34** | −.29** | −.29** | −.37** | −.32** | −.29** | −.36** | −.40** | −.36** | .33** | .58** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 12  | Group ID2 | −.03 | .05 | .02 | −.04 | .01 | .03 | −.11 | 0.04 | −.003 | .50** | .39** | .37** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 13  | Pressure 2 | −.26** | −.20** | −.21** | −.31** | −.25** | −.26** | −.31** | −.28** | −.30** | .26** | .58** | .72** | .31** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 14  | Group ID3 | −.19** | −.18* | −.24** | −.24** | −.14 | −.13 | −.26* | −.17* | −.17* | .44** | .53** | .52** | .57** | .49** | .51** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 15  | Pressure 3 | −.20** | −.16* | −.15* | −.22** | −.16* | −.12 | −.28** | −.22** | −.24** | .29** | .53** | .60** | .48** | .68** | .69** | .649** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 16  | Group ID4 | −.21** | −.24** | −.20** | −.21** | −.20** | −.22** | −.24** | .50** | .44** | .51** | .59** | .46** | .44** | .77** | .56** | .56** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 17  | Threat 3 | −.25** | −.17* | −.15* | −.26** | −.19** | −.23** | −.24** | −.24** | .32** | .57** | .73** | .43** | .71** | .76** | .53** | .70** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 18  | Group ID 5 | −.21** | −.24** | −.20** | −.21** | −.20** | −.22** | −.24** | .50** | .44** | .51** | .59** | .46** | .44** | .77** | .56** | .56** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 19  | Pressure 4 | −.22** | −.18* | −.15* | −.26** | −.23** | −.19* | −.30** | −.24** | −.22** | .33** | .54** | .64** | .51** | .68** | .64** | .68** | .77** | .71** | .70** | 1   |     |
| 20  | Threat 4 | −.26** | −.22** | −.22** | −.25** | −.21** | −.18* | −.27** | −.27** | −.31** | .24** | .51** | .74** | .36** | .77** | .73** | .73** | .49** | .67** | .81** | .54** | .71** | 1   |
| 21  | Pressure 5 | −.20** | −.17* | −.15* | −.24** | −.18* | −.14 | −.24** | −.19** | −.16* | .34** | .64** | .66** | .43** | .70** | .61** | .63** | .72** | .63** | .57** | .71** | .67** | 1   |
| 22  | Threat 5 | −.26** | −.20** | −.15* | −.27** | −.23** | −.18* | −.282** | −.21** | −.18* | .34** | .58** | .75** | .38** | .77** | .75** | .52** | .66** | .79** | .54** | .77** | .84** | .76** | 1   |

Note: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
their gender was not viewed as a threat to their reputation. They further felt no connection between their gender and the pressure placed on them to succeed. On the other hand, women who felt they belonged noted no connection between their sense of belonging and reputation threats but did note that when they felt they belonged in their job they also felt significantly less extra pressure to succeed.

Unlike a sense of belonging, the relationship between group identity and reputation threat, as well as group identity and pressure to succeed, was found to be almost identical among men and women. In terms of group identity and reputation, both men \((r = .542, p < .001)\) and women \((r = .450, p < .001)\) noted a positive significant relationship between constructs, meaning the greater each group’s identification with their gender, the greater they perceived their gender was a threat to their reputation. Similarly, the greater men’s \((r = -.015, p < .001)\) and women’s \((r = .538, p < .001)\) degree of identification with their gender, the greater the role they believed their gender played in creating extra pressure on them to succeed. These findings show that when someone working in athletic administration identifies with their gender, regardless of what that gender is, they also believe that the gender they identify with effects how others perceive them in the workplace.

Before the proposed model in Hypothesis 4 could be tested, each individual pathway had to be assessed to determine its validity. The pathways from group identification to reputation \((t = 12.25, p < .001)\) and pressure to succeed \((t = 10.37, p < .001)\) were both found to be positive and significant. Additionally, the path from belonging to reputation threat \((t = -3.85, p < .001)\) and pressure to succeed \((t = -2.32, p = .020)\) were both found to be significant, though negatively so.

After assessing the individual pathways, the fit of the model was examined. Evaluation of the fit indices resulted in two of the five— that is, \(\chi^2/df (p) = 2.89 (p < .001)\), SRMR = .0692—meeting the standards set by Iacobucci (2010) and Schumacker and Lomax (2004) of a good fitting model. Though RMSEA (.101; confidence interval [.0922, .110]) and CFI (.870) did not meet the widely accepted standard of .08 or less and .90 or above respectfully, the fact that RMSEA was below .10 and CFI was above .85 indicates the model was acceptable. Finally, GFI (.754) indicated a poor fitting model as it did not reach the .80 or above threshold. Given that two indices showed a good fit (i.e., \(\chi^2/df\) and SRMR), two showed acceptable fit (i.e., RMSEA and CFI), and one (GFI) showed a poor fit, the modification indices in the LISREL output were examined to determine if any theoretically justifiable changes could be made. Based on this review, one change (i.e., the addition of a pathway from the latent variables extra pressure to succeed to reputation threat) was determined to be justifiable. More specifically, this link between constructs was determined to be just as the degree to which a person is motivated to avoid confirming a negative stereotype (i.e., extra pressure to succeed) can be seen to influence the degree to which a person is concerned a negative stereotype of their group will harm their career (reputation threat; Aronson et al., 1998).

The pathway from reputation threat to pressure to succeed was found to be positive and significant \((t = 9.02, p < .001)\). However, the addition of the new pathway resulted in the path from belonging to pressure to succeed becoming nonsignificant \((t = 1.06, p = .287)\), thus the path from belonging to pressure was removed and the model was again rerun. Upon rerunning, all pathways were found to be significant, so an evaluation of the model fit was undertaken. It was discovered that the addition of the path from reputation threat to pressure and the removal of belonging to pressure improved the overall fit of the model. Specifically, four of five indices were found to indicate a good fitting model—that is, \(\chi^2/df (p) = 2.36 (p < .001)\), SRMR = .0630, CFI = .906, and GFI = .800. The fifth index (i.e., RMSEA = .084, confidence interval [.0765, .0955]) did not meet the good standard but was found to be acceptable. Given this, and the fact that no further modifications were seen to be theoretically justifiable, the model as a whole is a good fitting model (Figure 1). Further examination of the accepted model also revealed that an individual’s sense of belonging and group identification accounted for 54.8% of the variance in perceived threats to reputation, whereas reputation threats and group identification accounted for 95.8% of the variance in perceived pressure to succeed.

Finally, an examination of Hypothesis 4 found a significant difference between the amount of experience an athletic administrator had and their perceptions of belonging, \(F(5, 191) = 5.178, p < .001\), reputation threat, \(F(5, 191) = 3.565, p = .004\), and pressure to succeed, \(F(5, 191) = 3.015, p = .012\). Post hoc analysis in relation to a sense of belonging revealed individuals with 1–5 years of experience (\(\mu = 4.80, SD = 0.902\)) varied significantly from those with 6–10 years of experience (\(\mu = 5.13, SD = 0.589\)), 11–15 years of experience (\(\mu = 5.22, SD = 0.587\)), 16–20 years of experience (\(\mu = 5.43, SD = 0.426\)), 21–25 years of experience (\(\mu = 5.48, SD = 0.468\)), and 26 or more years of experience (\(\mu = 5.47, SD = 0.352\)). No other significant difference was found between categories of experience and sense of belonging. Thus, it can be concluded that once an individual surpasses 5 years of experience, there is a significant increase in their sense of belonging that maintains throughout the rest of the career in athletic administration.

In regard to athletic administrators’ perception of their gender threatening their reputation, again a significant difference was found between those with 1–5 years of experience (\(\mu = 2.42, SD = 1.34\)) and those with 6–10 years of experience (\(\mu = 2.02, SD = 0.714\)), 11–15 years of experience (\(\mu = 1.97, SD = 1.12\)), 16–20 years of experience (\(\mu = 1.65, SD = 0.942\)), 21–25 years of experience (\(\mu = 1.59, SD = 0.627\)), and 26 or more years of experience (\(\mu = 1.45, SD = 0.559\)). No other significant difference was found. As with a sense of belonging, it can be concluded that once an individual surpasses 5 years of experience, they feel that their gender on average does not create a threat to their reputation.

The same cannot be said of the pressure athletic administrators felt their gender placed on them to succeed. No significant difference was found among the first three age ranges (\(\mu_{1-5} = 2.49, SD_{1-5} = 1.16; \mu_{6-10} = 2.16, SD_{6-10} = 0.836; \mu_{11-15} = 2.22, SD_{11-15} = 1.040\)). However, each of the first three age ranges were found to be significantly

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**Figure 1** — Structural equation model with \(t\) values of relationship between belonging, group identification, reputation threat, and pressure to succeed for high school athletic administrators. **\(** p < .001**.**
higher than the latter three ranges ($\mu_{16-20} = 1.70$, $SD_{16-20} = .731$; $\mu_{21-25} = 1.88$, $SD_{21-25} = .885$; $\mu_{26+} = 1.82$, $SD_{26+} = .648$). As with the other constructs, the results show that once an athletic administrator reaches a certain level of experience (i.e., 15 years) the feeling of extra pressure being placed on them due to their gender decreases significantly.

Though a significant difference was found with all three constructs it is important to note that the mean score, regardless of the level of experience, did not cross the midpoint of the scale at any point. Thus, while a significant difference was found, all respondents noted some degree of belonging and only low levels of reputation threat and pressure to succeed because of their gender.

**Discussion**

The results of this study provide critical insight into the feelings of a historically marginalized group, women in athletic leadership positions. With the number of student-athletes split relatively even across gender and the leadership of intercollegiate athletic departments heavily skewed toward men, it is critical to explore the psychosocial components of leadership in the effort to improve both recruitment and retention of women leaders.

Regarding the first hypothesis, each factor is worth exploration. While both men and women felt a sense of belonging within the field, which is encouraging, the results indicated that men’s sense was significantly stronger. Sport has historically been a male-centered space (Whisenant et al., 2002), and thus it is not surprising that men, who make up 86% of ADs (Dombeck, 2018), would feel a stronger sense of belonging. Von Hippel et al. (2011) found that women who engaged in social comparison to men experienced higher ST, and that feelings of ST were associated with identity separation. The current findings validate and add to this as gender was revealed to be a part of the woman AD’s identity at work, while men did not share this feeling.

As stated, ST is situationally induced. In a situation where a person is a considerable minority compared with their peers, cognizance of identity and focusing on personal characteristics can occur. Thus, it was not surprising to find in the current study that women felt that their gender affected their work identity, while men did not.

Finally, women ADs believed gender affected how others viewed their job performance, adding pressure to succeed, while men did not share this concern. With no other women to compare themselves with and use to self-evaluate, as only 14% of high school ADs are female (Dombeck, 2018), it is likely women will continue to experience higher ST (Von Hippel et al., 2011). Research has shown that women have a predisposition to feel that their success and failure transcends beyond them (Schmader, 2010; Wout et al., 2008), as individual results are viewed and extrapolated as an indictment on all women, bringing an additional level of accountability.

The second and third hypotheses were also revealing. The association between feelings of belonging and threat of reputation, as well as gender association and pressure to succeed was not surprising, as the more one feels connected to the position, the less role that gender plays regarding pressure to succeed. This finding aligns with McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017). More specifically, in their study of African American women ADs, the group reported working to not only disconfirm stereotypes but also shouldered the burden of understanding that the success of other women might be hindered or advanced based on perceptions of their performance.

Finally, the connection between group identification with gender and administrators feelings about how they are perceived in the workplace is intriguing. Strong identity with one’s gender was found to play a role in the belief that their reputation was being judged by their gender. While not surprising for women, for men it is perplexing. Perhaps men perceive the growth of women in leadership positions as a threat, or perhaps there are situational characteristics involved. Regardless, this is a new finding and has not been revealed in previous research.

Adding to these new findings was the SEM model that showed not only that there is a relationship between variables but a causality. Specifically, gender group identification was found to have a significant positive effect on perception of reputation threat and pressure to succeed, while feeling a sense of belonging as an administrator had a negative significant effect on perceptions of reputation threat. Given that men were found in Hypothesis 1 to have lower levels of gender identification than women, this model shows identifying strongly as a woman within the field of high school ADs has negative consequences. Strong identification results in the individual feeling that their gender will hurt their standing and reputation with colleagues which in turn increases the pressure they feel to succeed at their job. However, if the individual feels they belong in the job, regardless of gender, the model shows that they experience decreased perceptions that their gender will hurt their standing and reputation with their colleagues. These findings are significant for practitioners who seek to create an environment of inclusion for all genders in athletic administration while strategizing how best to support all individuals, regardless of gender, to be successful. A major key to decreasing the pressure ADs feel to succeed is making them feel like they belong in the job and showing them that their gender in no way impacts how they perform or how they will be treated.

Finally, years of experience was found to be a factor in perceptions of belonging, reputation threat, and pressure to succeed. If one does feel the impact of ST early in a career, strategies successfully employed might lead to a decrease in negative outcomes associated with it. Bandura (1997) has shown that experience is a key tenant that affects self-efficacy, which is the belief that a person can succeed in their ascribed goal based on having put in the time to achieve the goal. Block et al. (2011) suggest that individuals who find success in overcoming issues with belonging, reputation threat, and pressure to succeed may be more likely to respond by being resilient to the threat. Once administrators pass 5 years of experience, it is safe to say that they have settled into their role, feel competent, and many insecurities may dissipate regardless of their gender.

**Implications**

Practitioners can look to the findings of the current study as an indication of not only the challenges that women face in the workplace, but also the barriers that might keep them from choosing a career in interscholastic athletic administration. For example, the results of the current study indicate that women perceive their gender as part of their identity at work, which they note affects their reputation amongst colleagues and how their work is judged. This was shown to result in women feeling a lower sense of belonging, a higher threat to their reputation, and greater pressure to succeed. Such feelings may deter women from entering the field or bring with it increased stress causing them to leave the field sooner or be less successful at their jobs. Such outcomes result in the issues of underrepresentation of women in athletic administration worsening rather than improving.

Thus, given the findings of the current study, while recognizing additional work on the topic is needed, practitioners should look to institute changes to address the perceptions of women and increase their sense of belonging. They might begin by reviewing
their current human resource management practices and examining the job description, responsibilities, and qualifications of ADs to assure a diverse pool of men and women candidates. For example, the historic practice of tying the AD position to the role of Head Football Coach, might deter some women with bonafide credentials in athletic administration and coaching from applying due to the perception that the job is going to be awarded to a man. Small changes in the job description, such as calling for a candidate who can coach any sport (men’s or women’s) or removing the coaching responsibilities from the AD role altogether should result in a more diverse pool of candidates and allow individuals to feel a greater sense of belonging at the institution.

Additionally, schools should examine the management practices of onboarding, mentorship, continuing education, and the likes and look to implement programs that make women feel a greater sense of belonging at work. As the results of the study demonstrate, increasing one’s sense of belonging (regardless of gender) reduces the pressure they feel to succeed and lessens their perceptions of threats. Such practices should not stop with the school and educating women athletic administrators but should extend to all athletic conferences, governing bodies, and those involved in interscholastic sport and education, as perceptions individuals have stem not just from how one individual feels within a given situation but also how others act around them. Thus, creating an environment that is more accepting and inclusive of women will lead to women feeling a greater sense of belonging, which the results of the current study show will reduce women’s perceived reputation threats and extra pressure to succeed. Such changes should help increase the population of women serving as AD and help them further succeed.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The lower sample size did not allow the researchers to run a multiple analysis of covariance with experience and gender, as well as run additional SEM models with gender. Additionally, the two states that were used for this study, Ohio and Louisiana, were based on access to valid email lists. Thus, due to the purposeful sampling methodology, the results of the current study can only be applied to the respondents and not generalized to the population of interscholastic ADs as a whole. Additionally, the descriptive statistics revealed the sample lacked racial diversity, which also limited the generalizability of the results. Future studies should look to expand upon these findings and extend the research to all NIAAA members in all states and territories to test the found relationships and determine if the general population shares the found perceptions. Within this exploration, scholars should also look to add additional categorical variables (e.g., race, education, coaching experience, etc.) to their analysis in an attempt to further explain the found relationships in the present study.

This was the first time the Gender Stereotype Threat in Athletic Administration was used in a study, so using this scale with administrators in other geographic areas, as well as in ancillary professions (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) is needed. Breaking down geographic differences can help state associations identify where stereotype bias is more prevalent, and subsequently develop strategies to mitigate its effect.

**References**


