Why WIN (Women in NASSM)? Motives and Benefits to Members

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The Women in NASSM (WIN) group was started in 2004 as a place of support and connection for female members of NASSM. The group started as an unofficial/unrecognized gathering and has since been officially recognized and included in the yearly NASSM schedule. Currently, there are 264 individuals included on the WIN listserv and attendance at the annual meetings averages around 60 participants (H. Grappendorf, personal communication, October 31, 2019). The purpose of this study is to further exam the impact of the WIN group including the motives members purport and the benefits which are derived from its existence.

There is a wealth of literature which examines the psychological benefits and outcomes of group membership including those with underrepresented or marginalized identities. The stereotype inoculation model posits career and academic aspirations are very much influenced by the exposure to successful role models and the degree to which one can relate to those role models (Dasgupta, 2011). Drawing from the literature which examines the psychological benefits and outcomes of group membership, the inoculation model makes four predictions: 1) Similar to a medical vaccine, contact with successful ingroup experts and peers will function as a “social vaccine”, protecting individuals from self-doubt and increasing self-efficacy. 2) Contact with ingroup experts and peers is particularly important for those whose ingroup is a numeric minority, for instance women studying or working in a male dominated discipline/field. 3) Exposure to ingroup experts is most potent if connection or identification with them is achieved. 4) The cumulative effect of stereotypes and/or isolation of being a numeric minority is often subtle and unconscious, thus, the impact of exposure to ingroup experts and peers may only be visible through implicit self-efficacy measures (Dasgupta, 2011). In sum, the model predicts this “social inoculation” will positively influence sense of social belonging, self-efficacy, feeling less challenged by difficulty, and feeling less threatened, thus, leading to positive performance, achievement, and attrition outcomes (Dasgupta, 2011).

Using the theoretical underpinnings of stereotype inoculation model (Dasgupta, 2011) as well as social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), role model theory (Dalton, 1989), stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), and belongingness uncertainty (Walton & Cohen, 2007), this study will examine the broad impact of the WIN group on female doctoral students and faculty members of Sport Management. Specifically, we will examine the motivational factors influencing group membership and group participation as well as outcomes and benefits experienced by group members.

A mixed-methods approach will be used for this research. Semi-structured interviews will be utilized and quantitative measures will include examining feelings of belonging within NASSM and within the field (scale adapted from the PBS—Allen, 2006), measures of self-efficacy (scale adapted from the NGSE—Chen, Gully, Eden, 2001), perceptions of threat (scale drawn from Ethier & Deaux, 1994), and ability to handle difficulty (scale adapted from the PSS—Sheldon, 1994). Control, demographic, and grouping variables will also be collected. Participants will consist of NASSM members who self-identify as WIN members.

Results will be presented and implications and future research will be discussed.