ORIGINAL RESEARCH

# Examining the Factors that Facilitate Athletic Training Faculty Socialization into Higher Education

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**Context:** Doctoral education is the mechanism whereby athletic trainers can develop an awareness of their future roles and responsibilities in higher education. Evidence suggests that doctoral education may provide an incomplete understanding of these roles and responsibilities, warranting further investigation.

**Objective:** To gain a better understanding on how athletic training faculty members are socialized into their role.

**Design:** Qualitative study.

**Setting:** Higher education institutions.

**Patients or Other Participants:** Twenty-eight athletic training educators (14 men, 14 women) who had completed doctoral training. Participants' average age was 39 ± 6 years, with 11.6 ± 5.6 years of experience working in education.

**Main Outcome Measure(s):** One-on-one interviews were completed with all participants following a semistructured framework. Data saturation drove sampling. Inductive analysis was used to evaluate the data. Member checks, peer review, and researcher triangulation established rigor.

**Results:** The first theme, professional socialization, was defined by participants as those experiences in their doctoral training that provided role understanding. The second theme, organizational socialization, speaks to those experiences that occurred once the athletic training faculty member was employed full time in higher education. The category of mentorship was articulated, in both themes, as impactful in both professional preparations at the doctoral level and during the institutional socialization process once a novice faculty member is hired.

**Conclusions:** Doctoral education provides the platform for role understanding, which allows the athletic trainer to be prepared to transition into the faculty member role. Specifically, engagement in the role and mentoring provided this role awareness, which is common within the socialization framework. Institutions also offer formalized orientation sessions as a means to assimilate, and mentoring is also available for support.

**Key Words**: Doctoral education, athletic trainers, educators, professional socialization, organizational socialization

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## INTRODUCTION

The primary function of doctoral education is to prepare an individual for a career in higher education as a faculty member.[1,2] Socialization is the platform whereby future faculty members learn about the roles they will assume upon degree completion.[3] The process is completed in 2 stages: professional and organizational. The first is often more formalized, viewed as educational, and termed professional socialization.[4] It is during this time that the doctoral student is able to develop an appreciation for the intangible aspects of the faculty member role, such as attitudes, values, and characteristics.[1–3] These aspects are most often observed through interactions with peers and faculty members, advisors, and mentors.[5,6] These skills are more casual in origin, yet just as important for future success as the more tangible aspects of development. Technical skills, the ones that are more tangible and critical for successful matriculation into the role of a faculty member, must also be developed during this time of professional socialization.[5,7] Technical skills include those necessary to succeed in the aspects of higher education, including research, teaching, and service to the community and profession.[8] Primary skills may include developing content expertise, grant writing, and scholarly success with writing and presenting research, as well as instructional skills and performing duties related to school, college, university, and professional leadership.[9]

Fundamentally speaking, a doctoral candidate will need to gain experiences in the tenets of higher education, including research, teaching, and service. Although all 3 areas are important, it is clear that doctoral education and the socialization process heavily favor the development of the researcher.[10,11] The need to develop a research enterprise is viewed as an important aspect of the doctoral socialization process; that is, doctoral students believe that they should be given experiences collaboratively and autonomously to cultivate knowledge and skills to be scholars.[5,6] Opportunities to teach and be involved with service activities, despite being a part of the academic culture, are often viewed as less critical in the socialization process.[10,12] This perception materializes partly because of the opinion that these skills, although hard, are alleged to be developed more informally or organically through engaging in the roles over time.[12]

Role understanding is necessary for faculty members to successfully transition into their role. In theory, then, doctoral education should be comprehensive and include a well-rounded experience. Despite this forethought, recent evidence suggests that in athletic training doctoral education is dominated by research experiences.[11,12] Research success is a primary function for all faculty members; however, not all institutions in higher education place great focus on this role as a criterion for success and promotion. In fact, in athletic training, although doctoral education appears to occur mostly at research-intensive institutions, a majority of full-time faculty positions are at colleges and universities that value teaching and service equally to research.[11,12] This is unique to the profession of athletic training, as is the importance of administrative duties often linked to program management and clinical education coordination. Such roles are often new and challenging to the novice faculty member.[13]

Doctoral education, however, is only one mechanism to provide support for a faculty member in the transition into higher education. The second stage of socialization, organizational, occurs when the faculty member enters the faculty role and gains on-the-job training that is specific to the institution.[3] The process is an assimilation of the individual into the workplace setting; fundamentally, it is a chance for the individual to become aware of expectations that match the climate of that workplace setting.[14,15] Socialization mechanisms here occur implicitly during casual interactions between members of the organization, as well as explicitly during clearly planned and defined programming such as orientations and mentorship.[3] New faculty orientation sessions are common for new faculty, and often serve as the primary mechanism for role understanding in academia.[3] Peers and supervisors often provide informal support through mentorship and role modeling for new faculty.[16–19]
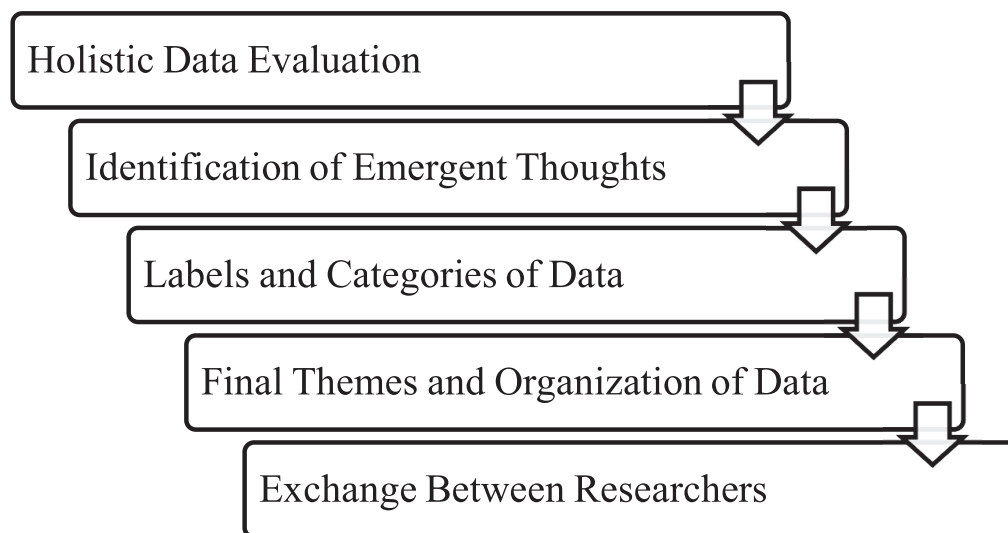
Currently there is a paucity of literature on the development of the faculty member in athletic training. Payne and Berry[20] suggest that it is important for the athletic training faculty member to gain experiences that will translate to successful induction into higher education. The purpose of our study, therefore, was to gain a better understanding of the socialization process the faculty member navigates in the transition into the role. Research questions that guided our inquiry include (1) What are the perceptions of athletic training faculty on their transition into faculty roles within higher education? and (2) What processes were used to help facilitate the socialization process for the novice faculty member during this period of time?

## METHODS

### Research Design

We used a qualitative methodology that was rooted in a phenomenological approach, to explore our research agenda, as most of the literature using the socialization framework has done so previously.[1,21] In addition, the phenomenological approach to qualitative inquiry is based upon learning more about the individual experiences of a person who is living or has lived an experience that is of interest to the researcher.[22] The importance of understanding the experiences of our faculty members as they perceived them was the core aspect of our study, and the reason a research design that encompassed in-depth interviewing was selected. Our findings presented here reflect the socialization process as it relates to role transition into a faculty position as experienced by our participants. We examined both professional and organizational processes as experienced by our participants. This study

**Figure 1.** Data analysis procedures.



is part of a larger study that examined the overall experiences of athletic training faculty members as they experience role transition into higher education.[23]

## Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

Our criteria were purposeful, as a means to fully capture transition into higher education from multiple perspectives and time from completion of doctoral education. Thus, we recruited athletic trainers with a terminal degree who were employed full time within an institution sponsoring a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education–accredited athletic training program. We also recruited faculty members who were classified as pretenured (newer faculty, with less than 6 years of experience in higher education) and tenured faculty (experienced, with more than 6 years of experience in higher education). To recruit our sample, we used convenience and snowball sampling procedures.[24] First, we reached out to individuals meeting our criteria who were professional contacts of the authors. From that sample we used enrolled participants as a means to finalize our sample. Upon completion of the interview session, we asked our participants for the contact information of any individual whom they believed met the inclusion criteria. Using this information, we contacted these potential participants for interest and willingness to participate. Data saturation was achieved, and recruitment was terminated. We determined saturation to occur at 28 participants, which was determined through a generalized approach to the interviews whereby field notes and researcher reflections were initially used to determine saturation. Then, upon completion of our formalized process, confirmation was established. Table 1 provides a summary of participants.

Twenty-eight athletic training educators (14 men, 14 women) completed the interviews. All participants were full-time faculty members who had completed doctoral training and held an academic rank of either assistant or associate professor. They were all current National Athletic Trainers' Association and Board of Certification members in good standing and had been certified for $16 \pm 6$ years as athletic trainers. Participants' average age was $39 \pm 6$ years, with $12 \pm 6$ years of experience working in education and $11 \pm 5$

years working as an athletic training researcher. Our participants represent a variety of Carnegie classifications with their current employment setting, as a means to gain a holistic impression. Also, all participants were in positions that followed guidelines for promotion and tenure.

## Data Collection

After gaining institutional review board (IRB) approval, we conducted in-depth, semistructured phone interviews with all our participants that were then immediately transcribed verbatim and shared with each participant as part of our member check process. One researcher (J.L.B.) conducted all interview sessions following an interview guide, each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was recorded. We (S.M.M., S.N.) developed the interview guide using the current literature on doctoral socialization and higher education.[3,24,25] The development of the interview guide was done with purpose to answer our research questions regarding doctoral education and faculty socialization. We then had a peer review the document for content, readability, and interpretability. The peer who is knowledgeable in the socialization framework provided usable feedback regarding the aforementioned criteria, and it was used to improve the accuracy of the interview framework. Four faculty members (2 tenured, 2 pretenured) meeting our study's inclusionary benchmarks completed a pilot study. Feedback from the piloting was used to improve flow as well as identify any additional questions that could help deepen our understanding. Pilot data are reflected in the final analyses.

## Analysis and Trustworthiness

A phenomenological approach[26] (Figure 1) following a stepwise process was used to evaluate our data. The process allowed us to inductively code the data, but also allowed for an appreciation for the socialization framework used to investigate our purpose. Table 2 presents questions used for our analyses for this study. First, all data were evaluated comprehensively by completing a holistic read of each transcript without coding the data. This first step allowed us to become aware of the overall experiences of our participants, and to become entrenched in the data. We then used

**Table 1. Participant Demographics[a]**

| Name | Sex | Age | Doctoral Degree | Years as Certified AT | Years in AT Education | Years as AT Researcher | Carnegie Classification Current Employment |
|------|-----|-----|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Kathy | F | 37 | PhD | 15 | 3 | 3 | Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs |
| Stacy | F | 31 | PhD | 1 | 8 | 9 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Robin | F | 39 | PhD | 16 | 11 | 9 | Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity |
| Sarah | F | 34 | PhD | 12 | 3 | 7 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Donald | M | 35 | ScD | 12 | 10 | 10 | Special Focus Four-Year: Medical Schools & Centers |
| Arthur | M | 31 | PhD | 9 | 4 | 9 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Reba | F | 32 | EdD | 9 | 7 | 6 | Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs |
| Carl | M | 33 | PhD | 13 | 6 | 2 | Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus |
| Andrea | F | 36 | PhD | 14 | 13 | 8 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Janet | F | 36 | PhD | 15 | 13 | 7 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Zoe | F | 28 | EdD | 6 | 6 | 5 | Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs |
| Barry | M | 35 | EdD | 13 | 10 | 10 | Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity |
| Louisa | F | 34 | PhD | 12 | 11 | 11 | Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity |
| Karen | F | 36 | PhD | 14 | 8 | 12 | Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity |
| Allie | F | 41 | PhD | 19 | 15 | 15 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Jack | M | 36 | PhD | 14 | 10 | 11 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Tammy | F | 37 | PhD | 16 | 13 | 15 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Josh | M | 45 | PhD | 20 | 7 | 19 | Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus |
| Jeff | M | 44 | PhD | 22 | 18 | 18 | Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity |
| Jerry | M | 44 | PhD | 20 | 15 | 15 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Alan | M | 49 | EdD | 28 | 22 | 24 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Erin | F | 41 | EdD | 19 | 17 | 13 | Baccalaureate Colleges: Diverse Fields |
| Dave | M | 40 | PhD | 17 | 15 | 8 | Baccalaureate Colleges: Diverse Fields |
| Joslyn | F | 51 | EdD | 29 | 26 | 10 | Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs |
| Mark | M | 46 | PhD | 24 | 15 | 18 | Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity |
| Jacob | M | 45 | PhD | 23 | 17 | 17 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Brad | M | 42 | PhD | 20 | 15 | 16 | Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity |
| Duncan | M | 42 | PhD | 18 | 7 | 7 | Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity |
| Mean ± SD | | 39 ± 6 | | 16 ± 6 | 12 ± 6 | 11 ± 5 | |

Abbreviations: AT, athletic trainer.

[a] N = 28 (14 men, 14 women).

## Table 2.  Interview Questions

Interview questions, Pretenured faculty
1. Can you describe your doctoral preparation?
2. Can you describe your current position? Please include a brief discussion of your primary roles and responsibilities with this current position.
3. How long have you been in your current position?
4. Has your position been consistent over those years or has it changed?
5. Where are you in the tenure and promotion process?
6. What resources were provided to you from your current employer to help navigate this process?
   a. Are you satisfied with the resources provided?
   b. What else could your current employer provide to you for success?
7. Do you believe your doctoral training prepared you for your current faculty position? Please describe.
   a. What about in the areas of:
      i. Research
      ii. Teaching
      iii. Service
      iv. Navigation of the tenure and promotion process?
8. Reflecting on your doctoral preparation, is there anything that you feel contributed to your transition to a faculty member?
   a. Is there anything in particular that could have benefited your transition, now looking back?

Interview questions, Tenured faculty
1. Can you describe your current position and primary duties?
2. How long have you been at your current position? Has the position changed over time?
3. Can you describe your doctoral preparation as a faculty member?
4. What role do you believe doctoral preparation has on the professional development of novice faculty members?
   a. What about in the areas of:
      i. Research
      ii. Teaching
      iii. Service
      iv. Navigation of the tenure and promotion process?
5. Do you believe doctoral preparation adequately prepares novice faculty members for their academic positions? Why or why not?

each subsequent evaluation of the data as a means to continually identify, group, and classify the emergent themes within our data regarding faculty socialization and transition into higher education. Only the themes that resonated with the majority of our participants were selected for presentation.

Steps to establish credibility included member checks, peer review, and researcher triangulation.[22] Each participant, once transcription was completed, was sent an electronic version of his or her interview and was instructed to review it, make changes as necessary, and return it to the researchers. Data analysis and textual data extraction were not initiated until this process was complete. We conducted a peer review with both interview guide development and data analysis. The peer provided independent feedback as a means to maintain rigor and accuracy throughout the study. Finally, the first 2 authors

coded data independently and then compared the process, as a means to establish clarity. We were able to agree upon the final presentation of the results. Our peer review also confirmed our findings.

## RESULTS

Athletic training faculty members are socialized into their higher education roles following the socialization framework of professional and organizational socialization (Figure 2). The first theme, professional socialization, was defined by participants as those experiences in their doctoral training that provided role understanding, albeit limited to the areas of research and teaching. The second theme, organizational socialization, speaks to those experiences that occurred once the athletic training faculty member was employed full time in higher education. The category of mentorship was articulated as impactful in both professional preparation at the doctoral level and during the institutional socialization process once a novice faculty member is hired. Each theme is discussed next with supporting text identified with participant pseudonyms.

### Professional Socialization

Professional socialization is defined as a process whereby an individual becomes adopted into a profession through a series of planned experiences that expose the individual to the values, norms, and normal behaviors that will be expected as part of the profession.[17] Our participants linked their experiences within their doctoral education as meaningful and important to their professional development and transition into higher education. Allie, when asked about transitioning to the role of a faculty member, shared, "I think [my doctoral education] played a significant role." Allie was convinced that her doctoral program was impactful because of the experience she was given, stating, "The structure of the (doctoral) program, the experiences we were given. We were encouraged to get involved." Erin shared,

> I think doctoral education has the potential to play a very valuable role in the professional development of novice faculty if done well. The process of doctoral education represents the pathway for an athletic trainer to transition to the professoriate role.
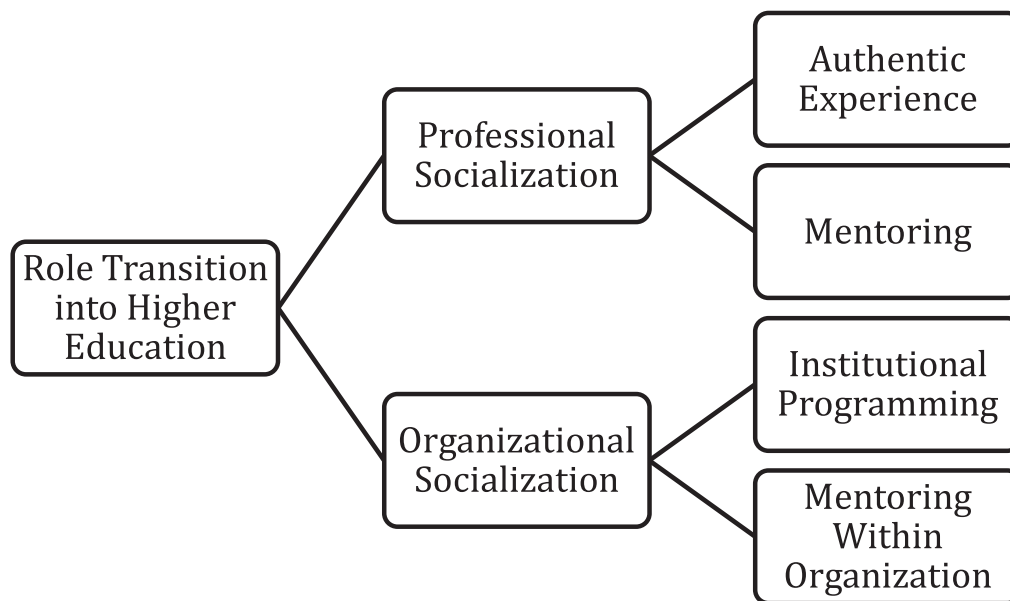
Zoe conveyed,

> I think doctoral preparation is just setting the stage, giving the tools to the individual to get started in their careers. It's a beginning and not the end point. It's preparing them to be researchers, it's preparing them to be teachers, preparing them to be of service to their profession.

Janet's reflections regarding her doctoral training summarize the impact on her transition to a faculty role: "I think that I am definitely prepared for the rigors, because of my doctoral training." Janet continued in an attempt to summarize her experiences as a doctoral student,

> I had a seminar class. We talked about the faculty role, how to navigate it. We talked about working with administrators, balancing the demands of tenure, and other aspects so that we could be prepared for what was to come. We were encouraged to get involved with the profession, and to think beyond just national service, but to our universities. We were not sheltered

**Figure 2.** Factors influencing role transition for the faculty member.

in our doctoral program; we were involved with all of the processes.

Two aspects were part of the professional socialization process: (1) engaging in the roles and responsibilities of a future faculty member during doctoral education (*authentic experience*), and (2) receiving mentorship during doctoral education.

**Authentic Experiences**. Our participants described engaging in the various roles and responsibilities of a faculty member, which was a facilitator to their socialization. In some cases, our participants referenced an assistantship as the primary catalyst for these authentic experiences, but overall it was their entire doctoral experience that allowed them to to learn the skills and knowledge needed to become a faculty member. Our participants all completed their doctoral education/training via graduate assistantship positions, meaning that they were serving as teaching assistants, research assistants, clinicians, or some combination of these while pursuing their doctoral degrees. None were working full time and pursuing their terminal degrees part time. Louisa described, "My doctoral training absolutely prepared me." She later shared the importance of doctoral training: "I think that doctoral training provides you a real-world opportunity to teach, to mentor, and do all of the things that you do as a faculty member." Brad discussed that although complete role understanding cannot take place until full immersion into the role, doctoral education provides experiences that provide awareness. He shared,

*I think that some of the responsibilities are hard to prepare for until you are finally living it, but I do think it is nice to understand research and how to conduct it. It was also nice to understand the teaching role. I was able to teach while I was a doctoral student, and so I was already working in an environment that allowed me to balance teaching as well as research. I think that really helped me when I transitioned to a faculty job. I had experiences in balance, working with the students, teaching, and meeting with the students, and then trying to work on my research.*

Comprehensive understanding regarding the expectations of a faculty member was limited, however, for our participants. Most were clear that doctoral education was very inclusive of research and teaching experiences, and limited in areas beyond those 2 primary tenets of academia. Jacob said about doctoral education,

*Sure it prepares you from a research perspective. I mean those are the building blocks, that they have their own research agenda. . . .I think in general new faculty members are better prepared for the research responsibilities than they are for the others.*

Alan illustrates, at times, the shortcoming of doctoral education on full role awareness sharing,

*I wish [doctoral education] would prepare all students for all of the facets of the [faculty] role, but the reality is it doesn't. It is missing at how to manage the service responsibilities, along with the research and teaching expectations. While some [doctoral] programs address the teaching role, in many instances new faculty are left to figure that out on their own.*

Some of our participants were very aware of their limitations in role understanding, particularly the lack of preparation for service, administration, and general faculty roles. Although new and experienced faculty discussed the shortcomings of doctoral education, for our new faculty who were currently experiencing role inductance, the realities of faculty roles were more "fresh" and acutely evident. For example, Zoe shared,

*I think in athletic training we often don't think about you could be an administrator, you could be a dean. I think of everything thinking of more on that clinical side of things or just being a faculty member. . . . So I was not trained to be an administrator, my doctoral works did not prepare me for that.*

**Mentoring**. Mentoring was also an important aspect of the doctoral education experience, whereby a mentor (more experienced faculty member) guided participants during their

initial experiences as faculty members (mentees). Our participants discussed that their doctoral advisors served as mentors, individuals who guided their learning experiences and allowed them to develop an appreciation for the expectations of academia. Reba shared,

*I think [my doctoral education] overall did [prepare me]. My doctoral advisor did a great job of exposing me to the areas of teaching, research, and service. I think it helped me become well-rounded.*

Louisa felt that doctoral education was important for role understanding, but that mentors were needed to guide the socialization process related to professional development of future faculty members. She shared,

*Mentoring, in my opinion, plays a significant role. I think in athletic training, the political side of it. Trying to network, people in the field, figuring out how much service you want to do, getting help with grant writing, publications, abstracts, etc. There is a lot of mentoring that needs to be done.*

Janet shared that gaining experiences beyond the more obvious skills and responsibilities of a faculty member was facilitated by mentorship.

*My doctoral education prepared me for the rigors of the profession. Our program director and other faculty members encouraged us to get involved with our profession. So when I came in (to my faculty role), from the national service perspective, I was doing way more than what the university would expect.*

Robin attributed her role transition and understanding to her doctoral education, especially from the mentoring she received: "I think that the professors that I have worked with, they were able to show me a little bit of that process [tenure]. My interactions with them made me understand the faculty role a lot better." Arthur shared that his growth and ability to transition into a faculty role was attributed to the experiences he gained during his educational training that was facilitated by his mentor and advisor, those that were outside of the traditional classroom setting. He said, "I think the stuff that happened outside of the formalized classroom (ie, supervising master's students, teaching a class, etc) prepared me the most to become a faculty member." Arthur continued,

*As a PhD student, I got guidance and leadership [from my mentor]. The program made sure the PhD student learned about the day-to-day life of a faculty member, what they have to do to be successful.*

## Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is viewed as an adjustment period whereby an individual begins to transition into a new role for which he or she has received professional training and becomes assimilated into that role. General descriptions of the organizational socialization process have grown from "learning the ropes" to a more formalized definition of becoming assimilated to and appreciating the values, behaviors, and social norms that are expected within an individual organization.[27] The emphasis lies more with "how things are done here," rather than a development of specific skills and knowledge as learned in the professional stage of socializa-

tion. For our participants, they were able to integrate into a faculty role because of formal institutional programming and mentorship received once they were hired in their new faculty role.

**Institutional Programming**. Formally, most institutions provide support and guidance for novice faculty in the form of basic documents outlining tenure and promotion expectations. Mostly these programs were designed to educate the new faculty member on promotion and tenure and basic expectations related to faculty success. Stacy shared her experiences regarding the support she received once hired by her institution:

*We were given an annual promotion and tenure handbook. In our first semester here we met with our subject dean to go over the promotion and tenure requirement we also are evaluated annually. ... I would say our outline is pretty clear. I've known from the beginning exactly what my expectations has been, which has been very helpful and great.*

Donald discussed a comprehensive faculty orientation that helped orient them to their faculty role. He shared,

*For my first year, we had a faculty orientation and then 2 days a week for the first semester. It had a lot to do with institutional socialization, so not necessarily just the promotion process, but figuring out how to submit an IRB, to understand the current institution's student body, among other things. We did cover tenure and promotion; it was about how to put your portfolio together.*

Similar experiences were found among our participants regarding formal institutional workshops and orientations regarding faculty expectations and institutional policies. Karen discussed having the chance to gain understanding through new faculty orientation: "As a new faculty member, I had the chance to go through faculty orientation. They were open about the requirements for research and tenure." Jack continued that at the departmental level, there were chances for formal programming to learn more about faculty expectations. Jack shared,

*Our chair coordinated monthly meetings for tenure track faculty that were in their first 3 years. So we met with the chair, and all of the faculty who were in the same situation. We discussed different topics.*

**Mentorship**. Mentorship was another aspect of the socialization process for our participants. Some participants' mentoring was formally supported and initiated by the institution, whereas other participants informally solicited individuals who they perceived could support their development. Allie shared,

*Mentoring is offered through our faculty development instructional design center, but I would describe it as moderately "formal." They try to assign some new faculty to other more seasoned faculty from other departments.*

Janet, too, experienced a formal mentorship assignment, explaining,

*[I was] assigned a faculty mentor for essentially the first year and we met on a need basis. It was somebody who could help with research or teaching questions, or anything really that I would need during that first year. This [mentor] helped navigate the whole transition."*

Using tenured faculty, or those who had success in being promoted within the current university system was discussed by Tammy as part of her socialization process into her current position. She said,

*[The university] pairs any incoming faculty members with at least an associate or a full professor both within their individual college as well as someone that's outside their college. So [new faculty] have a few mentors.*

Several participants described that mentoring relationships developed either because a mentor/mentee sought out the relationship or informal guidance was provided or requested. Many mentees noted that they sought out mentors to help them interpret the institutional resources that were provided, as they mentioned this information was often too basic. Donald described a more informal mentoring process during his transition into higher education. He experienced mentorship through the sharing of experiences of peers and others who had just completed the tenure process. He shared,

*I would say, I actually had a colleague who had a template document, and shared that with me. It was ultimately shared across the department, but it helped give context in terms of how to present yourself.*

Barry discussed using casual interactions as a means to support new faculty. He described his experiences with mentoring as

*less formal, where I'll invite them to a picnic or we will go to lunch here, I'd like to take them for lunch a couple of times in the semester, and we don't talk about work things. Because I don't want it to be every time I call they think it's oh—what is he asking me to do now?*

Likewise, Brad recognized the informal support that comes from other faculty, those who are more seasoned saying "I have seen mentors who would invite the [new] faculty to lunch or breakfast or coffee every month or something like that just to check in and see how things are going." For our participants, these informal mentoring experiences provided valued support in addition to the institutional resources provided to them.

## DISCUSSION

### Professional Socialization

Doctoral education serves as the conduit to an academic career, as it involves learning about the culture, values, and expectations specific to the student's discipline as well as the academic profession.[1] Some scholars suggest that doctoral education, which is described as a socialization process, may not be sufficient to provide a comprehensive and complete understanding of a successful transition to a career as a faculty member.[1,11,28] Our findings suggest that our participants were mostly satisfied with and felt prepared for their roles in higher education, which slightly contrasts the work of Austin.[1] A degree of satisfaction was founded on their

preparation to navigate their research and teaching roles, yet they noted that service and administrative roles were less of a focus and an area needed for strengthening. We do know that part of the socialization process for doctoral students is founded on research and/or teaching, as they often secure assistantships within these domains of higher education.[9] Thus, chances to engage in service and administrative tasks may be less prominent or frequent, particularly as mentors and faculty advisors do play facilitators in doctoral education and experiences that shape role understanding.[1–2,9]

Authentic learning has been discussed as essential for the developmental of future scholars, researchers, and educators, as it will provide a baseline level of understanding of the complexity of faculty roles.[1] Perhaps our participants felt prepared because they engaged in various faculty roles through the graduate assistant roles they assumed while completing their doctoral education. As recommended by Austin,[1] the graduate assistant position provided a structured opportunity to develop skills in research and teaching. Previous research[11] has suggested that doctoral education in athletic training does afford many students the chance to become trained in research skills, and to some degree in teaching. Opportunities to serve in various aspects of faculty roles before the transition to a full-time role are likely reasons why our participants were comfortable with their transition. Faculty advisors and mentors, who are often recognized as mediums to socializing doctoral students for their future employment endeavors, likely facilitated these opportunities.[1,29]

Interacting with faculty advisors and mentors, likewise, is also necessary for developing future faculty members.[3,10,30] The premise is that mentors can help shape the "complete scholar,"[31] a faculty member who is appreciative of the diversity and complexity of all the parts of academic work life. Research and teaching are very apparent roles expected of faculty members,[31] yet complex in nature because of the need for success as a writer, networker, and expert in one's specific discipline, research area, and ability to facilitate student learning.[1,31] Our participants felt when they received positive, effective mentoring from their doctoral mentors they were ready to transition into their faculty roles. Effective mentoring has been viewed as a critical socializing agent within athletic training, and thus provides credence to our results that if mentors can share their experiences, as well as provide opportunities for their doctoral students to engage in these roles, transition can be eased for the new faculty member.[29]

### Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization occurs during the period after entrance into the organization or workplace, whereby faculty members become acquainted with the specific culture, expectations, and demands of the academic community within the organization they are entering.[3] Most notably, organizational socialization process signifies role continuance, but also that the faculty member has completed degree training and holds the necessary credentials for the position.[5] We found that our participants had the chance to gain a sense of the academic culture and expectations for success through institutional programming, which included formal orientation sessions that provided resources and guided information on tenure and promotion. Orientation sessions are a common on-

boarding technique used to deliver programmatic information by universities and institutions of higher education. The use of structured, planned meetings has become common practice within athletic training, regardless of the forum, as a means to orient and disseminate critical information to the athletic trainer getting ready to transition to a new role.[32–35]

Much like orientation sessions, mentoring has emerged as a practice used for athletic trainers to support the transition to practice.[32–35] Mentorship, particularly within doctoral education and higher education, allows for the development of self-identity, self-efficacy, and awareness of the academic climate and community within university systems.[1,5,10] Thus, as acknowledged by our participants, when mentoring occurs they feel supported and guided and understand what will be expected of them for success. Although the benefits are well understood, mixed results exist on the need for formal versus informal mentoring in higher education.[3,36] Our participants discussed a blended approach, whereby they had opportunities for formal mentoring experiences as well as more informal chances to engage with a more seasoned faculty member. We did not assess our participants' level of satisfaction with their mentoring experiences, but rather asked what was available to them regarding support as they transitioned into their faculty roles. We can surmise that some degree of role understanding is facilitated when a new faculty member can receive a comprehensive doctoral education experience as well as have the chance to be mentored by a more seasoned faculty member.

Many institutions offer junior faculty mentoring opportunities that are specifically designed to help them continue their professional development, but also navigate institutional expectations, policy, and politics that related to success (ie, reappointment and tenure). Many of these mentoring programs were formalized, aimed at guiding the junior faculty member as they transition into higher education and become acclimated into their new roles.[37] Several of our participants shared their experiences with being assigned a mentor once being hired by their institutions—someone who could assist them with adjusting to their new environment and get a sense of how to succeed. For example, the University of California, San Diego structures its mentoring program similarly to the descriptions articulated by several of our participants and provides the mentor and mentee guidance in how to navigate the relationship.[37]

Perhaps the formal mentoring discussed by our participants, and those programs successfully being implemented, like the one at University of California, San Diego, can help provide the examples for other institutions to help support faculty development. Although the research is limited within faculty mentoring, there are data supporting formal mentoring and junior faculty development, specifically related to scholarly productivity.[38,39] Being prepared to succeed as a scholar is a primary aspect for success in higher education. However, other areas need to be addressed in the mentorship relationship, including teaching, student advising, and engagement in service.

Mentorship also appeared to emerge as an informal process for many of our participants, something commonplace in athletic training.[24,40] Simply, our participants found that mentors provided support through more unplanned activities,

often by engaging them in discourse or providing them with sample templates for documents that contributed to their successes. There is some evidence that informal mentoring can provide more positive outcomes as compared with those more formalized programs offered, as often informal mentors serve as coaches and counselors, individuals who can facilitate role learning in a more comforting manner.[41] This, however, does not detract from the benefits of formalized mentoring. We did not measure the success of the mentoring relationship, as this was not our purpose. However, it does appear that mentoring (formal or informal) does support the transition of new faculty into their roles.[42]

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We present our findings from the perspectives of our participants, which were collected at 1 point in time and based on their reflections of their experiences and navigation of their transition into higher education. A longitudinal research design may offer a varying perspective, or one that reflects the ebbs and flows that could occur with transitioning into the faculty role. We suggest that future research examine the transition to practice over time, particularly during the first few years within academic roles, as these years are viewed as stressful and critical to success.

We did not discern institutional type; that is, we did not evaluate our participants' perceptions on navigating their roles in higher education based on the type of institution in which they were employed or at which they had received their educational training. Expectations of faculty members related to the various tenets of higher education vary based upon the institutional type, and therefore may influence perceptions and experiences on transitioning and navigating roles and responsibilities. Potential for future inquiries should include evaluating the impact that institutional type can play in doctoral education and eventual transition into higher education.

Finally, we did not evaluate the direct impact of doctoral education on organizational socialization for our participants. That is, we did not evaluate the type of educational institution where our participants received their doctoral degrees and the impact that may have on role transition into a formal role in higher education. Future research can focus on the impact that doctoral education can have on role transition, particularly if the degree earned was of an institutional type that is not comparable with the faculty member's current place of employment.

## CONCLUSIONS

It has been suggested that transition to a faculty role can be stressful, as the demands of research, teaching, and service can be challenging.[3] Mechanisms to support the transition to higher education are necessary to help the faculty member be successful. Our findings suggest that doctoral education provides a baseline of understanding for the faculty member role, as the student can engage in the activities associated with faculty member roles while gaining some mentorship. Upon entry into the faculty member role, institutions provide formal orientation sessions and mentoring to further support the transitional process.

Based on our findings, we recommend that faculty members investigate avenues to gain support when transitioning to their

new roles as faculty members. Mentoring appears to be the staple to role transition and role understanding. Doctoral mentors and advisors should educate and provide well-rounded experiences that can prepare the future faculty member for the service and administrative roles that are part of a faculty member's reality. Academic institutions and individuals who are in a position to support pretenured faculty as they transition into their faculty roles should consider supporting these novice faculty with mentorship, orientation sessions, and additional resources to aid in this transition.

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