

Attractors to Faculty Positions Within Higher Education Institutions for Women in Athletic Training

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Context: Selection of one's occupation can be influenced and determined by several variables and is often studied through the lens of the socialization framework. Career choice has been examined in athletic training, with scholars focusing on identifying initial attractors to the education programs as well as the traditional employment settings. However, little is understood about why an athletic trainer (AT) pursues a role in higher education, specifically women ATs.

Objective: Gain an understanding of the factors that influence and motivate women ATs to pursue a career as a faculty member.

Design: Qualitative study.

Setting: Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education professional programs.

Patients or Other Participants: Sixteen women faculty members, average age 35 (± 6.2 , range 28–49; 2 did not report ages) with 11 average years of experience teaching in athletic training programs (1 did not report) and an average of 14 years of experience as certified ATs (± 5.9 , range 7–25).

Main Outcome Measure(s): Participants completed one-on-one phone interviews, which were digitally recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the data followed the interpretative phenomenological approach. Credibility was established through pilot testing, peer review, and researcher triangulation.

Results: Women ATs who have selected a role in higher education were attracted to their positions for three main reasons: (1) connection to the role of being a faculty member, employment goals aligned with the tenets of higher education, teaching, and research; (2) flexibility of schedule the women were able to maintain, accommodating schedule shaped to fit their needs; (3) selecting current jobs due primarily to logistics and location, allowing them to live in a desired location also acceptable to their spouse.

Conclusions: Pursuing a faculty role in higher education for women ATs appears to be stimulated by personal and organizational factors, including an attraction to the roles of the faculty member and job responsibilities that can afford flexibility.

Key Words: Socialization, career goals, hiring

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Full Citation:

Barrett JL, Mazerolle SM, Sampson L. Attractors to faculty positions within higher education institutions for women in athletic training. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2018;13(1):12–20.

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KEY POINTS

- Women athletic trainers in higher education are attracted to their positions due to their desire to complete both teaching and research roles while maintaining a flexible schedule.
- Spousal and family obligations are determining factors related to the locations where women will take positions in higher education.
- Institutions can attract women candidates to positions by continuing to offer flexible schedule options and placing a high value on the roles of teaching and research.

INTRODUCTION

Attraction to a particular career begins early; it is a process often viewed as anticipatory whereby a person attempts to informally or organically learn about the roles, values, and expectations one would assume in that career.^{1,2} A major attractor for a career in athletic training has been the connection to sport.^{2,3} Often the field of athletic training is seen as a sport-related occupation, and therefore an initial attractor is maintaining a connection to the sport industry.^{2,3} Other attractors include the desire to be a part of a helping profession (service-related career), work with young people, interests in the type of work (anticipated benefits of the job), and the experience of sustaining a previous sports injury that created opportunities to interact with an athletic trainer (AT).^{2,3}

Occupational choice is the understanding of why people select and enter certain professions.⁴ Selection of one's occupation can be influenced and determined by several variables, including psychological (eg, emotional attachment), sociological (eg, exposure to certain settings), socioeconomic (eg, monetary), and personality (personality type).^{4,5} Occupational choice⁶ is often influenced by a combination of factors such as gender, peer relationships, family, and culture.^{4,5} It is often studied under the premise of the socialization process or framework.⁷ Under this framework, individuals are actively socialized into their future roles through professional (educational training and schooling) and organizational (role transition) processes.^{8,9} The professional socialization process is often described as the initial phase of transition into one's intended role, but the person has not yet been officially adopted into it.⁷ In the field of athletic training, this would be before passing the Board of Certification exam.

Once athletic training recruits complete the professional socialization process and gain credentialing, they begin the organizational socialization process, whereby they begin to adopt the specific values and beliefs of their organization.¹⁰ During organizational socialization, the individual can gain an appreciation for the specific roles and responsibilities of the current employment setting. Anecdotally we know that different employment settings may exploit various skills and knowledge over others.¹⁰ Literature^{11,12} describing organiza-

tional socialization and factors impacting retention suggests that workplace fit and job connectivity are important.

Career choice has been superficially examined in athletic training, with many scholars being able to identify initial attractors to the profession from a student's perspective,² as well as professionals' attractions to some settings.³ However, little is understood about why an AT pursues a role in higher education. Furthermore, there has been an assumption that women are underrepresented in higher education, based upon motherhood and other roles that may limit flexibility and time to devote to a career, particularly in science and health fields.¹³ Departure from the profession has been reported in ATs working in the clinical setting,¹⁴ but it is unclear if the departure is completely from the field or from 1 role to another within the field, such as a clinician moving to higher education. Moreover, it has been postulated that women in athletic training select roles and employment settings that reflect a "family-friendly" mindset and the flexibility to have time to devote to family and household roles.^{3,15} Higher education, despite the challenges of earning tenure, has been described as a setting that may offer flexibility in work schedules to allow for work-life balance and time to meet household duties and obligations.¹⁶ The purpose of our study was to gain a better understanding of what factors influenced and motivated women ATs to select a career as a faculty member. We focused on attractors to higher education as well as their current position in higher education.

METHODS

Research Design

We used a phenomenological approach to examine the attractors to higher education for ATs who are women.¹⁷ We sought to explain the factors leading a woman AT to select a role as a faculty member in higher education. As such, we followed the parameters of a phenomenological study as described by Creswell¹⁷ and others,^{18,19} which relies on the interviewing individuals' meeting the sampling criteria as determined to understand their lived experiences. Institutional review board approval was gained from University of Connecticut, and participants signed a consent form before engaging in the study.

Participants

We identified 16 individuals who were willing to speak about their experiences as women faculty members. Establishing or having a good rapport with a participant is a critical aspect of qualitative research; thus we used our professional networks to reach out to a pool of women faculty members meeting our sampling criteria.¹⁷ Saturation was satisfied by our initial sample of 16 women faculty members. Inclusion criteria included (1) being a woman and (2) holding a full-time academic appointment in a Commission on Accreditation of

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Age	Children	Years of Experience Teaching	Marital Status	Position Title	Carnegie Classification
Angela	X	2	16	Married	Athletic trainer program director and director of Office of Graduate Studies	M1: Master's Colleges & Universities—Larger Programs
Anika	32	0	9	Single	Assistant professor and clinical education coordinator	M1: Master's Colleges & Universities—Larger Programs
Anna	34	3	12.5	Married	Associate professor	R1: Doctoral Universities—Highest Research Activity
Christine	29	0	6	Engaged	Assistant professor	R1: Doctoral Universities—Highest Research Activity
Eve	37	0	13	Single	Assistant professor	R2: Doctoral Universities—Higher Research Activity
Grace	29	0	5	Married	Assistant professor	R1: Doctoral Universities—Highest Research Activity
Jessie	33	1	10	Married	Associate professor and research scientist	R2: Doctoral Universities—Higher Research Activity
Joanne	31	0	3	Engaged	Assistant professor	M1: Master's Colleges & Universities—Larger Programs
Joyce	28	0	6.5	Married	Assistant professor	M1: Master's Colleges & Universities—Larger Programs
Katie	36	2	7	Married	Associate professor and program director	R3: Doctoral Universities—Moderate Research Activity
Maria	42	0	15	Single	Associate professor	R2: Doctoral Universities—Higher Research Activity
Martha	49	3	25	Married	Professor and chair of the School of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training	R2: Doctoral Universities—Higher Research Activity
Megan	X	1	X	Married	Associate professor	M1: Master's Colleges & Universities—Larger Programs
Sarah	36	2	9	Married	Assistant professor	R1: Doctoral Universities—Highest Research Activity
Shirley	33	2	8	Married	Assistant professor	R2: Doctoral Universities—Higher Research Activity
Victoria	45	0	20	Married: getting divorced	Associate dean for graduate programs	M1: Master's Colleges & Universities—Larger Programs

Abbreviation: X, unknown.

Athletic Training Education—accredited athletic training program at a higher education institution.

1 provides demographic individual information for each faculty member.

Sixteen women faculty members participated in our study. The average age of our participants was 35 (± 6.2 , range 28–49; 2 did not report ages) with 11 average years of experience teaching in athletic training programs (1 did not report) and an average of 14 years of experience as a certified AT (± 5.9 , range 7–25). We sought to gain an appreciation of the experiences of women with children ($n = 8$) and without them ($n = 8$). Ten of the women were married at the time of the interview, 3 were single, 2 were engaged, and 1 was getting a divorce. Eight women indicated their rank as assistant professor, 5 as associate professor, 1 as professor; 1 indicated she was a dean and 1 a program director. Carnegie Classifications for the participants included 4 women employed in R1 doctoral universities, 5 at R2 doctoral universities, 1 at an R3 doctoral university, and 6 at M1 master's colleges and universities.²⁰ Participants have been assigned pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality. Table

Data Collection Procedures

Before recruitment, we developed a series of interview questions (Table 2) to address our primary research questions regarding attractors to higher education for women athletic training faculty. Our interview protocol was drafted to reflect the current literature^{2,3} and our purpose. We worked with an independent scholar who has experience in qualitative methodologies, currently fits the criteria for inclusion of our study, and understands the socialization framework used to establish our study. Our peer was asked to review the interview protocol, specifically examining content, flow, and structure of the interview questions. Her feedback was integrated into our final interview guide. We also piloted our instrument before data collection; our pilot study sample consisted of 2 faculty members who met our inclusion criteria. No changes resulted from the pilot study, but it did allow us to help establish flow and approximate timing of the interview

Table 2. Interview Questions

All Participants

- What factors influenced your decision to pursue your doctorate degree?
- What factors influenced your decision to pursue an academic role in athletic training?
- What attracted you to your current position in higher education?
- Can you describe the factors that influenced your acceptance of your current job?
- Would you say that a position in higher education as a faculty member was your ultimate career goal? Can you explain?
- What aspects do you enjoy most about your current position?
- What are the least satisfying aspects of your current position?
- What role, if any, does the potential of motherhood play on your career planning (tenure, grants, etc)?
- What role, if any, does your position in higher education play in your family planning?

protocol. We included data from both pilot study participants in our final analyses. We then recruited an additional 14 women faculty members to complete our sample. All interviews were recorded and lasted approximately 45 minutes. We had an independent transcription company transcribe our interviews. Field notes were taken during each interview session as a means to help guide analysis. The field notes²¹ were designed to be reflective, thus we recorded our impressions and insights regarding the information shared by our participants. These general reflections were meant to direct our data analysis but also summarize our overall impressions of the experiences of the women faculty members.

Data Analysis and Credibility Strategies

We followed a phenomenological approach to data analysis.^{17,22–24} as we wanted to inductively uncover the major attractors to a career in higher education for our sample group of women faculty. Before analysis, (J.L.B., S.M.M.) discussed the stepwise process to be followed and then independently coded the data. Step 1 included multiple read-throughs looking at the transcripts in their entirety to gain a sense of the experiences of our participants and why they were in their current roles in higher education. Step 2 included a coding process that allowed us to label common findings with words that reflected their meaning. In step 3 the labels were grouped together to organize common meanings and experiences. During this process, only those codes and labels that were viewed as dominant were included. Step 4 consisted of ordering the themes consistent throughout all interviews. After this stepwise process we began to select raw data to be included in support of the themes emerging in our analysis. During the final step (J. L.B., S.M.M.) shared their findings by exchanging coding sheets, labeled transcripts, and the raw data pulled to support the final themes. Researchers triangulated their findings, using the process described above, which is reflected as part of the final presentation of the data.

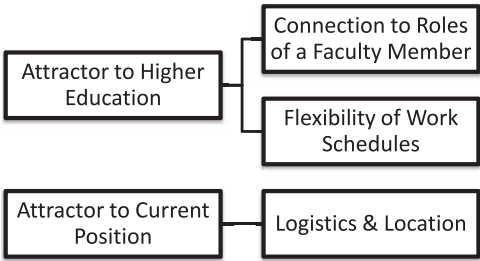
We established credibility of the study through researcher triangulation, peer review, and pilot testing before data collection.¹⁷ Selecting these 3 strategies was purposeful, as we wanted to ensure that our biases as women in, or pursuing, higher education roles did not influence our analyses or data collection procedures.¹⁷ Our peer reviewer was selected deliberately as we wanted someone with experiences in qualitative methodology, yet also with a perspective that would match that of our intentions for the study. The peer review process was completed in 2 stages; first, our reviewer confirmed the interview guide and structure through a content

analysis of the document. Her feedback was digested and incorporated into the final interview guide (Table 2). Upon completion of the researcher triangulation process as described above, we shared our findings with raw data and asked her to validate the analyses, a process that agreed with what is presented subsequently. We selected a semistructured format for our interview protocol but wanted to have a predetermined set of questions to ask all participants as a means to provide consistency among all interviews.²⁴

RESULTS

Women ATs who have selected a role in higher education were attracted to their positions for three main reasons (Figure). The first attractor was a connection to the roles of a faculty member. Participants described their employment goals aligned with the tenets of higher education (teaching and research). The participants found enjoyment and fulfillment from the multiple roles associated with being a faculty member and appreciated the interactions they had with students and the impact they were having on the future of the profession. The second attractor to a position in higher education was the flexibility of the schedule the women were able to maintain. Participants described that the position of a faculty member had afforded them an accommodating schedule that they were able to shape to fit their needs. The final attractor was one specific to the current positions of our participants. The women described selecting their current jobs due primarily to logistics and location. The descriptions presented by our participants indicated that their current positions enabled them to live in a location that was desirable to them or allowed for their spouse to find or maintain employment. Each theme is described below with supporting participant quotes.

Figure. Women athletic trainers’ attractors to higher education.



Attraction to Higher Education

Roles of a Faculty Member. Faculty roles are often associated with teaching, advising, mentoring, professional and organizational service, and scholarly activities. Our participants described an attraction to higher education and the roles of a faculty member due to the appeal of several of these facets. Anika knew she wanted to work in higher education, and that led to her pursuing a terminal degree. During her interview she stated, “I pursued my doctoral degree because I had the long-term career goal of becoming an AT educator and program administrator.” Joanne indicated her interest in working in higher education, specifically to teach, as the catalyst for her pursuit of a terminal degree:

I chose to pursue my doctoral degree because my goal was to become a faculty member of an athletic training program in higher education. I was required to be a teaching assistant for at least one semester. This took place in my very first semester of graduate school, and I immediately feel in love with teaching.

Our participants discussed areas such as student engagement, teaching, and mentoring as providing fulfillment and listed these as reasons why they pursued their advanced degrees. As Christine said, “I just really enjoyed being in the classroom and interacting with the students and sharing some of my experiences, so I think I just fit in well.” Many had learned of their love for teaching through experiences during their graduate assistant teaching positions, which they enjoyed and which encouraged them to continue to seek such experiences. As described by Joyce, “I had TA’d for some classes and I always enjoyed that and then I also enjoyed mentoring some of the younger students and that’s why my mentor was like, you should really try this.” Our participants shared that their experiences provided the foundation for purposefully seeking their doctorates, as they found a connection to the roles of teaching and student development.

Engagement in their current positions also sparked a continued connection to their roles, as our participants were able to gain validation in their decisions to seek a faculty role. When asked what they enjoyed most about their positions in higher education, many of the women mentioned student engagement and interaction. Victoria said, “I would say mentoring student research is the most rewarding part about what I do now.” Similarly, Joanne stated, “Definitely you know the teaching component, the in-class component, the interaction with the undergraduate students. You know that definitely far and above compared to anything else.” And Joyce said, “I like the student interactions. I have some really great students that make my job great.” Interacting with students through teaching and learning relationships was the primary reason these women sought positions in higher education, and even after assuming the role they continued to gain experiences that supported their decisions to be a faculty member.

The women also described a feeling of fulfillment in contributing to the growth of the profession of athletic training through their student interactions. Jessie said, “I love working with students both from a research and a course perspective and knowing that they’re the future of athletic training and working within those environments.” She further

described her attraction to the atmosphere of higher education as appealing:

Coming back into an academic study after working in more of a nontraditional setting as an athletic trainer with a PhD was that I really missed the students. Being able to engage with students and other professionals like me on a daily basis I think is a really important thing to me professionally and academia offers a place to be able to do that and then also the sort of idea that new knowledge and new ideas are always being generated.

Similarly, Christine spoke of making a difference through her teaching and impacting the students:

I think I felt like, one I really like the profession and I loved it so much that I felt like I could make other people love it and that was why I got into education. The other thing is I could see a lot of areas for improvement in our profession and I felt like the way to really conquer that was through education and through teaching.

Participants were drawn to higher education because they wanted to help grow the profession and shape the culture of the future of athletic training and they particularly enjoyed teaching, student interactions, and mentoring.

Flexibility. Many found that the flexibility of the work schedule was appealing and another reason to want a position in higher education. Katie, a mother, said, “I pursued my doctoral degree because I wanted to stay in athletic training as a profession, but wanted more stable hours and more predictability in my schedule.” We found this attraction regarding flexibility of the higher education setting among our mothers and nonmothers. Mothers found that a flexible schedule allowed them to arrive at the office later or leave early to attend their child’s events/needs. Jessie, a mother, spoke of the flexibility at her workplace: “At least in our department, if there’s a snow day there’s all kinds of kids at school. If a kid gets sick you can bring them in your office. You can leave if you’re not teaching.”

Sarah, a mother, described a situation with her son that her flexible schedule allowed her to accommodate,

[Son’s name] is in kindergarten so he’s just starting public school. It meant a lot to me, we decided to change his after-school care, so yesterday he didn’t have any so I just worked from home and I picked up in the car line and we came home. He got his homework done. I set up a play date with the kids down the street and was able to watch them in the backyard while I finished a journal review.

“It means a lot to me that I have the flexibility to be that mom,” she continued, later saying, “It’s pretty wonderful that I have the ability to move things around so that I can make those things happen.”

Nonmothers also enjoyed a flexible schedule as it allowed them to work from home or other locations where they experienced less distraction. Joyce described the schedule at her position as favorable and flexible:

Our department is a little bit more flexible. And I think that’s the biggest perk is just that flexible schedule and that’s something that when I was applying for the job that we talked about. And they’re like yeah we’re really flexible, we don’t

keep, we don't keep 40 hours a week if we don't want to or we can . . . 40 hours in the office I should say. They get their work done but it's more as long as you're getting your stuff done . . . then it doesn't matter where you are.

Maria, who is also not a mother, compared the values at her institution versus her peers:

I like the flexibility of my teaching schedule and having a little bit of control over my time. I like the fact that the university that I'm at values the outcome of works . . . I've got some friends that are in jobs where they have to be at the office in order to prove to coworkers and people that they're doing their job.

Similarly, Christine, not a mother, pointed out:

I think that faculty roles, what's nice is you can take some work home. There's some things that you don't need to be doing on campus. I find right now that I just work better from the office, so that's why I come in and work out long hours here, but I know that it's completely fine if I wanted to go home and take my, some of my grading home so that I could be with my family if I needed to or just not be in my office.

Both mothers and nonmothers found the flexible scheduling and ability to determine their own work hours to be very beneficial.

Some participants expressed that the appeal of a flexible schedule and control of their schedule was due to a desire to move away from the clinical aspect of athletic training. Some participants were drawn to positions in higher education due to a dislike of clinical or negative clinical experience earlier in their career; some indicated feeling burnout from working in the clinical setting and needed a change. Sarah described this, saying:

I wouldn't necessarily say my master's degree graduate assistantship was very good. And so the idea of taking a break away from that many hours was very appealing. Even that early in my career I had been working about 50 hours a week, maybe even up to 60. So I was already burned out. So the idea of not taking another clinical position was appealing.

Additionally, participants discussed their desire to create their own schedules rather than having their schedule dictated by a coach and team. Maria stated, "I found clinical practice a little boring. There's a lot of waiting around, standing around. There was a lot of a coach telling me when my time was going to be used. I didn't really, I just wasn't very fond of that." Similarly, Joyce said,

I think one of the biggest contributing factors to wanting to go into academia versus clinical practice is I do not love the setting where you're kind of under the purview of the coach and the coach makes essentially your schedule. If they want to have practice however late at night you're there. If they want to do practice early in the morning, holidays, whatever, I didn't want to work 80 hours a week for very little pay. And I didn't want it, my schedule to be completely determined by other people and I think that was primarily that was a contributing factor where it's like I don't want my life to be dictated by an athletics coach or schedule.

The desire to create their own schedules and have flexibility in the hours that they worked attracted them to pursue positions in higher education as faculty members.

Attraction to Current Position

Location and Logistics. The concept of kinship responsibility resonated among our participants; that is, when finding a faculty position within higher education it was strongly connected to the needs of the spouses and their employment. For instance, some of our participants had spouses who were currently employed full-time; therefore gaining employment within a higher education institution was purposeful and selective. Jessie's situation provides an example of kinship responsibility and location. She described waiting for a position to open in her preferred location:

You know, one of the reasons that I did not go straight into academia after my postdoc is that there was not an opportunity for me to do that in the place where my spouse is and he already was in a junior track position that was pretty much his dream job. So, I looked around for places that I felt like I could feel good about what I was doing in an area and that's how I ended up there until the tenure track position became open that I'm currently in.

Katie, much like Jessie, was selective in her job search and ultimate acceptance of a position in higher education, as she needed to be in proximity of her husband's current job. She shared, "The main reason is because I came down to this location because my husband already had a job in the area and I mean within an hour, because when I was looking for jobs I was looking for somewhere within a few hours of where he was."

Spousal considerations were a large component for many of our participants, and in some cases it meant that relocation would happen for both individuals. Joyce's reflections on her decision to accept her current faculty role had much to do with finding jobs for herself and her husband. Joyce shared with us:

I feel like location-wise, we've always been dependent on his career too because when we are looking at places to go you have to go somewhere that you can both work. And since we both have pretty unique fields . . . like we're both, both of our fields are very . . . we're in a real niche and so it's like it's hard to find places. So . . . my, his career is definitely influencing mine and vice versa.

Kinship responsibility extended beyond the needs of a spouse, and also encompassed the family. That is, marital status was not the only consideration when selecting a faculty position based upon location. Our unmarried participants also shared pursuing their faculty positions due to close proximity to family and a region of the country where they wanted to live. Sarah described this by stating, "So we did chose this particular institution because we're closer to family than we were before." Christine said,

I really liked the location, which sounds silly sometimes, but the [name not disclosed] region is kind of where I instituted myself living. I really wanted to be that closer to my family, being able to work close to both of our families is really helpful just to be able to go home and see nieces and nephews and things like that. That was important.

Anika, much like the 2 previous women, reiterated the importance of location in finding her current position, "Geographic area certainly had a factor for yeah, things that I like to do outside of work, and decent access to family,

they're not that close, but certainly not across the country from them."

Additionally, a few women discussed their spouses' allowing the women's position to dictate their location, Sarah said, "I wouldn't necessarily say his job has ever impacted me being a professor. If anything I've impacted him more than anything because he's had to move around the country for me." Similarly, Christine mentioned, "He's kind of put my career first as far as where I find a job, he will change companies or transfer within his company to work where I found the job that I like, which is nice." These two women indicated that their husbands were able to find employment in the locations after their hiring. Our participants were motivated to choose their faculty positions based upon location, the location influenced by the need to fulfill kinship responsibility.

DISCUSSION

Women ATs select a role in higher education due to forging a connection to the roles of being a faculty member as well as developing an appreciation for the flexibility of schedule that academia allows them to maintain. Another attractor specific to participants' current positions was the location of the employment setting. Career choice is often driven by an attraction to a particular role as well as skill sets,^{25,26} something that we found among our participants as they wanted to "teach" and "engage" students. Additionally, the concept of workplace flexibility has become an increasingly popular attractor, something working professionals need.^{27,28}

Connection to the Role

Participants described an attraction to the tenets of higher education, teaching and research. A study of ATs employed within education programs reported that teaching accounts for 40% of the average workload for this type of professional.²⁹ This indicates that the women in our study are well positioned to teach, as they described desiring, when pursuing their role. Interestingly, women in higher education have been found to have greater teaching loads than males with comparatively smaller salaries.^{30,31} Though they have heavier workloads, women have been found to engage in and enjoy teaching more than research.³¹ The women in our study were motivated to pursue their doctoral degrees and a position as a faculty member in higher education, but women in general continue to be underrepresented in academia. There are fewer women professors and women in the role of tenured faculty as compared with their male counterparts.³² Women in higher education are less productive and progress more slowly through academic ranks than their male colleagues.³¹

Studies in academic medicine have shown women are more interested in teaching than in research.³³ Women in academic medicine disciplines are influenced by the environment they have trained in, as well as the faculty and mentors they interact with.³⁴ However, as with our participants, an interest in teaching is the primary reason these women choose a career in academic medicine.^{33,34} Teaching is often associated with characteristics that embody the woman gender stereotype (eg, nurturing, caregiving) as well as a position that is often ideal for the primary caretaker in terms of domestic responsibilities and children.³⁵ Although those factors did not emerge from our data, it was evident that our sample was attracted to

higher education as it allowed them to teach and advance the profession through their research.

Our participants found enjoyment and fulfillment from the multiple roles associated with being a faculty member and appreciated the interactions they had with students and the impact they were having on the future of the profession. These are similar reasons to those that have been found to prompt ATs to seek the position of program director. Judd and Perkins³⁶ discovered that potential reasons for seeking the role of program director included an attraction to the academic environment and that teaching was one of the most frequently mentioned reasons for seeking the role. Similarly, Leard et al³⁷ found that teaching was a primary reason for becoming a program director, along with molding and interacting with students. Program directors and the faculty members in our study have the desire to teach and shape the next generation of professionals, and they feel a sense of pride in their role in that development.^{36,37}

The women in our study indicated that they chose to pursue their doctoral degree as they knew it was needed to begin a career teaching in higher education, which was their goal. Individuals may pursue their doctorate for many reasons such as personal attainment, status, and recognition, to achieve an upward mobility goal, and to become faculty members in the academy.³⁸ These reasons were also indicated by many of our participants, suggesting that their perspectives are similar to those of other women in higher education.³⁸

Flexible Schedule

Our participants described that the position of a faculty member has afforded them an accommodating schedule that they are able to shape to fit their needs. Athletic trainers in clinical settings face long work hours engaged in patient care with schedules that are controlled by administrators or coaches, which has led to departures from the field, particularly by women.^{14,39,40} Faculty members in higher education face the challenge of balancing seemingly endless academic responsibilities with their personal lives, as there can be a great amount of crossover between the two schedules.⁴¹

It may appear to some that the schedule of an academic position might be easier, but 93% of subjects in a study of athletic training education program personnel noted that they generally worked over 40 hours per week, with an average total number of weekly hours of 51 to 55.²⁹ Therefore, the hours for an AT working in academia may not be significantly less than the hours for someone working in clinical practice; it is the flexibility of the academic schedule that makes it more appealing. Having control over when and where work is completed is known as flexible work arrangements.^{42,43} While an AT working in the clinical setting often is not afforded such a schedule, a faculty member often does have the opportunity for such flexibility and freedom, which may allow easier navigation of work and family responsibilities.^{44,45}

Location

The women ATs described selecting their current positions due primarily to logistics and locations that enabled them to live in a desired geographical area or allowed their spouse to find or maintain employment. Kinship responsibility has been

previously linked to the decision to remain in one's current position in athletic training, especially for women ATs.¹¹ Moreover, it is not unheard of for women to choose to spend time raising children or supporting their husband's pursuit of education or his professional career.³¹ Some women are not as career-oriented as men; and the responsibilities of family, children, and other domestic duties may delay their pursuit of their own career while some women may find happiness in fulfilling their career.³¹ Women in higher education may seek to be employed in part-time positions rather than full-time spots to create time in their schedules.³⁰ In fact, women working full-time in the United States are paid just 79% of what men are paid.⁴⁶ So, in a family with 1 man and 1 woman working, the man would more likely be making more money. If it became necessary for one of them to give up working or to work part time, based on the salary discrepancy, it would be understandable for the man to maintain their job instead of the woman.

Women who have been unable to find positions in their desired location have decreased job satisfaction and lower rates of career advancement, thus proving that location is a large motivator and predictor of success.³⁰ Conversely, in cases of a man following a woman for her career, men have lost opportunities for advancement and their reputation and status may decrease.³⁰

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A few limitations must be considered when examining our findings. First, we recruited our participants based upon a simple set of inclusion criteria, which included gender and employment as a faculty member in a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education-accredited program. We did not include male faculty members in our sample, and therefore we cannot speculate whether these same factors hold true for male ATs who are faculty members. We also recognize that several variables can be investigated further, including previous experiences leading to doctoral education, current institutional classification (ie, Carnegie Classification), and faculty role (tenure versus nontenure). Future research can compare these variables among faculty in athletic training.

Our sample included ATs already in the role of the faculty member; future studies could also examine attractors and variables associated with career selection/employment setting among those who are currently being trained to assume that role. It is plausible that organizational socialization processes could influence the findings of our study.

CONCLUSIONS

Women ATs are attracted to faculty roles because of a connection to the teaching and research roles associated with the position. Women ATs who have selected a role in higher education were attracted to their positions due to their professional goals of teaching and research, in which they find enjoyment. Women faculty members in athletic training are also attracted to higher education due to the flexibility of the schedule and the locations of positions they have found. Efforts to encourage women to pursue roles in higher education should focus on maintaining flexible schedules to make positions appealing to women. Additionally, providing

women ATs opportunities to teach and interact with students may increase their enjoyment and fulfillment in their position.

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