

A PARTICIPATORY EXPLORATION OF WOMEN ATHLETIC TRAINERS’
EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

by

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Dedication

To the women athletic trainers who are selfless and deserving of all the gratitude: Thank you.

To my daughter, Amelie: May you know no limits and always pat yourself on the head (back).

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I would like to thank the members of the Community of Practice. Dani, Grace, Katelyn, Laura, Maggie, Tina, Yu-Wei – your time, thoughtfulness, and contributions to this project were invaluable. As my husband pointed out, I was always happy during and after our meetings. Thank you for allowing this project to fill me with joy. I cannot express how grateful I am to each of you.

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List of Abbreviations

Community of Practice	CoP
National Athletic Trainers' Association	NATA

Abstract

A PARTICIPATORY EXPLORATION OF WOMEN ATHLETIC TRAINERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

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While the majority of athletic trainers are women, research showed that many women left the profession between 28 and 35 years of age. Reasons for this phenomenon have been examined using traditional researcher-centered approaches. However, in 2019, the Strategic Alliance Research Agenda Task force identified vitality of the profession to be a research priority and recognized the need for collaborative research in athletic training. Using a critical feminist framework, this study disengaged from the expected researcher-led project to utilize a participatory approach to knowledge production. This approach allowed for the engagement of eight women athletic trainers to collaboratively examine the individual, organizational, and sociocultural factors that impacted their experiences in the workplace. Through a series of virtual meetings, journal entries, and a private, WhatsApp text conversation, data were collected over 5 months. An in-depth critical structural analysis was conducted, which uncovered three sociocultural structures that impacted women athletic trainers in the workplace: (a) structures of gender, (b) culture of

overdedication, and (c) culture of respect. The findings of this study suggest that women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace were shaped by the historical culture, structures, and expectations of a male-dominated patriarchy. Women athletic trainers resisted the gendered, patriarchal structures of athletic training through a culture of respect. This study demonstrated the feasibility of conducting a participatory research project with clinically practicing athletic trainers, and its usefulness in gaining in-depth insights of research topics and achieving relevant, action-oriented outcomes. There are implications for women athletic trainers, employers, athletic training leadership, and researchers which can help create change and support women athletic trainers in the workplace. Knowledge gained from this study should be used to take action and address the patterns and structures that negatively impact women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace.

Chapter One

The first woman joined the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) 85 years after the profession originated (Pennington, 2019; Webber, 2014). Today, the majority of NATA members are women (NATA, 2018). However, athletic training is a profession that was created by and for men (Anderson, 1991). When women began working in the athletic training industry, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they were met with resistance from men coaches and men athletic trainers (Anderson, 1991). Subsequently, women athletic trainers have faced numerous challenges working in a male-dominated industry (Anderson, 1991, 1992; Booth, 2000; Burton et al., 2012; Gorant, 2012; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Ohkubo, 2008).

In the early 1990s, women athletic trainers did not have opportunities for leadership, to share a collective voice in professional organizations, and advocate for themselves (Anderson, 1991, 1992). While women athletic trainers have since gained leadership opportunities in professional organizations and broken professional barriers (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Pennington, 2019; Pike et al., 2017), they still battled issues of gender stereotyping, and gender bias in hiring and recruiting practices (Burton et al., 2012;

Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Ohkubo, 2008). The “old boys network” limited opportunities for jobs, career advancement, and negatively impacted the work environment (Anderson, 1992; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a).

Women athletic trainers appeared to depart the profession between 28 and 35 years of age (Eason et al., 2018; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Factors which contributed to women athletic trainers’ experiences in the workplace and their departure from the profession have been previously studied (Anderson, 1991, 1992; Kahanov et al., 2013; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Reasons women left the profession were complex. A woman athletic trainer in this age group may choose to leave the profession due to challenges with balancing personal needs and professional obligations, prioritizing family, incongruency with work environment and demands, burnout, insufficient salary, and experiences with sexism (Kahanov et al., 2013; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). An in-depth understanding of the needs and desires of women athletic trainers is essential to address this issue.

Similarly, women athletic trainers had to make personal sacrifices and career-related decisions which were not considerations for their male colleagues (Anderson, 1991, 1992; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b). Research suggested women in health care professions confronted high levels of stress and burnout due to the difficult demands of the job (Campo et al., 2009; Lambert & Lambert, 2001). Athletic trainers reported unique

challenges such as long, nontraditional work hours, travel requirements, and inflexible work schedules which contributed to conflicts among personal and professional obligations (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015).

Several studies demonstrated the challenges athletic trainers face with work-life balance (Eason et al., 2014; Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017), or the ability to maintain equilibrium among the elements of paid work and personal life (Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007; Visser & Williams, 2006). These challenges included lack of social and family time, and low salaries, which negatively impacted women athletic trainers' personal lives (Anderson, 1991, 1992; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Conflicts with work-life balance have been associated with job dissatisfaction, burnout, and job turnover (Allen et al., 2000; Pastore, 1991; Pastore et al., 1996). In addition to this, women, compared to men, were more likely to face challenges in their career (e.g., impact on salary) due to having children (Budig & England, 2001; Parker, 2015). Women athletic trainers agreed that parenting impacted the work experience and may result in them re-examining or changing career paths (Kahanov et al., 2010).

Therefore, there is a pressing need to address issues which impact women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace and the challenges they may face. In 2019, the Strategic Alliance Research Agenda Task Force reported vitality of the profession to be

the second highest priority for athletic training research (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019). Research related to this priority may include investigating practices to support work-life balance, mitigate work-family conflict, and improve retention of athletic trainers (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019). Although researchers described some solutions to improving work-family conflict and supporting work-life balance (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018; Smith, 2016), more work is needed. Retention of athletic trainers and longevity in the profession is of prime importance for researchers. NATA recognized the need to support athletic trainers and address the concept of work-life balance. They addressed this need by developing and publishing a position statement to discuss the concept of work-life balance, facilitate work-life balance, and a partial aim of retaining athletic trainers in the profession (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018).

To retain women athletic trainers in the profession, there is a critical need for research methods which can provide in-depth exploration of these issues, contribute to a better understanding of the needs of the community, and help provide easily translatable solutions that can be implemented into practice. Investigating this topic through the viewpoint of women athletic trainers can provide in-depth information and insight. Therefore, I chose to use participatory approach to study women athletic trainers experiences in the workplace. Women athletic trainers are the ones experiencing their lives and the challenges associated with their work. Therefore, they are the experts on this topic and can provide a unique insider perspective. Participatory methodologies can tap into this insider knowledge and help address concerns related to this topic.

The Community of Women Athletic Trainers

In order to implement practical solutions for any community or organization, we must understand the needs of that community. In this case, the community of interest was women athletic trainers. Throughout this study, I used the terms “women athletic trainers” or “woman athletic trainer” as compared to “female athletic trainer” because the individuals who participated in this study identified as women, and I did not assess sex. Additionally, I recognized that focusing on women athletic trainers may reproduce thinking along the gender binary. This was not my intention. The focus on women was my interest for this particular study. Finding solutions that are relevant to this community will benefit women athletic trainers, their employers, patients, and the profession as a whole. Collaboration between researchers and clinicians has been recognized as a way to achieve this goal (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019).

For this study, I collaborated with women athletic trainers who worked in a variety of clinical settings to explore their experiences in the workplace. No one was better positioned to speak to the needs of a community than those who were a part of it. The women athletic trainers who participated in this study provided unique insider perspectives and insights into their lives or livelihoods (Freire, 2018; Salsberg et al., 2015). By intentionally engaging in equitable dialogue with women athletic trainers, I hoped to gain in-depth insight about challenges in the workplace and an understanding of realistic action steps that could be taken to support women athletic trainers.

Framing Women Athletic Trainers' Experiences in the Workplace

Gender roles constitute shared beliefs and expectations about what behaviors, or roles, fit specific genders (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Stereotypically and historically, men were viewed as task-oriented, decision-makers, masterful, assertive, competitive, and dominant while women were expected to be communal, friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Parson & Bales, 1955). Knowledge of these stereotypes and social conditioning could reproduce the expected behaviors in others (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978).

The foundational work of Parson and Bales (1955) reflected the behaviors of men and women in the 1950s. However, gender roles can change due to expectations, the economy, social structures, and organizational culture, among other things (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Social role theory accounted for the social, psychological, and biological factors which influenced social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In societies with less gender equality in division of labor, men took on roles similar to Parson and Bales' (1955) description while women served as homemakers and child rearers (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

If not socialized to exhibit stereotypic behaviors, individuals may not display expected social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Those who exhibited atypical roles may face disapproval from others (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, if taking on a contrasting gender stereotypic behavior was advantageous (e.g., career advancement), one may exhibit behavior which strayed from expected social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Women's stereotypic gender roles differed from the perceived requirements of leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Leadership characteristics were typically associated with masculine traits and resulted in a resistance to women as leaders or potential leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Despite great strides for women in this area, men have maintained dominance of leadership positions (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Helfat et al., 2006). Still, women were taking on more leadership positions and, as this shift persisted, researchers anticipated a subsequent convergence of male and female attributes (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Critical Feminist Theory

I utilized a critical feminist framework for this research project. Critical theory aimed to understand and help overcome the social structures which oppress individuals (Marx, 1975) while feminist theorists sought to transform male-dominated, patriarchal systems of inequity and oppression (hooks, 2000). Influenced by critical feminist researchers, I sought understanding of the current male-dominated systems which provided inequitable opportunities for women athletic trainers (Butler, 1990). By using an approach which tapped into the unique perspectives of women in science, scholars may be able to expand and contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Hartsock, 1998).

The lives of women and men alike were shaped by the dominant culture in science (Hartsock, 1983). The struggles women encountered to be a part of the science and health fields should be utilized to provide innovative perspectives, questions, and solutions (Hartsock, 1998). Hartsock's (1983) feminist standpoint epistemology stated

that the standpoint of the oppressed represents both their scientific analysis and political struggle. Likewise, feminist theorists provided a unique resource and perspective which should ground women's research (Hartsock, 1983).

Previous athletic training research used feminist standpoint theory to understand differences of gender bias in the field (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). Science grounded in a feminist standpoint could help inform researchers and practitioners about organizational structures to help redefine and restructure them (Hartsock, 1983). I hoped to expand upon prior research by examining the structures which impacted women athletic trainers experiences across multiple settings. As I engaged in this research, I reflected on my experiences as a woman athletic trainer and a researcher. This reflection provided opportunity to critically examine prior research and methods. Influenced by feminist researchers, I applied my unique contributions to the field and did not settle for the status quo to conduct science as usual (Harding, 1987, 1989).

To better understand women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace, I modeled my approach after critical feminist researchers and used a methodology which supported equity throughout the process (Bhavnani, 1994). Throughout this project, I maintained a commitment to the democratization and restructuring of research culture (Fine, 2018a; Lather, 1991) and anchored my project in participatory methodologies. This approach allowed me to use less oppressive approaches to knowledge production (Fine, 2018a; Lather, 1991). Participatory methodologies are anchored in a democratic approach which can facilitate engagement of community members—especially women and those who have been mistreated by systems of power—throughout the research process

(Alcoff, 1995; Fine, 1994). This approach to research also allowed for a more unified message from researchers and community members instead of researchers writing about the researched from a disconnected position of power (Fine, 1994; Lather, 1991).

Critical feminist and participatory frameworks allowed for recognition of and trust in the expertise of community-based researchers (Fine, 2018a; Jull et al., 2017; Torre, 2009), and support for an inclusive environment amongst academic researchers and community members (Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Freire, 2018; Jull et al., 2017). Gaining an in-depth understanding of the needs of a community could be limited by a researcher from the outside. Therefore, an approach which engaged with community members was helpful to provide insight into the experiences and needs of a community (Harding, 1989; Hartsock, 1998). Engagement of community-members through the research process allowed for an open exchange of dialogue which provided a better understanding of issues, interpretation of data, and opportunity to develop relevant outcomes for the effected community (Lather, 1991).

A critical feminist lens, which supported a participatory approach, provided an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual, organizational, and sociocultural factors which bounded women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. This approach provided a better understanding of how cultural and social structures impacted women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. Through this project, I was also able to better understand what support was needed for women athletic trainers to help retain them in the profession.

Why Participatory Methodologies for Athletic Training Research

Researchers recognized the value of qualitative research, and the utility of qualitative methods to expand upon the traditional athletic training research by providing a greater depth of understanding to the phenomena studied (Pitney & Parker, 2001). In recent years, more qualitative work has been conducted in the field. However, these qualitative studies were directed by academic researchers. Participatory methodologies stepped away from a researcher-focused model to engage in a community-centered model which includes community members through the entirety of the research process (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018).

A participatory approach can support athletic trainers to engage in evidence-based practices which has been reported as critical to advancing the practice and improving patient care (Welch et al., 2014). To practice evidence-based medicine, athletic trainers should engage in both educational and research activities (Institute of Medicine, 2003; Welch et al., 2014). For athletic trainers to engage in research, methodologies that promote their involvement are needed. Participatory approaches help achieve that goal, leaning on the expertise of community-based researchers and including them in the continuum of the research process from design to action steps (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). A participatory approach provided the opportunity for athletic trainers to engage in research, analyze the results, and use the knowledge created inform their decisions in

the workplace. Despite this, no previous athletic training studies have utilized a participatory approach to research.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace utilizing an approach rooted in participatory methodologies (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Vesely et al., 2018). The aim of this study was to better understand workplace experiences of women athletic trainers, the structures that affected their experiences, and solutions for issues they encountered. To examine this complex and multifaceted topic, I aimed to use an approach that allowed for a nuanced understanding of the intersection of the individual (personal and professional), organizational, and sociocultural factors which impact women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace (Eason et al., 2018). This project provided women athletic trainers an opportunity to discuss their experiences in the field, issues they faced in the workplace, how organizational factors impacted their experiences, how personal needs impacted career planning, and potential ways to address challenges. A participatory approach was well-suited to provide this insight.

Research Questions

While the topic of workplace experiences for women athletic trainers has been studied by other researchers, none have used a participatory approach. This study added to the existing body of research by utilizing a methodology and perspective novel to athletic training research. This study was originally guided by the following research questions.

1. How do women athletic trainers describe their experiences across multiple athletic training settings?
2. How do women athletic trainers' professional and personal goals and needs impact career planning?
3. What do women athletic trainers need to remain working in the profession?
4. What workplace strategies and policies can be implemented to help support women athletic trainers?

Methodology

This study utilized an approach rooted in dialogue (Freire, 2018; Given, 2008) and participatory methodologies (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Vesely et al., 2018). Due to the coronavirus pandemic, this study was conducted in a virtual environment. I engaged in dialogue with a group of women athletic trainers to form a community of practice (CoP). CoP members engaged in this study over a 5-month period from November 2020 through March 2021, through a series of five meetings via Zoom conferencing, journal entries, and a private social media tool (WhatsApp). I also journaled throughout the project. The structure of this project allowed for the creation, collection, and analysis of data, and reflection on the research process (Freire, 2018; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). Participatory methodologies are novel to athletic training research, and the findings from this study contribute to the existing literature in the field. The women who participated in this study represented experiences of women

who work in a variety of work settings that athletic trainers may work in, such as high school, college, clinic, military, and community outreach.

The women athletic trainers who participated in this study were the experts on their lives and livelihoods, and no outsider could have provided a more informed perspective in this area of study. For this project, I conducted a study that challenged a more traditional top-down, researcher-focused investigation (Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Wallerstein, 2006; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010) and fostered equality among community members and researchers (Cacari-Stone et al., 2014; Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Israel et al., 1998, 2001; Jull et al., 2017). A participatory approach allowed women who practice as athletic trainers every day to offer their unique insights, interpretations of research collected, and develop action steps which could be readily implemented.

The use of a participatory methodology allowed for recognition of the expertise of community members and to invite those individuals to participate equally in knowledge creation (Fletcher, 2002; Horowitz et al., 2009; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Wallerstein, 2006; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). This approach allowed me to disengage from the expected researcher-led project and engage with women in the athletic training community to create a more equitable knowledge production process (Freire, 2018). For this project, I collaborated with CoP members to explore and find practical solutions to the individual, organizational, and sociocultural factors which intersected the topic of women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace.

Furthermore, my approach to data analysis allowed me to honor community member's knowledge while providing a nuanced understanding of their experiences, thoughts, and ideas. Initial low-level coding was conducted partly as a collective and partly by me, independently. Data analysis was guided by CoP members and conducted throughout the course of the study, allowing for opportunities to reflect and revisit the analysis (Nind, 2011). The analysis prompted more dialogue and generated ideas, themes, and more questions (Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012). During this phase of the analysis, CoP members recognized there were cultural and societal factors that impacted women athletic trainers' experiences. To expand upon the data analysis that was conducted among CoP members, I conducted a critical structural analysis of the data (Dennis, 2013).

Social structures were constructed by a shared knowledge of how things should be done, actions taken based upon that shared understanding, and the assumption that actors were capable of producing that action (Giddens, 1994). Giddens' (1994) theory of structuration stated that structures were made up of the volition of the actor, a critical examination of these actions, and unintended consequences which reproduced those structures. To conduct the critical structural analysis (Dennis, 2013), I reviewed and re-examined data for cultural structural indicators and unintended consequences of action. This allowed me to identify three structures which impacted women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace: (a) structures of gender, (b) culture of overdedication, and (c) culture of respect.

Significance

As an athletic trainer, I read numerous research studies that I could not apply in my clinical practice. As a researcher, I observed a disconnect between the way the experts (university-based researchers) described their research and reality. As a woman athletic trainer, I questioned my ability to continue working in the profession long-term and have faced challenges in systems that did not seem to support a path forward. Modeling after critical feminist researchers, I did not conduct this project from a neutral standpoint but grounded it in my unique perspective (Harding, 1987, 1989; Hartsock, 1983, 1998; hooks, 2000). A critical feminist framework allowed me to lean on my unique insights and provide a novel perspective to this area of research. I pursued an equitable, action-oriented approach for this study, working with a community of women athletic trainers.

A critical feminist framework supported the use of a participatory methodological approach, which was novel to athletic training research. While the NATA position statement (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018) and other work offered valuable suggestions for work-life balance and support in the workplace, the insider perspective of the CoP offered unique insights into workplace experiences and opportunities for support. The women athletic trainers who participated in this study had a unique standpoint. They worked as an athletic trainer daily, and their stories and ideas were worth hearing. It was important to examine this topic through their lens. A participatory approach allowed the women athletic trainers of the CoP to share their experiences, ideas, and next steps for this important topic.

Athletic trainers reported wanting clinically relevant, meaningful data (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019). Conducting a participatory study that allowed for equitable collaboration among researchers and community members (clinicians) supported this effort. This process allowed for a better understanding of issues, accurate interpretation of data (Fine, 1994), and action steps that could be translated into practice (Lather, 1986). The CoP was uniquely positioned to build upon previous work and offer insider perspectives to the issues facing women in the field. Working with the CoP provided opportunity to uncover the structural contexts that affected their experiences, and the critical structural analysis provided a systematic method to understanding the structures and patterns that impacted women athletic trainers' experiences at work (Dennis, 2013). This analysis allowed for articulation of the structural indicators which seemed to be absent in the literature.

Delimitations

There were some delimitations to this study. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was unable to conduct a full, in-person participatory research project. The CoP consisted of a small working group which met virtually. The virtual meeting environment limited methods of data collection and may have hindered the development of the sense of community that an in-person experience might have produced. However, the virtual environment provided the opportunity to expand the CoP to women athletic trainers outside of the Washington, DC area and allowed for unique methods of conducting research which may prove to be innovative and useful for future research.

Additionally, I worked with a small number of women athletic trainers. It is possible that if I included more people, there may have been other experiences shared to compare and add. However, as a CoP, it was important to keep it small to allow for open dialogue and for each member to contribute to the conversations. The number of community members allowed for discussion, questioning of ideas, back-and-forth exchanges, and revisiting ideas discussed by individual members of the CoP. These discussions and exchanges provided rich and complex data. My decision to solely include women was limiting as it did not capture perspectives of men on this topic. However, athletic training is a profession that has been shaped by the expectations, goals, and experiences of men (Anderson, 1991). In this project, I sought to better understand the experiences and perspectives of women athletic trainers and capture ideas that may help current and future women in the profession.

Chapter Two

In this chapter, I presented literature about experiences and challenges women in general face in the workplace and, more specifically, within the sports and health care industries. The review also covered the history of women in athletic training, current characteristics of women in the field, and challenges faced by women athletic trainers in the workplace. Next, the chapter focused on career planning, retention, attrition, success strategies, and organizational factors that support women in athletic training. Lastly, I discussed the theoretical framework of this project, gender role theory and social role theory.

Women's Experiences in the Workplace

Women encountered a number of challenges in the workplace. In any organization, supporting balance among work, life, and family can be important for employee retention. Long work hours were associated with challenges for work-life balance and work-family conflict (Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; Major et al., 2002; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). In the sports industry, coaches' and administrators' ability to maintain work-family balance allowed them to remain in their jobs (Pastore et al., 1996). However, when personal time was limited, those coaches and administrators were more likely to leave the profession (Pastore et al., 1996). In fact, coaches identified decreased amount of time for family and friends as the top reason they would leave the profession (Pastore, 1991). Imbalances among work, personal life, and family may negatively impact women and result in undue burdens.

Women working in health care fields were faced with hardships such as stress, burnout, and challenges managing work and family responsibilities (Campo et al., 2009; Lambert & Lambert, 2001). These factors can impact career planning and decisions. Other obstacles women faced at work included gender stereotyping (Burton et al., 2011) and workplace bullying (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Unfavorable workplace experiences can negatively impact the affected individuals. For example, exposure to bullying in the workplace has been associated with negative impacts on health and well-being such as anxiety, depression, physical health problems, and burnout (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012).

Another hardship women encountered was unequal pay. Despite women gaining more opportunities in the labor market, research showed they earned 81.6 cents to every dollar a man earned (Semega et al., 2019). Some explanations cited for this gap were occupation and industry choices (Blau & Kahn, 2007), motherhood (Budig & England, 2001), and women being penalized for initiating salary negotiation (Bowles et al., 2007). However, when women had access to paid maternity leave, a year later they were likely to work more and earn greater pay (Rossin-Slater et al., 2013). This suggested that employers can implement salary-related policies and strategies to support and improve women's experiences in the workplace.

Organizational strategies which support women in the workplace may help employees obtain work-life balance and remain working in their profession. Research has shown that women who had children were three times more likely than men to face challenges with career advancement (Parker, 2015). Some policies and practices employers implemented included supportive supervisors, flexible work scheduling, and

leave for family obligations (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Inclusivity (e.g., free of discrimination, accepting environment, respect for differences) and support for individuals regardless of gender have been highlighted as factors that help with retention in the workplace (Pastore et al., 1996). Many of the challenges highlighted in this section have been observed in the athletic training profession.

Background of Women in Athletic Training

Research exploring experiences of women athletic trainers in the workplace has examined challenges women face such as work-life balance (Eason et al., 2014; Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012, 2015; ; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012), work-family conflict (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Pitney et al., 2011; Singe et al., 2020), motherhood (Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015), gender stereotyping (Burton et al., 2012; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Ohkubo, 2008), and bullying (Pitney et al., 2016; Weuve et al., 2014a, 2014b). Scholars also discussed career planning and advancement (Eason et al., 2018; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Pike et al., 2017), strategies for success (Burton et al., 2012; Gorant, 2012; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b, 2016c; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013;

Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Pike et al., 2017), mentorship (Dieringer, 2007; Eason et al., 2014; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c; Shingles, 2001; Singe & Walker, 2019), and organizational strategies (Eason, Mazerolle, & Goodman, 2017; Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019; Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Pitney et al., 2011). While these challenges have been extensively researched, they remain an issue for women athletic trainers today.

With an increasing number of women working as athletic trainers in the profession (NATA, 2000, 2018), understanding women's experiences and topics of importance to them is imperative. These insights may provide improved perspective about areas needing further investigation and help develop solutions to problems women athletic trainers face. Finding meaningful and translatable solutions may help with retention of women athletic trainers in the profession. Research investigating retention of athletic trainers has been identified as a priority for the NATA (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019). Through this literature review, I sought to explore the topics surrounding women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. Before presenting the literature on these topics, it was important to examine the roots of women athletic trainers by discussing pioneer women in the field. In the following section, I also reviewed early research regarding women's experiences in athletic training, the expanding opportunities, and characteristics of women athletic trainers.

Pioneer Women in Athletic Training

In 1966, the first woman, Dorothy Cohen, joined the NATA (Pennington, 2019). Other women soon followed in her footsteps. With the passage of Title IX, opportunities for women in the field grew (Anderson, 1991, 1992). As colleges developed and expanded their women's sports programs, there was a need to provide health care services to these student-athletes (Anderson, 1991, 1992). Subsequently, more women obtained athletic training positions in the collegiate setting (Anderson, 1991, 1992; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015). Despite the increase in job opportunities, women athletic trainers did not feel encouraged or supported to pursue leadership positions in NATA which left them excluded and without opportunity to share their collective voice (Anderson, 1991, 1992). For women athletic trainers to gain traction and more opportunities within the field, leadership roles needed to be obtained. Women athletic trainers felt there was a need to be proactive in professional organizations to obtain more opportunities and allow for their voices to be heard (Anderson, 1991, 1992). While involvement in NATA was a slow progression, women athletic trainers started to break barriers in employment opportunities.

In the late 1990s and into the 2000s, women athletic trainers began obtaining jobs in professional basketball, the National Football League, Major League Baseball, and as head athletic trainers in the collegiate setting (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Pennington, 2019; Pike et al., 2017). Women athletic trainers obtained more leadership opportunities within NATA. In 2000, 50 years after NATA's inception, the first female president, Julie Max, was

inducted (Pennington, 2019). By 2016, NATA had three women serve as president (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Women athletic trainers continued to experience progress and gain opportunities to serve on committees and in leadership positions in state, regional, and national organizations. Engaging in these service positions provided a platform for women athletic trainers to express their voice and expand support to other women in the profession.

Current Characteristics of Women in Athletic Training

In 2018, NATA membership was 55.9% women and 44.1% men (NATA, 2018). While there were a greater number of women athletic trainers in the profession compared to men, this number is deceptive as many of these women were young professionals. Researchers reported that the majority of women athletic trainers were between 22 and 28 years of age (Eason et al., 2018; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). A dramatic decrease in the number of women working in the profession was observed between the ages of 28 and 35 years (Eason et al., 2018; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). This decline was highlighted in the collegiate setting (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a), and findings suggested there may be a conflict with working in the athletic training profession and building a family (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015). The next section will cover some of the challenges women athletic trainers encountered in the workplace.

Challenges Women Athletic Trainers Encounter in the Workplace

Women athletic trainers have identified several challenges that they faced in the workplace. Researchers reported no differences between women and men athletic trainers

regarding job satisfaction after conducting an online survey (Eason et al., 2018). However, other research indicated that women athletic trainers faced challenges balancing professional and personal life (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Across all athletic training settings, women athletic trainers reported higher levels of burnout and lower emotional well-being compared to men despite reporting higher physical and social well-being and less work hours (Naugle et al., 2013). Women athletic trainers were particularly vulnerable to challenges with balancing work and personal obligations due to demands in the profession such as long work hours (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015), changing and inflexible work schedules (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015), and loads associated with patient care (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008). These challenges have been extensively noted by scholars examining the collegiate setting (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

Challenges in the Collegiate Setting

In the collegiate setting, women athletic trainers who were mothers reported working 70-hour work weeks, some logging 13-hour workdays during the academic year (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). Women athletic trainers often missed out on their own

children's lives because of work conflicts (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Singe et al., 2020). Similarly, a lack of time for routine activities like grocery shopping, laundry, social life, dating, speaking with loved ones, attending weddings and funerals, and lack of personal time impacted women athletic trainers' health and well-being (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Women athletic trainers felt they could not take time off work and that their job did not allow for it (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). In an interview, a woman athletic trainer pointed out that coaches devoted increased time during one season while athletic trainers typically were in-season all year long (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

The studies reviewed in this section utilized surveys, online interviews (journaling and open-ended questions), phone interviews, and mixed methods to explore these issues. The methods used allowed researchers to learn about the critical issues women athletic trainers face in the field. However, the tendency to utilize approaches (e.g., online surveys) that did not allow for dialogue, may not have allowed for the depth of understanding which could be obtained through rigorous qualitative methods. Utilizing a research approach that allowed for dialogue and discussion may provide opportunity for more in-depth insight into and solutions for these issues.

Work-Life Balance and Work-Family Conflict

Work, life, and family balance have received increased attention within athletic training, in part due to attrition (i.e., athletic trainers leaving their jobs) due to work-family conflict (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008;

Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Goodman, & Pitney, 2013; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Work-life balance and improving retention of athletic trainers were noted as research priorities for the NATA Research and Education Foundation (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019). In 2018, the NATA released a position statement on work-life balance with a partial goal of retention of athletic trainers in the profession (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). This guidance emphasized the need to focus on work, life, and family balance in athletic training, particularly of women athletic trainers (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). In the position statement, the NATA recognized that women may experience personal and professional stressors due to family demands, especially when they have children (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018).

Motherhood and Athletic Training. In the early 1990s, researchers reported that women athletic trainers made personal sacrifices and choices related to career and family that were not typically required by their male counterparts (Anderson, 1991, 1992). Recent research has also presented the stresses and challenges women face regarding career and family. Women athletic trainers were more likely to perceive greater challenges and stress from balancing work and family obligations than men in the field (Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Naugle et al., 2013) and displayed lower resiliency scores than men in a recent survey (Mazerolle, Eason, et al., 2018). While some survey research showed gender did not affect perceptions of work-family conflict,

these same studies showed men and women reported moderate-to-high levels of work-family conflict, which researchers attributed to organization-related factors (Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Pitney et al., 2011; Singe et al., 2020). Other research suggested that women place increased emphasis on and prioritize family and their caretaker role, which may be why more conflict was expressed (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b).

Motherhood was cited as a barrier to career advancement in athletic training (Booth, 2000; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Despite this, eighty-one percent of women athletic trainers reported having or wanting to have children (Kahanov, et al., 2010). Having children may influence women athletic trainers' career plans. In a study of women athletic trainers, 42% of those who were mothers changed settings after having children, and 65% of this sample changed their work hours (Kahanov et al., 2010). Other research highlighted that women athletic trainers were more likely to stay in a position that allowed for undertaking multiple roles (i.e. athletic trainer, spouse, mother, and caretaker; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011).

The long and odd hours of a traditional (high school or college) athletic training settings required in-home childcare, or using two or more childcare providers, as most daycares did not stay open late enough to accommodate an athletic trainers' work schedule (Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). In an online survey, 50% of women athletic trainers with children who worked in traditional settings reported they would prefer to spend more time at home (Kahanov et al., 2010). However,

many mothers chose or needed to work full-time. Therefore, more research on mothers' experiences in the workplace is needed. The same study reported that nonparent women athletic trainers had positive perceptions of the support systems of athletic trainers who were mothers and believed having a strategy to manage the demands of work and family were critical for success (Kahanov et al., 2010). Research should be aimed at identifying organizations which have successfully created a supportive work environment and strategies and policies that could be implemented by employers.

Workplace Bullying

One area of research that recently gained attention in athletic training literature was workplace bullying. Although women did not experience workplace bullying at a rate different than men in the profession, research showed men tended to conduct the bullying (Weuve et al., 2014a). Women athletic trainers reported having administrators including those with no medical knowledge bullying them in an attempt to micromanage or dismiss the athletic trainers' medical opinions (Weuve et al., 2014b). Being micromanaged by administrators or having an unsupportive direct supervisor were challenges that may hinder women athletic trainers' ability to properly do their job (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). Other women athletic trainers reported being bullied because of their sex or race, or after going to Human Resources about an issue (i.e., whistle blowing) and subsequently holding a meeting to resolve the issue (Weuve et al., 2014b). However, some women athletic trainers had success resolving bullying issues by utilizing Human Resources (Weuve et al., 2014b). Weuve et al. (2014a) utilized surveys to examine workplace bullying in the collegiate setting but recognized the need

for interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding of the issue (Weuve et al., 2014b). There is still a need to examine bullying in other settings and to understand what kind of support is needed to address the issue.

The Impact of Workplace Bullying on Women Athletic Trainers. Workplace bullying can negatively impact a person both professionally and personally. Women athletic trainers reported increased stress and anxiety due to bullying and that it negatively impacted their social lives, mental health, personal relationships, and confidence with their job (Pitney et al., 2016; Weuve et al., 2014b). Women athletic trainers also discussed delaying projects, avoiding contact with the person conducting the bullying, and having a lack of preparation and lack of support from administration to take action against the bullying (Pitney et al., 2016; Weuve et al., 2014b). Weuve et al. (2014a) highlighted the need for researchers to examine the impact of bullying on the intent to leave the profession. Through phone and online interviews, researchers were able to provide some insights about the issues surrounding workplace bullying. However, the interviews were semi-structured, brief, or conducted online. These methods may not have allowed for sufficient dialogue to address the issues surrounding workplace bullying.

Gender Stereotyping and Inequity

Early research about women athletic trainers reported barriers for women in the field (Anderson, 1991, 1992). These women reported inequity in educational training including access to academic athletic training programs, facilities, equipment, and exposure to high risk sports such as football (Anderson, 1992). Once working in the

profession, women athletic trainers highlighted working long hours for limited pay, which limited their social and family life (Anderson, 1992). These challenges have been reported in the literature recently as well (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

Women athletic trainers believed compensation in the profession was not comparable to other fields or other roles within athletic programs and was not reflective of athletic trainers' training and education (master's degree; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Some women athletic trainers reported that younger women were willing to accept low salaries for jobs in the collegiate setting, which created challenges for experienced professionals to negotiate appropriate salaries (Anderson, 1992). Because of this challenge, women athletic trainers left the collegiate setting for nontraditional settings with better financial compensation (Anderson, 1992; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Research identifying successful approaches to increasing salary is needed. Prior research about attrition and low pay was focused on traditional settings. Understanding attrition and retention in nontraditional work settings, and if satisfaction improves with increased compensation, are areas that are largely unexplored.

Gender Stereotyping Limits Career Advancement. In the early 1990s, women athletic trainers reported coaches, administrators and men athletic trainers not understanding the role of women in the field (Anderson, 1991, 1992). The “old boys network” and homophobia limited opportunities for jobs and impacted the work environment (Anderson, 1991, 1992). More recent research indicated that gender

stereotyping of young women athletic trainers occurred early in their careers and continued as they advanced in the profession (Burton et al., 2012; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Ohkubo, 2008).

Historically, hiring, recruiting practices, and gender stereotyping have been noted as barriers to career advancement for women in the profession (Booth, 2000; Burton et al., 2012; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Ohkubo, 2008). Men promoting men in athletics made it challenging for women athletic trainers to obtain pathbreaking positions (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Some women athletic trainers reported administrators believed women could not fulfill the requirements of role of head athletic trainer due to their sex (i.e. making tough decisions), should not work with men's sports like football, would eventually pursue family and leave their job, and that family responsibilities would prevent them from being able to take on head athletic trainer duties (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Furthermore, some coaches and administrators did not support or recognize women in positions of power (Anderson, 1991; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). However, one study found that women athletic trainers working with male sports did not seem to face barriers to earning their jobs (Pike et al., 2017). Despite the findings of Pike et al. (2017), women athletic trainers still experienced gender stereotyping in the workplace.

Administrators' and Coaches' Biases Against Women Athletic Trainers.

Women athletic trainers had challenges with coaches being biased against them. Young women in the profession reported challenges gaining respect from colleagues and administrators, including coaches identifying them as potential sexual distractions to male student-athletes (Burton et al., 2012). Coaches, administrators, and male student-athletes reportedly viewed women athletic trainers as nurturing and to have a “mom” role (Burton et al., 2012; O'Connor et al., 2010; Ohkubo, 2008). Furthermore, women athletic trainers have been told to change their personalities to discourage athletes from seeking care (Burton et al., 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2010).

Challenges women athletic trainers faced due to gender bias limited their opportunities at work. Administrators and male coaches used their power to prevent women athletic trainers from covering men's sports such as basketball and football, questioned women athletic trainers' abilities, and would go to men athletic trainers for answers over their women counterparts (Burton et al., 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015). Women athletic trainers also reported increased challenges to get the necessary resources to do their jobs compared to male colleagues (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015). When women athletic trainers worked with coaches who were women and women's sports teams, they did not seem to face the same issues as those who worked with men's teams (Burton, et al., 2012). Because of these barriers, some women athletic trainers chose not to work with men's teams (Burton et al., 2012).

How Gender Stereotyping Impacts Perception of Women in Athletic

Training. Women in head athletic trainer roles stated that gender stereotypes may lead to

the perception that women athletic trainers did not have the necessary competence or skills to serve as head athletic trainers (Burton et al., 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015). The low numbers of women athletic trainers in leadership roles may be partially attributed to gender stereotyping. Gender stereotyping seemed to perpetuate the belief that men were more capable of managing the demands required of head athletic trainers in the collegiate setting (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Ohkubo, 2008).

Stereotyping and discrimination appeared to negatively impact career aspirations and hinder women athletic trainers from pursuing leadership roles (Burton et al., 2012; Gorant, 2012; Laurent & Bradney, 2007; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c; Ohkubo, 2008). However, women athletic trainers who obtained Division I head athletic trainer positions believed the culture changed and that gender was no longer a factor in obtaining leadership roles (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015). The majority of these studies utilized interviews. Researchers may want to explore the coaches' and administrators' perspectives on these issues and examine topics such as if the nurturer perception impacts opinions on competence of women athletic trainer. Researchers may also consider examining ways to address and resolve the issues associated with gender stereotypes.

Career Planning and Retention in Athletic Training

Career advancement for women athletic trainers in the collegiate setting was viewed as challenging (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015). While few head athletic trainer or athletic director positions in collegiate sports have been held by women and opportunities to work with men's professional and collegiate sports have

been limited (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Pike et al., 2017), there have been a notable increases in the number of women athletic trainers in leadership positions over the past few decades (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Pike et al., 2017). In fact, there has been an increased number of women athletic trainers in leadership roles in the collegiate setting (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). Despite this progress, women athletic trainers were still less likely to assume a head athletic trainer position compared to men (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c).

Why Women in Athletic Training Do Not Pursue the Head Athletic Trainer Position

Several reasons for not pursuing a head athletic training role have been noted in the literature. Many women athletic trainers reported having a disinterest or lack of aspiration to being in a head athletic trainer position (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a, 2016c). This lack of interest was due to not having a desire to provide health care coverage to the football team, a duty typically associated with a head athletic trainer position (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a, 2016c). Some women athletic trainers did not believe they could handle the responsibility of head athletic trainer; however, those who accepted a head athletic trainer role were glad they did (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Many women athletic trainers reported wanting to have a work-life balance as a reason not to pursue a head athletic trainer position (Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a, 2016c).

Work Setting and Career Planning

Working setting can impact women athletic trainers' choices on remaining in or leaving the profession. Reasons women athletic trainers left the professional included work-life imbalance, sexism, conflicts with coaches and administrators, being challenged professionally, lack of support from supervisors, burnout, parental concerns, and salary (Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Some of these issues were more apparent in certain settings.

The Collegiate Setting and Career Planning. One setting that women aspired to work in but also perceived as being challenging to work in was collegiate athletics. In previous research, women athletic trainers reported several reasons why they chose to work in the collegiate setting, specifically, Division I setting or with men's college sports. Women athletic trainers enjoyed the autonomy to practice athletic training the way they want, advance in their career, develop their professional skills through continuing education, and the fast-paced, competitive Division I environment (Goodman et al., 2010; Pike et al., 2017). The Division I atmosphere was identified as rewarding, particularly working with student-athletes, building relationships with them and helping them return to full function after injury (Goodman et al., 2010). Other reasons for pursuing these roles included location, being close to family, and having a support system at and outside of work (Goodman et al., 2010; Pike et al., 2017).

The collegiate setting noted a larger decrease in women athletic trainers compared to men (Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov et al., 2013; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). The

Division I setting was considered exceptionally demanding due to time requirements, changes in work schedule, frequent travel, pressure from coaches, and worries about job security (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Pike Lacy et al., 2020a, 2020b). Additional factors noted were the bureaucracy of the Division I setting—being forced to prioritize things that seemed unimportant instead of focusing on their job (Goodman et al., 2010). While these challenges deterred women athletic trainers from taking leadership roles in the Division I setting, they appeared to be more willing to pursue these roles at other levels (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b).

Division II and Division III environments were viewed as settings in which there was a balance between athletics and academics, that were lower pressure, and that had a more balanced work culture compared to Division I (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c). Due to this perception, women athletic trainers were more willing to seek and take head athletic trainer positions in those settings (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c). While women athletic trainers still reported the job to be demanding, they also perceived a more balanced work culture which included more flexibility in their work schedules and a work environment that was more family friendly, compared to Division I settings (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c).

A limitation of this literature was that all but one study utilized online-based surveys or online interviews. These approaches limited researchers from asking follow up questions to gain more insight into participants' responses. Moreover, much of the current literature was focused on traditional settings. In order to gain a better understanding of the impact of different work settings on retention of women athletic

trainers, researchers should explore other settings such as clinics, orthopedic office settings, military, industrial/occupational (working with individuals in a physically demanding setting such as production, manufacturing, or distribution), and other emerging settings. This could provide insightful information for athletic trainers and may allow them to make informed career choices. Having information about other options may result in women changing settings instead of leaving the profession altogether.

Parenting and Career Planning

Parenting was reported as factor that impacted career advancement (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015), and research showed women athletic trainers made career planning decisions due to motherhood (Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015). Women athletic trainers shied away from the head athletic trainer role and working in Division I setting because they desired a more family-centered lifestyle and more time to focus on their families (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). While some research showed there was no difference in women or men's willingness to leave the athletic training profession due to work-family conflict (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015), other research suggested that women athletic trainers perceived long hours and conflicts to be of greater concern (Eason et al., 2018; Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov et al., 2010, 2013; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Naugle et al., 2013). Women athletic trainers who were mothers also appeared to leave the collegiate setting or profession more quickly than men due to the challenges of balancing parenting duties and working

as an athletic trainer (Eason et al., 2018; Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov et al., 2010, 2013; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Naugle et al., 2013).

Mothers and nonmothers reported that they did not think being a mother and working in athletic training was feasible; however, many women athletic trainers believed that pursuing career and family was possible, if given adequate support (Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015). It is worth noting that 69% of nonparent women athletic trainers surveyed by Kahanov et al. (2010) wanted to have children, and 62% believed children would not be a factor in their job setting choice. However, work environment has been demonstrated to impact the ability to balance work and family. Differences in work-family conflict were found among work settings (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015). For a new mother, the clinic setting was flexible and allowed her to pursue her career and role as a parent (Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012). Many women athletic trainers reported desiring work-life balance, to succeed in their career, and to get married and have children as a part of their goals (Mazerolle & Eason, 2015). These goals and how employers can support these women should be investigated further.

Success Strategies for Women Athletic Trainers

Several success strategies for career advancement have been identified by women athletic trainers. Women athletic trainers gained opportunities by being promoted within their current place of employment or through networking (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Pike et al., 2017). When administrators and supervisors were

able to observe women athletic trainers' abilities to provide medical care for patients, professionalism, and confidence, women earned job opportunities (Pike et al., 2017). Demonstration of professionalism, commitment, persistence, and personal drive helped women athletic trainers advance in their careers (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c; Pike et al., 2017).

Women athletic trainers reported establishing clear communication with coaches and players, and developing good relationships with other women administrators or colleagues in the department to be factors that helped them develop respect from coaches and succeed in collegiate athletic positions (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). Some women felt they had to change their behavior to succeed. Prior researchers reported women athletic trainers had to dress conservatively and avoid joking with male student-athletes to avoid being viewed as unprofessional (Burton et al., 2012). These actions suggested women athletic trainers felt they must fix themselves to advance in their careers.

Women athletic trainers identified personal attributes which helped them obtain and succeed in head athletic trainer positions. Leadership, communication skills, strong work ethic, prior work experience, organizational skills, and the ability to multitask were viewed as personal attributes that helped women athletic trainers distinguish themselves from others and allowed them succeed in head athletic trainer roles (Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c). Lastly, many women athletic trainers in a Division I head athletic trainer role reported they were able to manage the demands of the role because they did not have children (Mazerolle, Burton,

& Cotrufo, 2015). Future research should try to understand why women felt not having children allowed them to succeed, and if organizations were able to support women with children in these positions.

Personal Success Strategies for Balancing Work and Life

While many women in athletic training struggled to balance work and motherhood, other women athletic trainers found strategies to help them find balance. Family and spousal support were identified as imperative in helping women athletic trainers manage work and family obligations (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Smith, 2016). Many women athletic trainers leaned on their husbands for child-rearing duties, especially during the academic year (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). Support networks at work and home, including colleagues, supervisors, administrators, spouses, family, and nonwork friends have been identified as reasons women athletic trainers were able to remain in their place of work (Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011). When a supervisor encouraged their employees to build a life outside of the workplace, it was encouraging and aided in women athletic trainers' ability to achieve a work-life balance (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2013).

Women athletic trainers reported being organized and having a structured schedule at work and home, planning for work and home obligations, meal planning, and prioritizing obligations as critical to their success in head athletic trainer roles (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). Some women athletic trainers chose prioritizing family during time off

and not bringing work home with them as a means of maintaining work-life balance (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011). Setting boundaries, so work did not interfere with personal obligations, was noted as critical to achieving work-life balance (Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Smith, 2016). Women athletic trainers also noted taking time for exercise, sufficient sleep, and having a social network outside of the workplace to be elements that were helpful (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2013).

Motherhood and Work-Life Balance. Personal attitude and perspective on motherhood and full-time work impacted women athletic trainers' management and stress related to this topic. While only 41% of women athletic trainers with children reported being a working parent to be enjoyable, 87% did not wish to be full-time parents (Kahanov et al., 2010). Some women athletic trainers sought job settings that were more flexible and accommodating to expanding their family (Barrett et al., 2018; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012).

The perspective that full-time work and motherhood was a challenge, and the guilt that results, was normal regardless of the profession helped some women athletic trainers cope with the stress of managing work and family obligations (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). For some women athletic trainers, traditional gender role issues, such as believing mothers should spend more time at home and that men received better treatment in the workplace, were a factor in their experience as working mothers (Kahanov et al., 2010). However, some women refuted this attitude. In one study, a woman athletic trainer stated it was important not to make excuses and not to be expected

to be treated differently (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). This perspective supported an attitude in which the problem was the responsibility of women instead of recognizing the system's need for change.

Women Athletic Trainers as Role Models for Work-Life Balance. Women in head athletic training positions recognized the need to create an environment that supported their staff as well as supported other women athletic trainers in the field who wished to have families. Head athletic trainers strived for their own work-life balance and to model it for their staff (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). These women athletic trainers tried to create a culture that allowed athletic training staff to attain a work-life balance (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). The perspective and approach of these women athletic trainers supported the need for the work environment to change in order to support and retain women working in the field.

Mentorship

Mentors influenced athletic trainers' professional commitment both positively and negatively (Eason et al., 2014; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). In athletic training, identifying a mentor was recognized as a strategy for success. Mentors provided encouragement, guidance, and aided in professional development and career advancement (Dieringer, 2007; Eason et al., 2014; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Shingles, 2001; Singe & Walker, 2019). Strong mentors also helped navigate the politics and inner workings of collegiate athletics (Pitney, 2006) and have been reported as a way to reduce gender bias in the workplace (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). However, observing women athletic trainers who

struggled with personal and family time can negatively impact women athletic trainers' views on athletic training being a sustainable career (Eason et al., 2014) and has been noted as a barrier to obtaining head athletic trainer roles (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Research has also listed a dearth of mentors as an explanation for low numbers of women in head athletic trainer roles (Eason et al., 2014; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c). Similarly, women athletic trainers in the high school setting reported they did not have a mentor in which they could go to for support (Walker et al., 2019).

Women athletic trainers expressed the desire for more women role models and to see more women athletic trainers who successfully balanced family and athletic training careers (Eason et al., 2014). Similarly, women athletic trainers believed it was important to serve as a role model for others women as they advanced in their careers (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). A woman athletic trainer working in the Division I setting highlighted that she felt it was important for athletic training students to see her interact with her children at work, so the students could see it was possible to pursue career and have a family (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2013). In another study, a woman athletic trainer expressed that women leave the profession, and the ones who stay remain single without children, which was not the type of role model she desired (Eason et al., 2014).

Women athletic trainers credited formal mentoring opportunities (e.g., Women Leaders in College Sports programming) as empowering tools to successfully pursue and obtain leadership roles (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). A formal women in athletic training group may help women athletic trainers support each

other and promote more women to pursue head athletic trainer positions (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c). Implementing an intervention to provide mentorship, creating and evaluating formalized women in athletic training groups, or studying the impact of the available leadership programming may be opportunities for future research. Other potential areas of exploration included development and impact of a mentorship programs that allow women to see women athletic trainers successfully pursuing career and family, or a social media and/or networking platform which highlighted successful women athletic trainers. These platforms could provide visibility to successful women athletic trainers and opportunity for others to learn more about their ability to succeed.

Organizational Factors That Support Women in the Athletic Training Workplace

Benefits in the workplace such as paid time off, sick days, teleworking, and maternity leave impacted women athletic trainers' perception of work-family conflict (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Smith, 2016). Through a survey, researchers found that women and men athletic trainers who had a lower comfort level in using workplace benefits had a higher work-family conflict score and that there were differences in comfort levels among work setting (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015). Pitney et al. (2011) conducted a study using a survey and semi-structured phone interviews and reported support, understanding, and encouragement from administrators to take sick and personal days to be important to manage work-family conflict. The interview approach allowed them to explore this topic more in-depth. However, many questions surrounding this topic still exist. While workplace benefits may mitigate work-family conflict, the nature of the role of women athletic trainers in a traditional setting did

not typically allow those individuals to feel comfortable taking time off (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019). If workplace benefits were not utilized, then the ability for these benefits to alleviate stressors may not occur. The results of a recent study identified that approximately 50% of athletic trainers who used formal workplace benefits and 35% who used informal benefits felt supported to use them (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019). Yet, 42% of athletic trainers stated it was unrealistic to utilize formal workplace benefits, and 65% felt the same about informal benefits (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019). Researchers have not examined athletic trainers' use of workplace benefits to support personal and family needs; therefore, the impact on mitigating work-family conflict is unknown (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015). Researchers should study organizations and institutions that have or plan to implement policies to support this effort.

Work-life integration, which allowed children in the workplace or work to be done at home, has been identified as an organizational strategy to support women athletic trainers to work the profession and be a mother (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013). This suggestion was identified through online interviews. However, a study that used a survey reported that 31% of nonparent women athletic trainers had negative views of bringing children in the workplace, stating in open-ended questions that they were a distraction and that work may be neglected with children present (Kahanov et al., 2010). This outlook may be a result of workplace culture. Implementing a research approach that allowed for dialogue may provide better understanding of these perspectives. In another study, it was stated that women athletic trainers should be paid sufficiently to afford in-home child care implying that salary was

sufficient for this need (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Future research should investigate the impact salary has on childcare decisions for athletic trainers who are mothers.

Administrative support was needed for organizational strategies to be successful. Women athletic trainers identified a positive work culture with supportive colleagues and supervisors to be important (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). Women athletic trainers reported that a workplace that allowed for flexibility and supported work-family balance allowed them to stay in their position (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013). Job sharing, teamwork, and creative scheduling were suggested solutions to accommodating women athletic trainers with family obligations (Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013; Smith, 2016). Additionally, women athletic trainers reported having greater balance in the summer (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b). Researchers should explore if having a contract which does not require summer work obligations or having fewer work hours in the summer, or other times of year, aids in balancing long in-season hours and women athletic trainers' perception of work-life balance. Women athletic trainers also reported that having a voice in practice schedules would be helpful in achieving work-life balance (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011). In a recent study, researchers reported medical models (athletic trainers reported to doctor in university health center) and academic models (athletic trainers reported to academic dean) of collegiate athletic training settings to be beneficial for role congruency (Eason, Mazerolle, & Goodman, 2017). The medical model was better for work-life balance but

resulted in role conflict with coaches and athletic administrators while the academic model resulted in role strain and challenges with work-life balance (Eason, Mazerolle, & Goodman, 2017). Athletic trainers employed in the athletics model (athletic trainers managed by the athletic director) were less satisfied with their pay and did not feel they worked in a family-friendly model (Mazerolle, Eason, & Goodman, 2017). Researchers should continue to explore workplaces that employ strategies to support work-life balance to help understand how it can be achieved. Understanding what aspects of each model or which policies help provide support for work-life balance could provide guidance for other institutions to adapt.

Theoretical Framework

Gender role theory and social role theory provided explanations for gender stereotypic behavior assumptions and gendered organizational practices. Eagly and Wood (2012) used gender role theory as a foundation to develop social role theory, which provides a more in-depth explanation for these phenomena. Social role theory took into account psychological, social, and biological concepts to provide a more complete explanation for the differences and similarities in social behavior between sexes (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly, Wood, & Dieken, 2000). In the following sections, I discuss gender role theory then social role theory.

Gender Role Theory

Through observations of female and male behaviors, people deduced that men and women have certain attributes and dispositions (Eagly & Wood, 2012). The shared beliefs about these attributes and role expectations are considered gender stereotypes

(Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly, Wood, & Dieken, 2000). Gender roles were constructed from the beliefs people held, were culturally responsive, and appeared to be inherent to the individuals (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Early researchers who looked at occupational roles within an American family described men's behavior as "instrumental" (e.g., task-oriented, breadwinner, decision-maker) and women's as expressive (e.g., social and emotional support, communal) (Parson & Bales, 1955). Men were viewed as agentic, or masterful, assertive, competitive, and dominant while women were viewed as friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These roles were viewed as stereotypical of men and women in the United States. Stereotypes can shape behavior by producing the expected behaviors individuals anticipate (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978). These psychological and social concepts, which strived to explain sex differences in behavior, provided the foundations for social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Social Role Theory

The work of Parson and Bales (1955) represented the culture of the 1950s and neglected to recognize that gender roles can change based upon expectations, the economy, social structures, organizational culture, and other factors (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Social role theory provided a unique framework that considered how social, psychological, and biological factors influenced sex differences and similarities in social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Men and women were prepared for typical personal (family) and employment roles through socialization, biological (hormonal fluctuations),

and psychological processes such as internalization of gender roles as self-standards and perceiving others' expectations for their behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Social factors played an important role in the division of labor (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In societies with less gender equality in division of labor, men preferred women with homemaker and child-rearing skills while women preferred men who could be a good provider (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, individuals raised with atypical social norms may not internalize expected behaviors and were less likely to exhibit expected gender attributes (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Typically, behavior which conformed to gender roles was met with approval while contrasting behavior may result in negative consequences and disapproval from others (Eagly & Wood, 2012). For example, women who exhibited an assertive, direct leadership style were viewed more negatively than men with the same leadership style (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Because of negative consequences, an individual was unlikely "to deviate from gender roles unless the benefits outweigh the costs" (Eagly & Wood, 2012). For women, opportunities to advance their career, increase their salary, and take on leadership roles may outweigh the costs of deviating from gender stereotypic roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

In an organization, stereotypic men's roles within the home were similar to that of leadership roles at in the workplace while women's roles were contrasting (Eagly & Wood, 2012). This divergence from stereotypical gender roles had negative consequences for women in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This incongruity between gender stereotypes for a woman and the perceived requirements of leadership roles resulted in prejudice toward women as leaders or potential leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Despite sweeping changes in women's roles in recent decades (Eagly & Wood, 2012), men continued to dominate leadership positions (Helfat et al., 2006). Similarly, even in dual income families, women continued to carry the majority of childcare and household responsibilities (Bianchi et al., 2006; Pew Research Center, 2013). In spite of this, women were taking on more leadership positions and, as this shift persists, a convergence of male and female attributes is expected (Eagly & Wood, 2012). This convergence has already been observed in women's desire for challenge, leadership, prestige, and power in their occupational roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

These theories framed the issues surrounding women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. With this foundation in mind, this leaves the questions of how women athletic trainers describe their experiences in the workplace? How do their personal and professional needs and desires impact their career planning, and what do they need to remain in the profession? What can be done from an organizational perspective? Are there strategies that can help support women athletic trainers? To explore these questions in-depth and gain new insights, I used a critical feminist approach which can provide innovative ideas and knowledge (Harding, 1989). In the next chapter, I discuss critical feminist theory and how it informs the participatory approach I used for this project.

Chapter Three

This dissertation project used a participatory inquiry approach to explore women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. The study was anchored in dialogue and informed by participatory methodologies. While originally designed as a fully participatory action research study, the 2020 outbreak of coronavirus posed challenges which made that difficult to achieve. Therefore, the study that was conducted was a slight adaptation of my original plan.

Athletic training researchers recognized the benefits and need for conducting more qualitative research in the field (Pitney & Parker, 2001). While more qualitative work has emerged, much of the previously published athletic training research used a top-down, researcher-centered approach to conducting research. Researchers included athletic trainers in the review of surveys or interview guides prior to conducting a study (Eason et al., 2014; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008) or piloted their work with athletic trainers prior to implementing their studies (Eason et al., 2014, Mazerolle & Eason, 2015; Pike et al., 2017). However, athletic training studies which have rooted their research in dialogic or participatory methodologies are absent in the literature.

In health care professions including athletic training, there is a push for practicing evidence-based medicine (Institute of Medicine, 2003; Welch et al., 2014). According to the Institute of Medicine (2003), to employ evidence-based medicine principles,

throughout their clinical practice, the practitioner should engage appropriate research, clinical expertise, and patient values in addition to learning activities. Participatory methodologies can inform evidence-based practices in uniquely insightful and nuanced ways that other methodologies do not allow. A participatory approach engaged community-based researchers throughout the entirety of the research process (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). In line with this methodology, a research approach that incorporated athletic trainers throughout the process was well-suited to support athletic trainers' engagement in evidence-based medicine by conducting research, creating knowledge, and implementing changes in their clinical practice and workplace. In order to fully appreciate the potential for participatory methodologies in athletic training, one must first grasp its underlying theoretical and epistemological grounding. Therefore, in the following section, I discuss critical feminist theory which informed the chosen methodology for this project.

Critical Feminist Theory

For this dissertation, I used a critical feminist theory framework to explore workplace experiences of women athletic trainers. Marx (1975) defined critical theory as “the self-clarification (critical philosophy) of the struggles and wishes of the age” (p. 209). A shift in feminist thinking involved a movement focused on gender equality and transforming the systems to disrupt the male-dominated culture within organizations (hooks, 2000). To combat the current structures, women must not only be a part of science but apply their unique contribution to the creation of knowledge (Harding, 1989).

A critical feminist approach utilized a critical consciousness of gender roles (hooks, 2000) and sought to understand how current structures restrained women while seeking liberation from these structures and the existing power dynamics (Butler, 1990).

It was not enough for women to join science and conduct science as usual (Harding, 1989). While it was important for women to have a seat at the table, to have an impact, they must contribute with a fresh perspective. Women should contribute to science with their unique standpoints and ideas, not participate as neutral, impartial observers (Harding, 1989; Hartsock, 1989). Challenging the previously male-dominant research culture and engaging in critical feminist research can provide innovative contributions to science (Harding, 1989). Feminist struggles to enter and be a part of the science and health fields were recognized as fundamental to gaining knowledge (Harding, 1989). Through these struggles, feminist researchers could find community to challenge and change the traditional mindset about conducting research, which pushed researchers to expand beyond their current methods and provide new insights (Hartsock, 1998). By examining the social relations, taking a critical look at research, and working both with and against the existing research, feminist researchers can recognize its strengths and weaknesses (Harding, 1989; Hartsock, 1998). By grounding research in a feminist standpoint, it can challenge the current structures and ensue change (Hartsock, 1983).

One way feminist researchers can contribute to science is by generating qualitative research, which can provide a better understanding of and explanation to quantitative results (Harding, 1989). Prior athletic training research used a liberal feminist lens, but it limited understanding of the unequal societal relationships between

women and men (Burton et al., 2012; Kim, 2016). Mazerolle, Borland, and Burton (2012) utilized feminist standpoint theory (a critical feminist approach) to examine socialization of female athletic trainers, allowing for the recognition of women athletic trainers' unique perspective in a historically male-dominated field. To impart change in science, knowledge creation which was informed by the political tussle, new ways of thinking, and systematic analysis was needed (Hartsock, 1998). Postmodern thought abandoned scientific objectivity, impartial research, and lack of account for heterogeneity of people (Hartsock, 1989; Lather, 1991).

Feminist theory should not utilize research approaches that have been frequently utilized in scientific research (e.g., impartial research, or approaches and analyses that describe the researched as powerless or without influence) as these approaches accepted the status quo of a patriarchal, colonial subjugation of those being researched (Bhavnani, 1994). Research approaches which blindly accepted the neutrality of the researcher failed to allow space for emancipatory capabilities of subjective approaches (Hartsock, 1989). Critical feminist researchers remain committed to decolonizing knowledge (i.e., challenging the cultural and institutional influences of the colonialist era by democratizing and restructuring culture) and generating less oppressive approaches to knowledge production (Fine, 2018a; Lather, 1991). To challenge the current cultural and organizational structures and avoid the inequitable power relations inherent to certain research approaches, an environment must be created to allow for this change (Griffiths et al., 2013; Hartsock, 1989). Critical feminist researchers must be conscious of the structures that create an oppressive environment and exploit research participants

(Hartsock, 1998). Empirical research with hierarchies of power was believed to reproduce oppressive structures and engaging with community helped to decolonize the research process (Olesen, 2018). While a public sphere that had no social hierarchies was difficult to achieve, a group of people gathered to address a common interest could help attain equity (Fraser, 1990; Habermas, 1984).

Working together can decrease disconnectedness, encourage mutuality among people (hooks, 1984), and contribute to research with socially positive outcomes through purpose, projects, and modes of research (Harding, 1989). However, university-based researchers working with and within a community of people required a critical and reflective approach. Typically, university-based researchers conducted work from a privileged stage. We must recognize our positions, our biases, the relationships we have with the communities in which we work and study, and consider how choice of methodology impacts social and political structures (Bhavnani, 1994; Fine, 1994; Lather, 1986, 1991; Olesen, 2018). We hold an ethical commitment to be reflexive, remaining conscious of how Others are viewed and created, and the interactions we have with community members (Fine, 1994; Olesen, 2018). Researchers must respect participants, recognize ways to create more equitable and inclusive environments, and communicate in ways that support these goals (Harding, 1989).

Outside researchers can be limited in their opportunities to understand the experiences of and gain in-depth insight into people, communities (Hartsock, 1998), and the implications of their work on the outside world (Harding, 1989). To address these issues, close attention must be paid to methodology (Hartsock, 1998). Engaging with

community-members can help researchers develop relevant research questions, ensure data were interpreted appropriately, and was aligned with the experiences and perspectives of participants (Harding, 1989). By working with individuals both inside and outside of the sciences, we can support open dialogue with community-based researchers, foster a democratic research process (Lather, 1991), and generate new insights and potential change in the choices made by researchers (Harding, 1989).

A democratic approach must not be lost when writing and translating knowledge. Feminist researchers should be aware of the responsibility they have when they speak or communicate, and understand the social implications of how and what is communicated (Alcoff, 1995; Lather, 1991). A more equitable approach can be achieved by engaging with community members throughout the research process, instead of writing about them from a position of privilege and power (Alcoff, 1995; Fine, 1994; Lather, 1991). Feminist researchers wrestled with how to write without placing themselves at the center of an issue (Hartsock, 1998) as speaking for others was viewed as arrogant and unethical (Alcoff, 1995). By including community-members as a part of interpretation and writing efforts, university-based researchers were able to decenter themselves and check the dominance of their voices in knowledge products (Lather, 1991). Individuals speak their meaning and truth, so being careful about speaking for others was imperative (Alcoff, 1995). Working with individuals in a community and engaging in dialogue provided opportunity to develop a unified message (Lather, 1991) as when community members were able to express their voices, it allowed for discussion, more nuanced understanding of issues, and refined interpretation of data in a research project (Fine, 1994).

A critical feminist approach recognized that experiences of marginalization influences a person's way of knowing and viewpoints (Hartsock, 1989). These experiences allowed individuals to provide unique perspectives which may help inform research (Harding, 1989). At the same time, it was important to acknowledge that all women do not necessarily share the same struggles of people of color, different sexual orientations, or societal classes (Hartsock, 1989). While a small number of women may not speak for all women, the unique experiences and viewpoints of community insiders were essential to generating new knowledge and informed outcomes (Harding, 1989). Working with community members can help challenge ideas, push researchers to think differently, potentially generate innovative ideas, and shape project outcomes (Harding, 1989; Hartsock, 1998). In line with feminist researchers, for this project, research was viewed as praxis and aimed to take the ideas of participants and create actionable outcomes (Lather, 1986). To remain aligned with this critical feminist framework, I selected a methodological approach that would honor the expertise of women athletic trainers, their experiences, and unique insights into their lives and livelihoods. In the next section, I discuss participatory methodologies, the benefits, and the potential for applying these research methods in athletic training.

Participatory Methodologies

Community-based participatory research (CBPR), participatory action research (PAR), and other participatory methodologies have been shaped by a Global North tradition influenced by Kurt Lewin, John Gaventa, Budd Hall, and others, and a Global South “emancipatory tradition” influenced by Paulo Freire (Wallerstein et al., 2018),

Orlando Fals-Borda, Mohammed Anisur Rahman, and many others. Lewin (1946) took a practical approach to organizational improvement through research that led to social action. Freire (2018) advocated for equity in power through uncovering and honoring the knowledges and experiences of those who had been pushed to the margins of society, which then, according to Freire, would lead to action and liberation. Participatory methodologies were also influenced by feminist and critical race theorists who took a critical approach to research and issues of power and knowledge production (Torre, 2009; Wallerstein et al., 2018). These methodologies, overall, challenged the top-down hierarchy of traditional research structures and recognized that communities can mobilize to take action based in their own experiential expertise (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Torre, 2009). Using a flat, equitable approach to research rather than a project with a university-based researcher informing and leading research allowed community-based and university-based researchers to contribute equally to each phase of a research project (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). It also allowed for unique insights, in-depth understanding, and culturally appropriate methods and outcomes (Jull et al., 2018; Torre, 2009).

University-based researchers engaging participatory methodologies must remain aware of the history of abuse of people and communities, particularly people and communities of color, indigenous people and communities, and those who were diagnosed with disabilities, due to lack of meaningful and equitable participation in research processes (Wallerstein et al., 2018). Feminist and participatory researchers

grappling with this concern by exploring the concept of participation from a methodological perspective, arguing that engaging with community members must be a primary focus of participatory work rather than an afterthought or token (Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Call-Cummings, 2017; Call-Cummings & Dennis, 2019; Dennis, 2014; Jull et al., 2017; Nast, 1994; Visweswaran, 1997; Wallerstein et al., 2018). To maintain a commitment to equitable and democratic participation, participatory methodologies, especially approaches that claimed a critical nature, must foster an environment with a genuinely cooperative and communal approach to research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fine, 2018a; Fine & Torre, 2006; Freire, 2018; Habermas, 1984; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This genuine collaboration was necessary because community-based researchers have unique insider knowledge that can inform research questions and the research process in ways a top-down approach could not. This insider knowledge can contribute to more meaningful action steps for the communities closest to the phenomenon of interest (Torre, 2009).

In the past, researchers championed our own interests from our ivory towers (Harding, 1987). Participatory methodologies, including CBPR and PAR, maintained a commitment to eliminating hierarchies in research and de-centering expertise (Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fine, 1994; Habermas, 1984; Jull et al., 2017; Torre, 2009). The epistemological commitments (i.e., beliefs and perspectives held related to knowing and knowledge production; Hofer & Pintrich, 2001) of participatory researchers honored all forms of knowledge by recognizing the expertise of community members (Fletcher, 2002; Horowitz et al., 2009; Jull et al., 2017; Torre, 2009).

Participatory researchers aimed to establish a more appreciative and equitable approach to research when compared to traditional research processes (Call-Cummings, 2017; Dennis, 2014; Horowitz et al., 2009; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Visweswaran, 1997). A more equitable approach was supported by open exchange of ideas through dialogue (Given, 2008). Dialogue was considered an ethical data collection method and means of knowledge construction (Given, 2008), and vital to the process of learning, knowledge creation, and theorizing about shared experiences (Freire, 2018). However, for dialogue to support a participatory and open exchange of thought, there must be uncoerced, equitable conversations. The epistemological commitments of participatory methodologies aligned with dialogical practice as an approach to knowledge production (Fine, 1994; Freire, 2018; hooks, 1994; Lather, 1986). Participatory approaches were unique in their commitment to de-centered research and provided an opportunity to flip research hierarchies by inviting people outside of the ivory tower to join in the knowledge production process with university-based researchers (Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Wallerstein, 2006; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010).

Participatory methodologies, in general, are considered an epistemological approach or stance to research. They are not a method which are considered the procedures employed to collect and analyze data (Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, & Mildenerger, 2008; Horowitz et al., 2009; Jull et al., 2017; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). Influenced by their epistemological commitments, researchers are guided by their principles and beliefs about knowledge production to

select and use methods in research projects (Jull et al., 2017). Participatory methodologies allow for a flexible approach and use of numerous research methods and theoretical bases (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Jull et al., 2017; Minkler, 2005) that can adapt to the situation rather than using a predetermined method (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Participatory researchers employ an iterative reflective process and disseminate findings to the community throughout the research process (Lencucha et al., 2010), which provides opportunity to reflect and adjust methods throughout a research project.

Regardless of method used to address an issue, participatory methodologies engaged community members in all aspects of the research process: design, data collection, analysis, dissemination of knowledge, and taking actionable steps (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). Participatory methodologies are not researcher-led community-outreach research projects (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). Equitable collaboration among community members and researchers are maintained from project design to information dissemination, action (Cacari-Stone et al., 2014; Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Israel et al., 1998, 2001; Jull et al., 2017), and decision-making (Faridi et al., 2007; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Through a collaborative, democratized approach, participatory methodologies have challenged assumptions about how knowledge is created, what is considered knowledge, and how to disseminate knowledge (Jull et al., 2017).

University-based researchers who embrace a more equitable approach must be conscious and aware of their actions and the dynamics among university-based and community-based researchers throughout the research process. For example, traditional

ethical research guidelines may not align with community members ethical and cultural values (Jull et al., 2017, 2018). Therefore, mutually agreed upon ways and guidelines should be established (Jull et al., 2017). By working closely with community members, through open communication, researchers can make conscious efforts to respect the values of the community.

Benefits of Participatory Methodologies

University-based researchers must get out of our ivory towers and engage with the communities we work with to better understand the people and their needs (Freire, 2018). This approach provides opportunity for greater insight to the issues that a community faces. Community-based researchers may contribute new ways of thinking that only those who live within and have an intimate understanding of a community can provide. The insider status of community members is invaluable to understanding issues and solutions to those issues. Participatory methodologies can complement the traditional, researcher-led work that exists, by providing in-depth insight, improved outcomes, and knowledge which can be applied in health care fields (Horowitz et al., 2009; Jull et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Trickett et al., 2011; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010).

By merging academic and experiential knowledge, revolution and growth in the field can be achieved (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Jull et al., 2017). Engaging in participatory inquiry provided opportunity to uncover the truths that were always there but could not be revealed by traditional methods (Harding, 1989). University-based researchers did not always understand or know how to implement effective approaches to engagement (Ramsden et al., 2017). A benefit of a participatory approach was that when

a multicultural group of peers within a society worked collaboratively, they have been able to address the policies that affected them (Fraser, 1990). According to the Institute of Medicine (2003), clinicians should engage in research as a part of practicing evidence-based medicine which allows them to inform and improve their practice. Participatory research provides an opportunity for clinicians to engage in research and may provide the insight needed to implement positive changes in a community.

“Authentic thinking,” or ideas that consider real-world application, do not occur in isolation but by engaging in dialogue with members of the community (Freire, 2018, p. 77). By holding conversations and learning to trust community members’ expertise, researchers can work with these groups to better inform questions and issues to produce novel ideas (Freire, 2018). This genuine engagement and trust allows researchers to better understand the communities and issues of importance (Salsberg et al., 2015). It may also help identify solutions and interventions that are readily disseminated and possibly easily implemented into the field (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Faridi et al., 2007; Horowitz et al., 2009).

Bridging the Research-Practice Gap. It can take up to 17 years for 14% of research studies to be implemented into clinical practice (Balas & Boren, 2000; Green, 2008), which means the majority of research fails to be translated into practice (Jull et al., 2017). Outcomes resulting from a researcher-centered approach, which do not involve the end users of said research, may not incorporate the needs or context to translate research into practice (Jull et al., 2017; Ramsden et al., 2017). In order to bridge this inability to translate research into practice (the research-practice gap), researchers must consider that

providing health care services are social in nature. Therefore, engaging in research processes that recognized and explored the social impacts and influences of research, and its subsequent action was crucial (Francisco & Butterfoss, 2007; Pitney & Parker, 2001). The collaborative approach of participatory methodologies allowed for community-based change, relevant questions, and exploration of the individual, sociocultural, and organizational factors that impacted community members' everyday lives (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Israel et al., 1998; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Salsberg et al., 2015).

An exchange of knowledge between researchers and community was recognized as a tactic for closing the research-practice gap (Green, 2008; Jull et al., 2017). A participatory approach helped bridge the research-practice gap by addressing social and cultural issues, and creating solutions that can be implemented in health care fields (The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World, 2006; Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Green, 2001; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Trickett et al., 2011). Drawing upon the knowledge and input of community members can help develop socially and culturally valid solutions, which results in more relevant research and quicker translation of findings into practice (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Faridi et al., 2007; Francisco & Butterfoss, 2007; Freire, 2018; Green, 2008; Jull et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015). Moreover, participatory methodologies aimed to utilize knowledge generated to take action, which can help develop viable, actionable solutions to research questions (Jull et al., 2017).

Employing participatory methodologies resulted in a higher likelihood of behavior and practices changes (Flicker, 2008; Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, & Mildemberger,

2008; Flicker, Savan, McGrath, et al., 2008; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010).

There was also the potential for increased future collaborations (Jull et al., 2017). By including community members in the research process and benefiting from a new perspective and approach, there was potential to impact future research and changes in communities. Participatory methodologies encouraged a more equitable approach that was in tune with community needs. Channeling this insider knowledge can help make progress in areas of need.

Potential for Participatory Research in Athletic Training

Participatory research can provide an in-depth exploration and improved understanding of factors that impact athletic training research. It has the potential to help bridge the research-practice gap and support practice of evidence-based medicine. Particularly, for this dissertation, drawing upon participatory methodologies can address issues for the community of women athletic trainers. While at first mention of the word “community,” one might not recognize women athletic trainers to fit this notion; however, they are in fact, a community. Women athletic trainers are a community within the health care industry and athletic training profession with shared common experiences and struggles that have pushed them to the margins somewhat. Oftentimes, this community of women were not treated as having valuable knowledge or insights. A collaborative opportunity to create and disseminate knowledge may empower women athletic trainers to recognize the value they bring to the table and allow them to understand avenues in which they can continue to create knowledge, foster improvements in their practice settings, and contribute to the athletic training community at large.

My Project

For this dissertation, I utilized a participatory inquiry approach, anchored in dialogue and guided by participatory methodological principles. This project aimed to explore the experiences of women athletic trainers in the workplace through a CoP made up of women athletic trainers. Modeling after the principles of participatory research, members of the CoP were an integral part of the research project acting as co-researchers with me as we explored, examined, and made sense of our own experiences as well as the experiences of others in the field.

The CoP worked together to explore the institutions, social constructs, relationships, and ideologies that created inequity and lack of support for women athletic trainers in the workplace (Fine, 2018b). As a part of this project, in line with participatory and feminist research, another goal of the project was to take action steps to support women in the field (Freire, 2018; Torre, 2009). In the next section, I share details about the CoP including demographic information and positionality statements from co-researchers. I then discuss my positionality in an attempt to clarify my unique ability to carry out this study as well as any potential biases that may affect the study. Following that, I discuss data collection methods and data analysis. Lastly, I discuss validity techniques, credibility, and ethical considerations.

Community of Practice

Modeling after feminist researchers (Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Jull et al., 2017; Nast, 1994), this was my opportunity to engage with the insider access of CoP members and their unique perspectives to explore an area of need, to create and share knowledge.

These women athletic trainers were the experts on their lives and their livelihoods. No one could answer the questions better than the people who lived it on a daily basis. This project allowed me to honor the knowledge of these women.

The first step of the project was to form a CoP. To recruit members of the CoP, I reached out to women athletic trainers I knew, who lived and worked in the Northern Virginia and Washington, DC area, and had experience working in various clinical settings to try to gain a representation of the field. I reached out via email, text, and phone calls. The original CoP consisted of five members including myself who identified as women, and all members except myself were working full-time as certified athletic trainers. The women athletic trainers in the CoP worked in various settings including college (Division I and III), high school (high income and socioeconomically diverse), physical therapy and orthopedic clinics, and community outreach. All CoP members held a master's degree, and myself and one other member had education beyond a master's degree. Given virtual communication was more common because of the coronavirus pandemic and my decision to move to a virtual environment, I expanded the CoP to recruit members outside of the Washington, DC metro area. To do this, I asked each member of the CoP to invite another friend or colleague to join. The new members still fit the initial criteria. After this expansion, the CoP consisted of eight members including myself.

The establishment of the original CoP involved two initial meetings. A first, in-person meeting was conducted to give CoP members who did not know one another an opportunity to meet, learn about one another, and have preliminary discussions about the

project. A community consent form was developed in which CoP members discussed and developed a consensus document stating what made them feel comfortable and would establish a safe environment to work together on this project (Brear, 2018; Jamshidi et al., 2014). To build trust, the CoP participated in a story circle exercise (Hebert et al., 2020). Each community member voluntarily shared their story including their background, information about who they were personally and professionally, and why they chose to participate in this project. We identified themes or commented on interesting aspects of each member's story and used these as points of discussion and conducted informal analysis after the members finished their stories. The story circle and subsequent analysis informed the areas of interest for the CoP. One area that emerged was the topic of women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. The second meeting was virtual, via Zoom, and further refined the area of focus. We discussed examining women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace as the formal focus for our research. CoP members were welcoming and excited about the idea, recognizing it as an important topic.

During this study, I conducted collaborative research with seven women athletic trainers who were currently practicing clinically. I participated in this study as an equal member of the CoP, contributing to the conversation, sharing anecdotes, and collecting data just as the other CoP members did. Each of us had multiple years of experience practicing in a variety of clinical settings, had interest in the topic, and could make the commitment to the project. I excluded potential participants who were no longer practicing clinically but was open to those who may have lost their job due to the

coronavirus pandemic. All CoP members were in the ages of upper 20s and 30s, which is the age group that many women stop practicing clinically or leave the profession altogether. Working with a small group allowed for dialogue and opportunity for each member to contribute to the conversation. Prior to beginning my study, I obtained institutional review board approval from George Mason University and obtained electronically signed consents from members of the CoP.

Participant Information. This study tapped into the unique perspectives of seven women athletic trainers who worked in the field. The average age of participants was 34 years of age and had been certified for an average of 8.5 years at the start of the study. CoP members had experience working in clinic, clinic/outreach, high school, college, professional sports, and military settings. More demographic information about participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1*Demographic Information About Members of the Community of Practice*

Name	Age	Marital status	Number and age of children	Race/ ethnicity	Current employment setting	Job title	Number of years in current setting	Number of hours worked per week (non-COVID)	Number of years certified	Professional degree	Highest level of education	Length of contract (months)
Maggie	30	Committed Relationship	0	White	NCAA Division I	Assistant Athletic Trainer	2.5	60-70	8	Bachelor's	Doctorate (DAT)	12
Laura	37	Domestic Partnered	0	Asian American	Secondary School	Head Athletic Trainer, Strength Coach	2.5	40-50	6	Master's	Master's	11
Katelyn	35	Committed Relationship	0	White	Secondary School	Head Athletic Trainer	9.5	40-60	11	Master's	Master's	11
Yu-Wei	39	Separating	0	Asian (Taiwanese)	Secondary School	Head Athletic Trainer	2.5	40	6.5	Master's	Master's	12
Tina	34	Married	1, 6 years old	African American	Secondary School	Director of Sports Medicine	10	50+	12	Bachelor's	Master's	12
Grace	28	Single	0	White	Hospital/ Clinic	Certified Athletic Trainer	2.5	40	5.5	Master's	Master's	12
Dani	37	Committed Relationship	0	White	Military Athletics	Athletic Trainer – All Marine Wrestling Team	2.5	50-55	10.5	Master's	Master's	12

I asked each participant to provide a positionality statement in their own words. Below are statements from each participant.

Dani. I am a 37-year-old working as an athletic trainer in the Military Sports setting. I attended an entry-level Master's Program in Athletic Training and obtained my certification in 2010. I began my career working as the head athletic trainer at a Military Academy for Competitive Club Sports. I spent 5 years at the Academy working mainly with rugby and boxing. After my time at the academy, I moved onto working with USA Boxing and the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee. Following my time there, I started working as an athletic trainer in the Military Elite Amateur Sports setting. For the majority of my career, I have been passionate about continuing to grow as a health care provider to bring a wide skill set to the athletes that I have chosen and been chosen to work with. As a female athletic trainer, I have worked extremely hard to have a career that I am proud of. One of my biggest wishes for this profession is to have a support system of female athletic trainers with similar experiences, as well as, provide an outlet for future female athletic trainers.

Grace. My name is Grace, I identify as a straight white female. I am 28 years old and single. I grew up in northern VA in Fairfax County. I have three siblings, two brothers and a sister, and I am in the middle of the bunch. I have middle child syndrome. I grew up playing multiple sports but eventually focused on cheerleading. This sport took a huge toll on my body which resulted in several major injuries that resulted in five ankle surgeries. This caused me to be a frequent flyer in the athletic training room at my high school, my orthopedic surgeon, and physical therapy. My parents and coaches were strict

and pushed me to work hard, earn money for what I wanted, and to become the best version of myself. I had exposure working in a few settings in the sports medicine world. I was torn between physical therapy and athletic training. Based off that I felt that getting athletes one step further, such as a position I had been in as an athlete, was important to me as an individual. Thus, my decision was made for me. I feel that was my calling to become an athletic trainer. I have had challenges in my athletic training roles but now have found a job that I love in which my boss and the physicians I work with are supportive and value the skills I bring to the table. I had a life altering event being diagnosed with thyroid cancer which resulted in removal of my thyroid. I was unable to pick up work on the side during my 8-month recovery, and it made me realize that I cannot work my life away. There is more to life then work and finding that balance can be difficult at times. This revelation allowed me to find a work-life balance that I think is hard for many athletic trainers to achieve.

Katelyn. My name is Katelyn, and I am a 36-year-old Head Athletic Trainer in the High School setting, assisting over 1000 student-athletes. I identify as a straight Caucasian female and am currently in a relationship; however, I have never been married nor do I have children. I have been a Certified Athletic Trainer since 2010 where I was the first person in my family to obtain a master's degree. After a year internship in the NCAA Division I collegiate setting, I decided to move back to Northern Virginia to pursue the High School setting in hopes of a more "normal" schedule. I have now been working in the county that I went to high school in for 10 years, 4.5 as an Assistant Athletic Trainer and Special Education Teacher, and 5.5 as a Head Athletic Trainer. I am

very lucky to still be connected to many of my family and friends that live in the area, and they serve as a constant support in my profession. I am also a founding member of Women Empower which is an organization to support women to be their best selves through connection, mentorship, and philanthropy. I am a huge supporter on women empowerment, and as a young woman who once struggled in her own skin, I feel that it is a very important to make my female student-athletes to know their worth and endless capabilities.

Laura. My name is Laura, and I identify as a cis gender female, gay, Asian American. I am the Head Athletic Trainer and Strength coach at a private school in NYC. I have my MSAT and my CSCS certification, and have been practicing athletic training for about 6 years. I grew up in a two parent, lower economic class household in Queens, New York. I am the first one in my immediate family to have a college degree. My parents always pushed me to go to college, and my father was extremely proud of me when I obtained my master's degree.

Maggie. I am a 30-year-old working as an assistant athletic trainer in the NCAA division I collegiate setting. I attended an undergraduate program where I studied athletic training, and obtained my certification in 2013. I worked for a year at a high school before working as a graduate assistant in the high school setting while obtaining my master's in athletic training. I then moved to the clinical setting, working for a year in a traditional physical therapy clinic, then moving to a physical therapy and sports performance center. While at the sports performance center, I started my doctorate in an online program. I worked through doing research on the incidence of mental health

disorder in high school and collegiate athletes. During this time, I moved into the NCAA division I setting, where I work with three teams. I am a white, cisgender female in a long term committed relationship, and my parents have been married for 38 years. All of these things put me in a place of privilege with my viewpoints and ability to communicate said viewpoints. I was raised in a home where I was encouraged to read about and discuss things that I saw, and questions were always encouraged. I was pushed to use my voice to use my knowledge and my voice to both stand my own ground and help uplift others that may not have the same things that I did or do.

Tina. I am a 34-year-old African American secondary school athletic trainer. I am married to my high school sweetheart, and we have a 6-year-old daughter. I have been at my current school for 10 years. I was the first athletic trainer ever at my school, because the head football coach refused to sign his contract without having an athletic trainer. I have built the sports medicine department from the ground up. Over the past 10 years, I have been promoted from Athletic Trainer to Head Athletic Trainer and now to the Director of Sports Medicine. I am very fortunate to work for a school system who understands the importance/role that an athletic trainer can play.

Yu-Wei. I am a queer Asian immigrant who went to PT school (4-year bachelor's) in Taiwan and then finished up athletic training graduate school in New York City. I played basketball in high school and college and that really solidified my love for athletics, even though it's not always a loving environment for girls/women. As a person that crosses a few intersections, I definitely have first hand experiences that have proven to be valuable in my professional career. I understand the kind of mental fortitude

necessary to be successful in athletics and the kind of support system necessary to help create that environment. What it really comes down to is, as a queer Asian immigrant female athlete/AT, I want to provide my athletes an experience that is free of all the negative judgements/preconceived notions/prejudices that I have personally witnessed or gone through. The goal is always to foster an environment that lets my athletes know that no matter what, their best interest, as a whole person, is my best interest. My hope is that the athletes that have gone through my office will have a very positive reaction whenever they henceforth hear the words “athletic trainers.”

My Positionality

I remained consciously aware of my own subjectivity throughout the research process (Peshkin, 1988). In this section, I discuss my positionality as well as my insider-outsider status within the athletic training community. As a critical feminist researcher, it is imperative that I was reflexive and thoughtful about my positionality. With this in mind, I considered the ways in which who I am and how I am positioned in the world relative to others, structures, and systems, constrain and influence my actions, interpretations, and understandings.

I identify as a 36-year-old woman who is Latinx and raced white. I am a wife and a mother. I have two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree, and am nearing the completion of my doctoral studies. Currently, I am primarily a researcher and project manager who works with researchers and doctors at some of our nation's most prominent educational and medical institutions. I am an athletic trainer who practiced clinically full-time for 7 years and part-time for the past 4 years with declining involvement in clinical

practice. I worked in variety of clinical settings but mostly Division III collegiate athletics and community outreach. I recognized my recent focus may differentiate me from the other members of the CoP. While my current work status removes me from the everyday reality of working in a clinical setting, I still have multiple years immersed in the clinical setting, and my more recent experiences have exposed me to other positions and thought processes that may contribute to the conversation. As a critical feminist researcher, I recognized my identities impact how I conduct research, my bias, and how I was perceived by members of the CoP.

Despite my clinical experience and doctoral training, I recognized that my thoughts and ideas were not inclusive of the athletic training community. I was unable to understand and address what was important to the women who work in the field every day on my own. Throughout the research project, I strove to exercise care, compassion, and collaboration to help achieve equity of power (Burgess-Proctor, 2015). I recognized that each person brought their own strengths to the table. During the project, I contributed by offering my own experience and expertise while allowing space for the contributions of the other CoP members. Throughout the research process, I practiced iterative reflection by asking myself questions and reflecting on the project, research questions, and my relationship with the CoP members. I grew and was shaped as a researcher throughout the project.

I remained aware of my background, experience, power and privilege. My ethnicity and race did not seem to play a role in my study. However, researchers reported almost 81% of NATA members of the were white while less than 4% were Black and less

than 5% of Hispanic origin (NATA, 2018). Being Latinx has been historically associated with oppression (Freire, 2018) and marginalization while whiteness has been associated with power and privilege (Patel, 2015). With 90% of full professors being white men and the majority of full-time faculty positions being filled by white men and women (Patel, 2015), it was important for me to recognize that while I am a Latinx woman, I am still raced white. Throughout the project, I navigated my role, and accounted for my identities, experiences, and reactions.

While more than 70% of athletic trainers have master's degrees (NATA, n.d.), I still needed to consider my education how that set me apart from my community. I am a doctoral trained researcher and have focused on academic research for the past 5 years. However, my prior first-hand experiences working as a woman athletic trainer gave me insider access. My recent experiences as a mother provided me with insights on the ways being a mother impacts experiences in the workplace. My positionality and experiences allowed me to be uniquely positioned to work with the CoP to conduct this research. Still, I continuously worked to build trust and authentically engage with the CoP through dialogue and recognition of their expertise. I tried to minimize the extent to which they view me as authority, although I know I was not always successful. Throughout the project, I tried to honor the unique experiences and insider access of the individual members of the CoP.

Data Collection

This project consisted of five CoP meetings from November 2020 through March 2021. The CoP was highly involved in the research process from idea conception, data

collection, analysis, ideas for dissemination of information, and resulting action (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). Due to the outbreak of coronavirus across the globe, the project was conducted virtually.

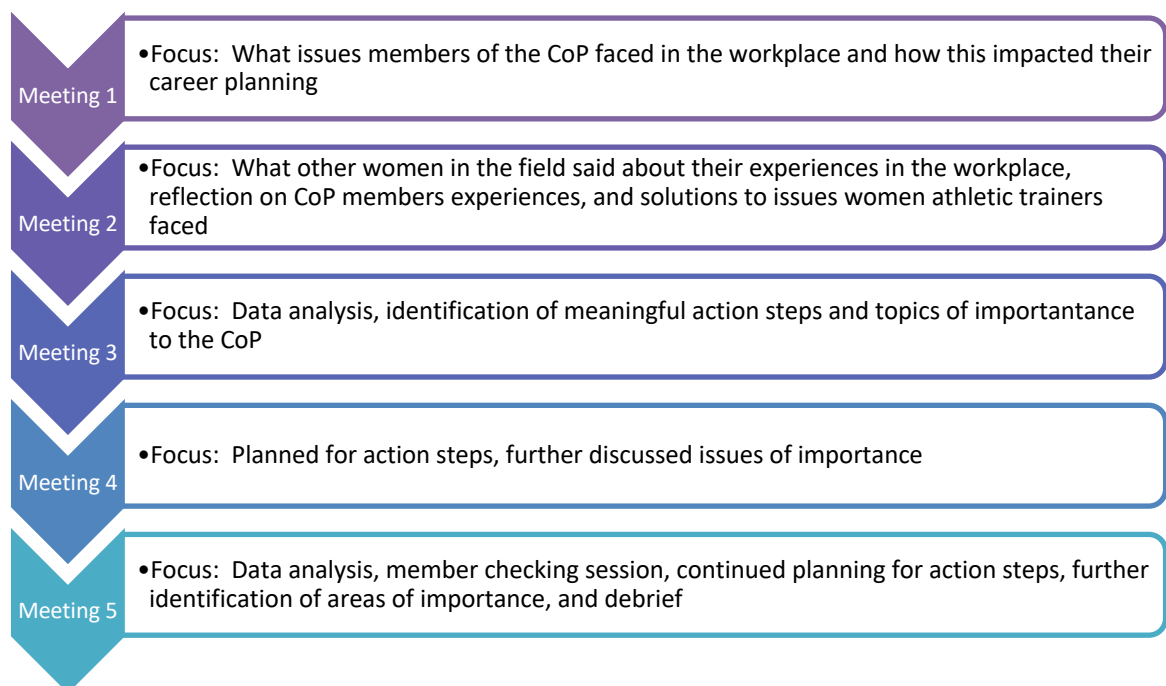
I had four sources of data collection. The first was a series of five informal focus groups that were held via Zoom and recorded through the application. Secondly, CoP members wrote one journal entry in reflection on a conversation they had with another woman athletic trainer. In order to gain more in-depth insights over time, I used a private social media tool (WhatsApp) to collect data throughout the study (Goodyear et al., 2018). I began the study taking field notes. However, I found it took away from my ability to focus on the meeting, so I decided to stay fully engaged during meetings and journal afterwards and throughout the research process (Carspecken, 1996).

During our meetings, I invited CoP members to engage in dialogue about topics related to women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). After the first meeting, the previous meeting's discussions influenced the topics discussed in the ones that followed. In addition to data collected among the CoP members during meetings, data were collected in between meetings through various avenues. Prior to the second meeting, each CoP member reached out to another woman athletic trainer and held a conversation about issues women face in the profession and how it impacted career planning. After this conversation, each CoP member wrote a journal entry and shared it with me. These conversations encouraged dialogue and extended our reach to other women in the athletic training community. For

the third meeting, I originally planned for CoP members to read the NATA position statement about work-life balance (Mazerolle, Eason, & Goodman, 2018), then write a journal entry. However, CoP members were unsure on the direction they wanted to take for the project, so we took a break after the second meeting to reflect and decided to change the course of the project. We decided to conduct data analysis and what action means to the CoP during the third meeting. This discussion informed our research process and shaped the remaining meetings. Our fourth meeting, focused on planning for action steps. Initial data analysis was completed prior to the final meeting and shared via email with CoP members. During this meeting, we further discussed and analyzed data and continued to plan for the action steps.

Figure 1

Areas of Focus for Community of Practice Meetings



Because I tried to embody a democratic and equitable approach, I discussed the plan with the CoP as a group, obtained feedback, and adjusted the project to meet their needs and goals. The CoP was, collaboratively, a part of decision-making about the project, design, area of research, data collection, analysis, and how the data would be used (Israel et al., 1998; Jull et al., 2017; Lencucha et al., 2010; Ramsden et al., 2017; Salsberg et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). The project was tailored toward what CoP members deemed important and helpful to the athletic training community. Working with participants to design the study allowed for more robust and comprehensive understanding of the interests and needs of a community (Curry, 2012). The flexible nature of participatory methodologies allowed me to adjust topics of discussion, data collection methods, and analysis during the project (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Jull et al., 2017; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Minkler, 2005).

Data Preparation

To prepare the data for analysis, I created a primary record by using the transcription which was automatically generated by Zoom. I reviewed the transcription by listening to and watching the recordings multiple times in order to ensure that the transcripts were accurate and made corrections to the transcripts as needed. The data preparation also served as an opportunity to immerse myself in the data. After I cleaned the transcripts, I shared the transcripts with CoP members to conduct a basic member check.

Data Analysis

While my goal was to conduct data analysis primarily as a collective, due to this being my dissertation project, the data were analyzed in part by the CoP as a collective, and in part by me, independent of the collective. I grappled with this approach and selected a method of data analysis that was in line with my critical feminist approach. After initial low-level coding which was conducted partly as a collective and partly by me independently, I used a critical structural analysis approach (Dennis, 2013).

Carspecken (1996) encouraged examination of cultural themes as a part of in-depth analysis. According to Giddens (1994), cultural conditions and action co-constituted cultural structures. Social and cultural structures influence our behaviors and thoughts while, at the same time, our actions create cultural structure. The critical structural analysis approach seemed appropriate because CoP members recognized there were larger cultural and societal structures in place that impacted the topics and issues we discussed. Employing a critical structural analysis allowed me to honor the expertise of the community of women I worked with while more closely examining the structures and sociocultural factors that impacted their experiences in the workplace.

Initial Data Analysis. Initial data analysis was conducted partly as a collective and partly by me independently, in order to assist the process. Dialogue during CoP meetings began the initial data analysis process, identifying areas of importance and ideas about topics discussed. In participatory research, community consultations among peers can allow for identification of themes, issues, and topics that are priority for community members (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Sawhney, 2012). In our analysis, guided by CoP

members, we generated ideas, themes, questions, and more discussion points (Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012). A core principle of participatory methods was knowledge creation rather than extraction of it (Veale, 2005). The discussions generated by our analysis created more dialogue and further insight into the discussed topics. These insights were organized into a number of themes and topic areas.

Collaborative sensemaking was a part of a reflexive process used in participatory analysis (Nicholls, 2009). During the project, the CoP was able to return to and revisit the data in order to identify the most important messages (Nind, 2011). The conversations among CoP members during this return and revisit process allowed for input and feedback from one another throughout the data collection and analysis process (Nind, 2011; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998).

To facilitate the analysis, I revisited the primary record from meetings and journal entries, immersed myself in the data, took notes, and used an open, low-level coding method described by Carspecken (1996). This initial data analysis approach allowed me to use some themes and ideas already identified by CoP members. As I read and reviewed the primary record, I began identifying codes and associated data; I continued this process identifying new codes and subcodes as needed (Carspecken, 1996). Once I completed this step, I emailed the analysis files to CoP members for their review. We then reviewed the analysis as a collective in meetings. The analysis of the low-level codes from the fifth meeting was emailed to CoP members for their review and any feedback they might have. This process allowed me to check for accuracy of claims and to ensure I captured their thoughts and ideas appropriately.

The on-going data collection and analysis provided CoP members space to think about reality and the next steps to be taken (Sitter, 2015). According to Freire, active exploration of themes increased one's critical awareness, and by identifying that awareness, it allowed one to take possession of reality (Freire, 2018). The first meeting allowed for brainstorming, identification of general ideas, questions, and initial identification of priority issues (Curry, 2012; Freire, 2018; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Sitter, 2015). During the second meeting, the discussion reflected on conversations CoP members held with colleagues. This approach in the second meeting allowed for more in-depth insight to topics of importance, broad themes, ideas, and unanswered questions (Freire, 2018; Sitter, 2015). The third meeting involved review and discussion of data analysis of the first two meetings and the journal entry. The review of data and analysis allowed CoP members to return and revisit their thoughts on the conversations with colleagues and the previous two meetings (Nind, 2011). This revisiting of thoughts and data provided opportunity for critical analysis and recognition of interaction of different components (Sitter, 2015). During the fifth meeting, data analysis of the third CoP meeting, fourth CoP meeting, and of the WhatsApp data was conducted as a collective (Cashman et al., 2008). These discussions added another layer of analysis. It allowed for an opportunity to reflect on the thoughts and conversations that occurred throughout the project and reflections captured in between meetings and data collection. The last meeting also provided opportunity for feedback, for me to consider how the ways I was presenting our data and analyses may be interpreted, to continue to identify priorities of CoP members, and helped me to write responsibly throughout my dissertation (Curry,

2012; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). It also provided another opportunity to revisit data and continue working toward future action steps. After the conclusion of the project, I emailed CoP members for permission to conduct a more in-depth analysis.

Critical Structural Analysis. The in-depth analysis included a critical analysis of the cultural structures and unintended consequences which emerged from the dialogue among CoP members and in their reflective journal entries. Structural relations can be impacted by cultural, economic, and political conditions (Dennis, 2013). These conditions of action both “resource and constrain the volition of the actor” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 190). In other words, the cultural structures in place influenced action while, simultaneously, action can reproduce and challenge it (Dennis, 2013). As such, social structure constituted a shared knowledge of how things should be done, the actions conducted based upon a shared understanding of that knowledge, and the assumption that actors were capable of producing that action (Giddens, 1994). Cultural structures defined the conditions in which actions existed and influenced the choices of the actor.

Contrastingly, the volition of the actor also produced consequences beyond the actor’s intent (Dennis, 2013). These unacknowledged and unintended consequences of action were recurrent acts which were irrational social patterns (Giddens, 1994). Actors were able to practice reflexively monitor structures and systems of action which “afford us opportunities to critique the conditions and consequences of our actions for inequity, oppression,” and “ideologic distortion” (Dennis, 2013). Giddens (1994) suggested that structures were generally quite stable, but they can be changed, especially through

the unintended consequences of action when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently.

In order to understand the actions discussed by the women of the CoP, I analyzed the data for cultural structures and unintended consequences. Dennis modeled the concept of structure after Giddens' (1994) theory of structuration which stated that structures were made up of both the volition of the actor and our critical examination of these actions as well as the "unacknowledged conditions of action and unintended consequences of action" (p. 411). To achieve this, I used the initial coded data and filtered them for topics and statements relevant to my research questions. Following this, I conducted a critical structural analysis methodology (Dennis, 2013).

To begin the systematic, critical structural analysis of the data, I reviewed and re-examined data for cultural structural indicators. These cultural structural indicators included patterns of "effects and structures" or "or an awareness among participants of cultural conditions as being in operation" (Dennis, 2013, p. 414). To increase the rigor of the analysis, I identified counternarratives that did not fit the emerging themes. I also examined the data for unintended consequences of action, identifying recurring action that chronically reproduces features of the social structures in place (Dennis, 2013).

Reconstructive Horizon Analysis. To uncover the layers of meaning within the data, I used reconstructive horizon analysis to explore the layers of meaning for more nuanced statements as needed (Carspecken, 1996). According to Dennis (2013), a strong, critical structural analysis involved reconstruction of meanings. An analysis is reconstructive when it identifies "cultural themes and system factors that are not

observable and that are usually unarticulated by the actors themselves” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). According to Carspecken (1996):

When we notice an object before us in our visual field, we notice it against many other objects that are out of focus. Implicit contrasts between the focal object and its background bring the focal object out for us. The background is part of our experience, but it is out of focus and plays a barely noticed role in producing object perception. (p. 103)

To begin my analysis, I used meaning fields to reconstruct meanings using “and,” “or,” or “and/or” statements to “indicate the ambiguities that meaningful acts possess for all parties involved” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 96). Once I completed this step, I conducted the reconstructive horizon analysis.

To reconstruct the meanings behind speech acts, two intersubjective domains were identified: (a) relations to the horizon—foreground, midground, and background, and (b) categories of validity claims—objective, subjective, normative, and identity claim meanings (Carspecken, 1996). The vertical analysis of relations to the horizon and objective (multiple access, what is external to a person), subjective (intentions, feelings, desires, etc., that are internal to a person), normative (socially accepted shared norms and values), and identity (unique claims which considers social recognition, values, norms, and subjective claims) claims were used to reconstruct the possible meanings of an individual’s speech act (Carspecken, 1996). This analysis allowed me to make explicit that which was implicit and identify the multiple plausible meanings of a speech act (Carspecken, 1996).

Validity and Credibility

The subject of validity has garnered much attention in qualitative research and can be considered *authenticity, credibility, confirmability, internal coherence, transferability, reliability, and significance* (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Lather, 2007). The issue gained such attention because it provides credibility to scientific knowledge and determines what is considered “good science” (Lather, 2007). In this sense, the determination of what is or is not credible (i.e., validity) is the power to determine what is considered science (Lather, 2007).

Too often validity claims which were externalized and objectified represented “good science” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010) and did not account for claims specific to the culture or concept being explored (Carspecken, 1996). Using a set of criteria for validity claims was necessary for methodological rigor and to point to the truth (Carspecken, 1996). However, I called into question the use of solely external, objectified validity techniques and welcomed the concept of “validation” to consider “ways in which the knowers build assertions warranted by their individual, collective, and spiritual experiences within social worlds, as well as the ways in which they engage in dialogue about their assertions with their environment” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008).

As a participatory project, I aspired to share the experiences of women athletic trainers in the workplace with accurate interpretation. Because of this, it was imperative to understand that truth claims are culturally bound (Carspecken, 1996). Therefore, I selected validity techniques which allowed me to stay to true the viewpoint of the individuals in the CoP. To ensure credibility of the data, I used a critical feminist

approach to select applied validity techniques (Lather, 1986). I present Lather's (1986) concept of openly, value-based research which refined and expanded validity concepts to fit an interactive, dialogic approach (Reason & Rowan, 1981). Through this understanding of validity, there were multiple validity techniques to prevent researchers from using their bias to distort data and to ensure trustworthiness of data. The four techniques I chose to use are *triangulation*, *construct validity*, *face validity*, and *catalytic validity* (Lather, 1986).

Triangulation should include multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical bases (Lather, 1986). In my study, I used multiple sources of data and methods for data collection including a series of meetings, journal entries from participants, WhatsApp text, and my personal journal entries. These sources allowed for multiple perspectives over time which provided an in-depth look and enabled truthful representations of the data. My theoretical approach, critical feminist theory, grounded my project in critical and feminist roots while gender role theory and social role theory helped explain the phenomenon.

Construct validity required systematized reflexivity which allowed researchers to show how a priori theory was associated with the data (Lather, 1986). Throughout the study I practiced reflexivity by journaling, reflecting on the knowledge construction process and my role during the study, and by comparing the data I collected to that of the already-existing literature. I compared the knowledge gained through my literature review to the findings of my study.

Face validity was crucial to ensuring truth and credibility (Lather, 1986). This technique utilized member checks, which were viewed as paramount to fortifying credibility of claims and essential to a democratic research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lather, 1986). I conducted basic and interpretive member checks throughout and after the conclusion of the study. I conducted basic member checking of the transcripts and interpretive member checks of the low-level codes as well as the structural analysis. The CoP revisited the data and concepts multiple times during the study, and I took the interpretations of the data to the members of the CoP to see if they agreed with the claims made and made adjustments to analysis based upon their feedback (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Catalytic Validity was considered the research process which “re-orient, focusses, and energizes participants in what Freire (2018) terms ‘conscientization,’ or knowing reality in order to better transform it” (Lather, 1986; Reason & Rowan, 1981). The design of the project, a series of meetings with reflective journal writings and an on-going WhatsApp text chat, provided space for thoughtful assessment as well as reflection. The collaborative approach allowed for dialogue over time and space to share and challenge ideas. The iterative process provided opportunities for discussion, reflection, and to return to ideas which drove CoP members to gain better understanding of the topic and resulted in the desire to take action address issues specific to women athletic trainers (Lather, 1986).

Ethical Considerations for Validity

I recognized there were ethical considerations for this study. As a critical feminist researcher, I was aware of the ethical and moral responsibilities I had as I engaged in my research and presented ideas during the study (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). More specifically, I reflected upon *Othering* and *reductionist validation*.

Othering has been described as when one distances themselves from the (oftentimes a marginalized or previously ignored) Other in a way that represents them as inferior (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). When presented in this way, it established dominance and power (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012) which was antithetical to participatory research. When researchers wrote about “Others” without taking individualism and context into account, they did not work the hyphen (Fine, 1994). To work the hyphen between Self and Other, researchers must understand the relationships they had with Others and create opportunities to discuss the story that was being told, the interpretation, and any effects of sharing that information (Fine, 1994). In my study, I created opportunities and space to discuss experiences, the interpretations, and how this information would be shared in the future. Some ways I resisted *Othering* included using a participatory methodology, engaging in dialogue and using their words in writings, dialogue, reflexivity, and acknowledgement of my positionality (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012).

Reductionist validation can simplify data and reduce them to easily verifiable, “controllable elements, fragments, and predetermined structures” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). The modern attempt to “legislate certainty” removed the researcher from the

context and could result in demitting from ethical responsibility (Popke, 2004). An a priori selection criteria may limit how truth can be conceptualized (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). During my study, I tried to use the validity techniques in a way that was not reductive but that created credibility and allowed for better understanding of data.

Chapter Four

In this chapter I present findings from a critical structural analysis (Dennis, 2013) conducted on data collected over a period of 5 months (see Table 2). Structures and systems of social interaction influence how people act, provide a shared understanding of how things should be done, and assumes that individuals will act according to that knowledge (Giddens, 1994, p. 64). To uncover the cultural structures which impacted the experiences of CoP members, I analyzed data sources for structural indicators (patterns, structures, or awareness of cultural conditions) present in women athletic trainers' work experiences. In the following sections, I share the cultural and social structures which impacted women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace and how these structures impacted their ability or desire to remain working in the field.

Table 2

Data Collection Mode and Associated Dates

Data collection mode	Date or date range for event
WhatsApp chat	November 9, 2020 – March 19, 2021
CoP Meeting 1	November 9, 2020
Journal entry	November 24, 2020-December 2, 2020
CoP Meeting 2	December 2, 2020
CoP Meeting 3	February 15, 2021
CoP Meeting 4	March 3, 2021
CoP Meeting 5	March 22, 2021

Findings – Critical Structural Analysis

In line with my critical feminist epistemology, I conducted a critical structural analysis which sought to understand the influences of gender and power structures on women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace (Dennis, 2013). The athletic training profession was a historically male-dominated patriarchy (Anderson, 1991). Therefore, the expectations, roles, and goals of the profession were shaped through the lens of men (Anderson, 1991).

Social systems which have been controlled and shaped by a dominant group (in this case, men) may result in preferential treatment and unequal opportunities for the subordinate group (in this case, women athletic trainers; Harro, 2000). Unless actions were taken to disrupt the cycle, it would persist (Harro, 2000). In line with my critical feminist approach, I sought to conduct an analysis that would help to understand the social structures and conditions which impacted women athletic trainers and to help transform the male-dominated patriarchy of the profession (hooks, 2000; Marx, 1975).

Critical structural analysis was a novel approach to data analysis for this research topic and allowed me to make plain the social and cultural structures which impacted women athletic trainers' experiences, actions, and understanding of their experiences. According to Dennis (2013), social and cultural structures influence the actors' choices, environment, and context in which actions were interpreted. These structures were created from a shared understanding of expectations, and as individual's actions reinforced these expectations, it resulted in a reproduction of the existing social systems (Giddens, 1994). Therefore, I employed an analytic approach which would uncover the

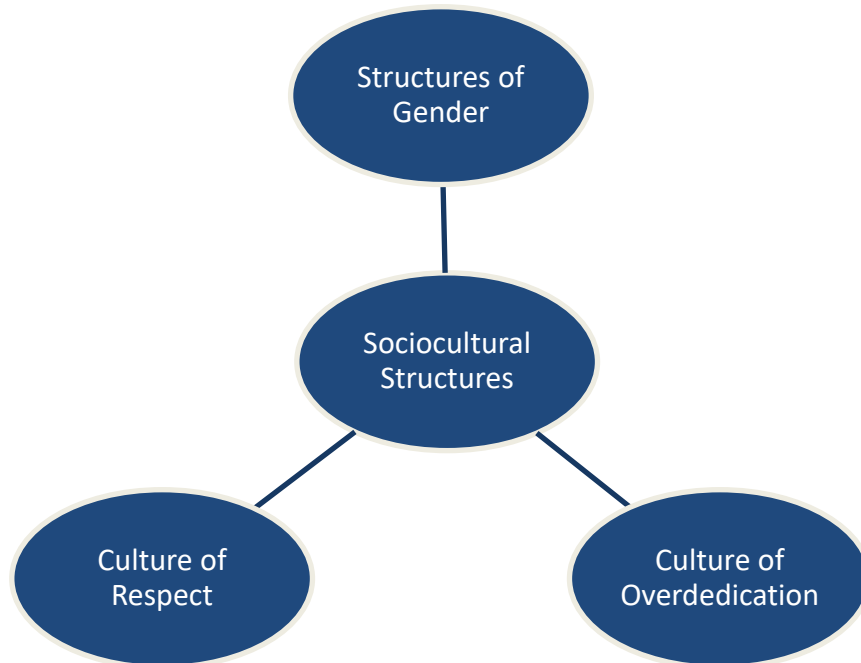
sociocultural structures that existed for women athletic trainers, how these structures impacted them, influenced their actions, and what changes could be made to combat these structures (Dennis, 2013).

In this section, I present three overarching sociocultural structures that both resourced and constrained the identities and actions of the women of the CoP:

(a) structures of gender, (b) culture of overdedication, and (c) culture of respect (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Structures of gender and culture of overdedication were deeply rooted in the historically, male-dominated systems constructed by men and men athletic trainers. Athletic training began with men working in a field (sports) dominated by men (Anderson, 1991). As a result, the culture, structures, and expectations were those set by men and for men (Anderson, 1991). A culture of overdedication stemmed from a time when men's primary role was to be the breadwinner and had the freedom to dedicate excessive amounts time to their job while women were expected to be the homemaker and caretaker (Anderson, 1991; Eagly & Wood, 2012). As a result, women athletic trainers had a cultural expectation that putting in long hours and dedicating their time meant they were a good athletic trainer and would be rewarded with better jobs.

Figure 2

Sociocultural Structures That Emerged From the Critical Structural Analysis



As women joined the profession, they faced resistance from men (both coaches and other athletic trainers; Anderson, 1991). As a result of this attitude and the culture of male dominance, women athletic trainers have faced issues of gender bias, sexism, and inappropriate behavior, which seems to be a cultural norm in some cases. In this study, I found women athletic trainers' resistance to working in a male-dominated patriarchy resulted in a culture of respect, which served as a counternarrative to the male-created narrative of meritocracy. Women athletic trainers sought a work culture which recognized and respected their value as health care professionals as well as their desire for a work-life balance. These counternarratives, which highlighted acts of opposition toward gendered, patriarchal structures, permeated the dialogue throughout the study. Despite women athletic trainers' resistance to structures of gender and the culture of

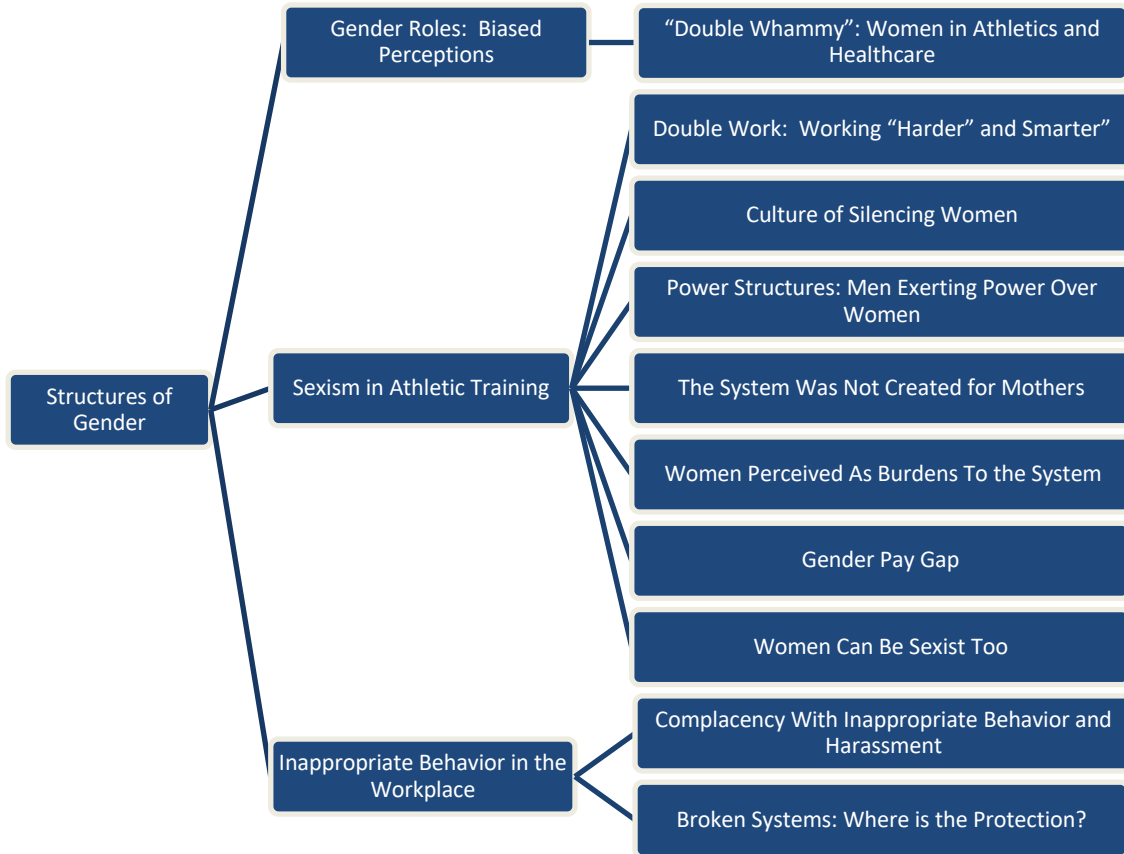
overdedication, the data analysis unveiled unintended consequences of action which reproduced these structures. These unintended consequences of action are presented in this chapter as well.

Structures of Gender

Structures of gender (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) seemed to be a direct sociocultural consequence of the male hegemony stemming from the historical roots of the profession. Gender seemed to have significant impact on the structures and systems of women athletic trainers. The expectations of the profession seemed to be created by men, resulting in power structures that posed challenges for women in the profession. These conditions and patterns of shaped the mindset, experiences of, and decisions made by women athletic trainers. The experiences described by the women of the CoP centered around gender roles, sexism, and inappropriate behavior toward women in the workplace.

Figure 3

Themes in Structures of Gender



Gender Roles: The Perceptions Were Biased. Multiple CoP members faced challenges with how coaches and administrators perceived their personalities and roles working with athletes. Dani shared a story which seemed to reflect a common experience that women athletic trainers faced in the workplace. Working as a young professional at a United States military academy, a coach held a sexist opinion about Dani's characteristics and how they impacted her role with student-athletes.

The men's rugby coach that I worked with um basically said I was, too nurturing because I was a female. Um, and it had nothing to do with my skillset. But it was

just I pulled someone from a concussion for concussion, and I called him on a Tuesday because we had a big game on Saturday, and he basically like told me that the guys would report symptoms to me because I was too nurturing. And I was like, ‘no, the guys report symptoms to me because that’s my job to investigate this, like to make sure that I’m taking their health and making sure that it comes across that that is more important than this game. And it’s about their lifestyle now, and in 20 years, and commissioning, and everything in between.’

(Dani, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

Other members of the CoP rolled their eyes and shook their heads in frustration and disappointment about the coach’s statement and nodded their head in agreement about Dani’s viewpoint.

Similar stories from CoP members resounded throughout our meetings. Tina, a high school athletic trainer in Washington, DC, shared a story from her early career. Coaches complained, “Oh my god. We’ve never had this many injuries before,” to which she responded, “Well, you never had an athletic trainer before.” The coaches also made statements about how she was “babying” student-athletes and acted “like their mom.” In Tina’s case, the staff at her school eventually saw that she helped the program and recognized her value. Tina expressed gratitude for the respect and support she received from coaches and student-athletes at her school. Laura conveyed surprise in her November 30, 2020 journal entry, sharing that her colleague who worked at a coeducational (mixed gender) school with sports such as football and wrestling did not

have negative experiences in her workplace. Her colleague expressed she was lucky and “a bad example” because she knew discrimination and sexism existed in the field.

“The Double Whammy”: Women in Athletics and in Health Care. As we reflected on things discussed in the first CoP meeting, Maggie voiced she believed some of the issues women athletic trainers faced were societal.

For how long have “male characteristics” been good, and, you know, caring about other people is bad and weak but that is the reason that so many females are the best athletic trainers or health, you know the best whatever of any job, that we know. And it’s, I think, a lot of it is just kind of like fighting societal norms and like, like you said, Laura, it’s we’ve come a long way in a lot of places, but at the same time, it’s really hard for a lot of people to move past that inherent, even if they don’t realize it. (Maggie, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

Other CoP members agreed that gender-related societal structures and biases were present and hoped the mindset would change. In response to Maggie’s statement, Laura who worked at an independent school in New York City agreed with this statement, sharing she believed these preconceived notions were associated with women in athletics as well as in medical fields and that women athletic trainers battled “double whammy” in which “we’re trying to establish ourselves as medical professionals in the athletic world.” Katelyn voiced an opinion in the same meeting on others’ perceptions of women athletic trainers, stating she hoped that society would recognize qualities of vulnerability and being nurturing as attributes that contributed to women being successful athletic trainers. Yu-Wei, an athletic trainer at an independent school in New York City, echoed this

sentiment in her journal entry on November 27, 2020. She hoped the attitude of women athletic trainers being “too caring, too emotional, too soft” would shift from a negative connotation to a positive one in which society recognized being caring and emotionally in tune “as decent human qualities” essential to health care providers.

Sexism in Athletic Training. Throughout meetings, CoP members discussed the history of athletics and athletic training being a “boys’ club” and expressed concerns for how this work culture negatively affected women athletic trainer’s experiences in the workplace. Maggie conveyed her frustration with athletic training (including the academic experience) being a “boys’ club” when “it doesn’t have to be.” The “boys’ club” mentality seemed to silence women athletic trainers and prevent women from contributing to academia and the profession. Women athletic trainers were aware of these issues and seemed to feel it was commonplace. Tina noted gender-related structures were a significant factor that kept her in the same job for so long (10 years). In the first CoP meeting and in her journal entry on December 1, 2020, Tina expressed fear of “suffering” like “everyone else” and being discriminated against because of her gender.

Multiple CoP members shared disquiets about their experiences and how their standpoint was colored by inequity in the athletic training workplace, especially in athletics. Laura touched upon this sentiment in the first CoP meeting.

I think some of that is a reflection of how even though we’ve had amazing leaps and bounds with how women are viewed in the sports world, I think that it’s still a reflection of, in general, women in sports not getting the respect that men do. And I think that that’s not only in the sense of our athletes, but also our medical staff

and our coaches as well. So, I think it's just a reflection of like a, like a standard that's already set that we're fighting still. (Laura, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

As a result of this lack of respect, women athletic trainers have unique experiences that men in the profession do not.

Double Work: Women Must “Work Smarter” and “Harder” to Prove

Themselves. An awareness of the history of hegemonic masculinity in the field seemed to influence women athletic trainers' actions. They were conscious about their positions and actions in the workplace. As women athletic trainers established themselves in their jobs, it seemed when they acted in opposition of the existing socially constructed expectations, there seemed to be negative consequences at work. Therefore, women athletic trainers had to judiciously consider their actions and reactions in the workplace. These experiences appeared to have a lasting effect and, for some, impacted their career aspirations and paths. Yu-Wei journaled on November 27, 2020, that the colleague she reached out to as a part of our data collection felt she had to “work smarter” than men and make considerations that men would not have to.

During the fifth CoP meeting, Dani shared her frustrations with how women had to be cognizant of their reactions and responses in the workplace. Dani described how women had to consider their reactions to frustrating situations in the workplace, so people do not say “Oh, she's acting like a woman.” Dani felt that when a woman responded with frustration to an incident in which “X, Y, and Z hasn't happened yet” such that “any human being regardless of gender would be mad at this point in time,” it was not viewed

by people as a normal response. Women had to think “Okay. How does this affect the fact that like I’m female and having this reaction?”

Women athletic trainers explicitly stated that they had to work to showcase their value through their actions. CoP members revealed multiple instances which demonstrated commanding respect through action. In the first CoP meeting, Yu-Wei demonstrated how women showed their worth through their work, “I definitely feel like female athletic trainers like work harder, just because we have to like prove ourselves and like let our work speak for themselves.” She further explained, it was necessary to demonstrate abilities through action because even if women stated something, “it doesn’t mean that that people are just going to believe us.” In the same meeting, Katelyn, an athletic trainer at high school in Virginia, reiterated the challenges of a woman athletic trainer establishing herself in a new job. She had to work harder initially to prove herself to earn the respect and trust of the athletic director. She hoped coaches and athletic administrators would begin to recognize that more student-athletes reporting injuries to the athletic trainer (compared to previous years) was not a “bad thing” but a reflection of more student-athletes trusting in the athletic trainer.

A Culture of Silencing Women Athletic Trainers. Women of the CoP shared stories which highlighted patterns of silencing women. Laura shared some thoughts in the second CoP meeting which highlighted a culture of silencing women athletic trainers, sharing that male coaches had the audacity to tell women athletic trainers how to do their job. She shared how men coaches will tell a women athletic trainer, “Oh, no. I got the perfect solution for that...” and explain what to do. She seemed offended by the lack of

respect men coaches had for women athletic trainers' education and knowledge, and disappointed in the level of respect that people had for the profession as a whole. Men trying to tell women athletic trainers what to do and how to do their job preserved a culture which silenced women. Laura's example seemed to highlight the assumption that men knew better than women; therefore, women should be listening, not speaking. She hoped the transition to the master's degree¹ would propel the profession to be taken more seriously by others, and for athletic trainers to hold themselves to higher standards as medical professionals.

Other CoP members shared experiences in which voicing their position resulted in negative consequences at work. In the first CoP meeting, Dani shared how she seemed to lose respect from a coach after disagreeing with him and wondered if she would have the same result if she was a man. This coach seemed to have declared that Dani was not deserving of having a voice (opinion) and should not speak up. On November 30, 2020, Maggie journaled about a similar experience in which the women in her Advanced Athletic Training master's degree program seemed to be treated differently compared to the men in the program. Their professor who was a women seemed to be dismissive and label women who were outspoken as disruptive and disrespectful while the men who asked similar questions were not treated as such. This professor's actions served as efforts to silence the women in Maggie's class. Maggie noted the women in her class

¹ The athletic training education's accrediting body will require all professional athletic training education programs to be offered at the master's degree level beginning in the year 2023 ("Becoming an Athletic Trainer," n.d.).

were expected to do what they were told instead of asking questions, pushing for new ideas, and striving to get better.

Yu-Wei shared a story during the first CoP meeting which exemplified how women athletic trainers were disregarded as health care professionals. While working a boys' basketball tournament, a child injured his foot. The injured child's coach directed him toward the male athletic trainer without even looking at Yu-Wei. When the other athletic trainer returned, he shared with Yu-Wei his diagnosis which was clearly incorrect. Members of the CoP were astonished by her story. Yu-Wei expressed her frustration but explained, "It is what it is. ...They don't know you. You don't have any opportunity. ...How could they possibly know that that dude knows nothing?" This coach's intentional or unintentional action showed his complete disregard for her presence and a lack of respect for her as a health care professional. This act in itself silenced Yu-Wei as she never got the chance to speak. In the second CoP meeting, Yu-Wei returned to this topic, highlighting the historically male-dominated patriarchy of the sports industry, expressing she felt that men were quicker to trust men athletic trainers because that was the cultural norm in athletics.

These incidences of silencing women aligned with the societal expectations and actions Yu-Wei discussed in the second CoP meeting. Yu-Wei expressed frustration with how women had been conditioned to behave compared to men. She shared that in her experience men and women talked about themselves differently. For example, she shared that men would fight for a promotion even if they were unqualified for a role while women would not ask or would easily accept no as an answer to a similar request. She

believed the gender differences in communication, and a woman quickly accepting what she was told (about salary increase, promotion, or otherwise), to be societal.

Power Structures: Men's Exertion of Power Over Women Athletic Trainers.

Men, their perception of women athletic trainers' role, dictating expectations, and exerting control shaped women athletic trainers' mindsets, expectations, and actions. In the first CoP meeting, Katelyn shared a story that occurred during her undergraduate experience in which she was told by staff and athletes that she could not work in professional athletics. As she began her career and searched for jobs, she noted that those comments were in the back of her mind. Those comments thwarted her goal of pursuing a career working in professional baseball or football, and it was something that has stuck with her close to 15 years later.

CoP members shared other encounters with gender-related power structures. Grace shared a story that showcased the battles women athletic trainers may face with their supervisors. In the first CoP meeting, Grace shared an experience she had while working in a high school in the same county as Katelyn. While Grace did not initially feel a gender-related issue with the athletic director at her school, his treatment of her and him challenging her decisions made her question that belief. She originally thought he was just "an asshole" or that because he did not hire her, he did not consider her a part of his team. However, the longer she worked in the position, she wondered if his actions were because she was a young woman who was successful at her job; had good relationships with coaches, student-athletes, and parents; and if this made him feel threatened. Grace eventually left that position without a resolution to the issues with her former athletic

director. In the second CoP meeting, Grace shared that the colleague she reached out to for data collection had a similar experience with an older male athletic director and noted she experienced power struggles as well.

Similarly, CoP members noted issues of power with coaches. Dani journaled on December 1, 2020, that the colleague she reached out to for our data collection worked at a Christian college in the South, and a coach she worked with did not believe women should be working. Although her colleague believed it was his innate nature rather than his issue with her being a women athletic trainer, the coach's stance resulted in power issues. The coach's behavior was not exclusive to the athletic trainer, he also exerted control with his women staff and student-athletes. Interestingly, on November 30, 2020, Grace journaled that she did not have any issues with young male athletic directors and found them to be supportive. Grace's observation could be reflective of a change in sociocultural norms and expectations.

When women athletic trainers attempted to step outside of the expected cultural norms, they sometimes received pushback or experienced the consequences of explicit gender bias. In Tina's journal entry from December 1, 2020, she illustrated examples of overt sexism and exemplified how men used their power to constrain the experiences of the colleague she spoke with for our data collection. Her colleague accepted a graduate assistant position working with a football team at a large, Division I university in the Midwest. When Tina's colleague arrived to campus, and the staff realized she was not a woman, not a man, they changed her work assignment to softball with the explanation that "she would be better suited there."

The System Was Not Created for Mothers. Women of the CoP emphasized there were systemic issues that created barriers for women athletic trainers. A story Tina shared about the colleague that she reached out to for data collection highlighted this issue. In the second CoP meeting, Tina shared her colleague was “ran out of” the high school she worked at when she was pregnant, with staff at her job telling her “you can’t really do your job if you’re pregnant.” As a result, Tina’s colleague left the profession for a couple of years to raise her son.

In the first and third CoP meetings, Yu-Wei highlighted that family planning was a huge obstacle for women athletic trainers as they planned for their career. Systemic barriers seemed to make having children and working in these settings challenging. Yu-Wei highlighted lack of paid family leave, long hours, low salary, culture, and support in the workplace as factors that influenced women athletic trainers’ career-planning decisions. She also noted that lack of support by employers (to have a family) was a reason why there were fewer women compared to men in the collegiate and professional settings. Diverging from this sentiment, Dani noted in her journal entry from December 1, 2020 that her colleague felt fortunate to have bosses (in the collegiate Division II and industrial settings) that understood and championed that family was priority.

Women Were Perceived as Burdens to the System. Women also experienced instances of sexism in terms of resources. Coaches acted like it was a burden to support a woman athletic trainer to travel with a team. CoP members expressed that the expense was minimal and might not be different (higher) if they had a man athletic trainer. As Laura explained in the second CoP meeting, “they definitely spend more money on

socks.” Laura’s comment was in response to stories other stories CoP members shared in that meeting. Dani shared one coach made the “unnecessary” comment even though it only cost about \$200 for her boarding for 4 weeks. While Dani did travel with that team and provided in-house medical care, which they would have had to outsource otherwise, she explained that it was a constant battle to “prove your worth.” In her current role, the coach recognized that it was important for her to travel with the team and provide care for the athletes; however, he still made similar comments about the expense of her traveling with the team. In response, Katelyn shared that similar comments were said to her by a wrestling coach who complained that he would need to pay for another room when they went to the state tournament. When Katelyn countered his statement by pointing out how the student-athletes liked working with her, the coach quickly changed his tune and supported her traveling with the team. This seemingly shared opinion by men coaches that paying extra for a woman athletic trainer to travel trivializes the value of these women. Women of the CoP were discouraged by these coaches’ minimizing women athletic trainers’ services and value. These instances of sexism highlighted a lack of respect, and the inequitable support women athletic trainers received in the workplace.

The Gender Pay Gap. CoP members also discussed how salary was a challenge for women in the profession and expressed disappointment about the large gender pay gap. On December 28, 2021, I shared a blog article (Clemons, 2020) in the WhatsApp chat which discussed whether there was a shortage of athletic trainers, or if the issue was employers’ lack of commitment and willingness to compensate athletic trainers appropriately. This article led the CoP to a discussion about the gender pay gap. When

we referred to the most recent NATA Salary Survey (McKinley Advisors, 2019), it showed that women athletic trainers earned nearly \$9,000 less than men. I commented that the NATA Salary Survey (McKinley Advisors, 2019) noted that women's salaries were increasing at a higher rate compared to men's but that it did not seem fast enough. Yu-Wei agreed, commenting that it was sad, and progress was slow. This constraint of the pay gap was a challenge women athletic trainers face and was something CoP members felt needed to be addressed. In the third CoP meeting, Yu-Wei emphasized that the pay gap was a barrier for women athletic trainers and hoped there would be more research to examine the issue and increase support from athletic training's professional organizations.

Women Can Be Sexist Toward Women, Too. While many examples of sexism in this study occurred between men and women, in the first meeting and in her November 27, 2020, journal entry, Yu-Wei noted that this was not always the case. She highlighted that women can be sexist toward other women, sharing that some women were not supportive of other women or viewed "each other as competition." She journaled that the colleague who she spoke to as a part of our data collection found more men who were willing to support and mentor her as she started her athletic training business. Yu-Wei also noted the "singular seat at the table is pervasive across society" but that it was important to remember that women also perpetuated sexism and misogyny. Yu-Wei returned to this sentiment in the fifth CoP meeting as we planned for the action steps of a forum for women athletic trainers to speak to young professional women and athletic training students. She emphasized people do not respect women in professional

settings and that it was important for the forum to highlight issues specific to women in the field.

Inappropriate Behavior in the Workplace. Multiple CoP members shared experiences of inappropriate behavior or harassment in the workplace shown toward women athletic trainers. There were two areas that emerged in this section: (a) workplace complacency with inappropriate behaviors toward women athletic trainers, and (b) the broken systems in organizations that failed to protect women.

Workplace Complacency With Inappropriate Behavior and Harassment. On November 27, 2020, Yu-Wei journaled about an experience the colleague she reached out to for our data collection had during an internship at a large, Division I university on the East Coast. When Yu-Wei's colleague began the internship, she was asked about her sexual preference, current relationship status, and potential pregnancy. Yu-Wei noted that you do not hear about these unlawful questions being asked of men in the field. During the same internship, Yu-Wei's colleague was explicitly told not to look at the football field or football players, so as not to distract them; she was told if she was caught doing so, she would be written up. One coach commented that he did not want Yu-Wei's colleague to intern with them because "she looks like the type of girl my guys would date." Yu-Wei also shared this story in the second CoP meeting, and Katelyn confirmed that working in college sports as a student "is like that." These attitudes and actions from coaches constrained women athletic trainers' experiences, limiting opportunities and resulting in negative experiences.

Dani also endured inappropriate behaviors from staff when working in a setting with elite athletes. On December 1, 2020, Dani journaled that a team physician she worked with made a reference to stripping music as she unzipped her jacket. This was not the only incidence of inappropriate behavior from this physician. When Dani cited concerns about this physician with the high performance director (oversaw administrative aspects of the team's needs) about multiple incidences of inappropriate behavior including safe sport violations with athletes, it resulted in Dani being discredited. She expressed that when you work at higher levels of athletics, this type of behavior (inappropriate) was supposed to be okay and accepted. Ultimately, she left that position and contemplated leaving the profession. Dani did not find her experience to be acceptable and was angered by the situation. Katelyn's journal entry on November 30, 2020 reaffirmed that this type of complacency exists within organizations; "you were expected to take the heat if you hung with the big guys."

During our study, an alleged incidence of harassment of an athletic training student working with a professional soccer team was highlighted in the news. On November 24, 2020, in the WhatsApp group chat, Maggie shared an article from the *New York Post* (Walker, 2020) that described how a woman athletic training student reported that she was sexually harassed by one of the professional soccer players and harassed by the club's head and assistant athletic trainer. Both staff athletic trainers appeared to be aware of the sexual harassment from the soccer player but did nothing to address it. In the article, she recalled an incident in which the head athletic trainer witnessed the soccer player physically touch the athletic training student and how the staff athletic trainers

would joke about how she would file a lawsuit against the soccer player for workplace harassment. The student was told the staff athletic trainers had an on-going bet as to who would have sex with her first. Laura explained, it was “horrible,” but she was “not shocked by the head AT’s [athletic trainer’s] complacency.” Maggie agreed, “It’s sad that it’s never necessarily shocking, just very sad and infuriating.” It was another example of blatant complacency with harassment of women athletic trainers in the workplace.

CoP members discussed that the soccer club needed to address the issue and that there should be consequences for the culprits, implying that a way to effect change in organizations was by investigating instances of sexual harassment and ensuring that responsible parties were held accountable for their actions. It appeared the accused parties did not have consequences for their actions (at the time the article was discussed). Yu-Wei said, it was “crazy (but not surprising)” that the head athletic trainer already obtained a different job working in the college setting. Four months later, I followed up about this on my own but could not find any articles with updates about the incident. During the fifth CoP meeting, I asked if anyone knew if there was follow up. Yu-Wei commented, “Nah. It just feels like it’s probably not a big enough deal to anybody else, you know? I mean like who cares, you know?” She expressed that it was a sad reality of the profession. It appeared there was a lack of accountability from the organization. The head athletic trainer’s ability to easily find another job demonstrated the complacency with this type of behavior. This and similar incidences with no consequences will allow the cycle of complacency to continue.

Unprofessional behaviors toward women athletic trainers were not exclusive to athletic settings. Reflecting on their work experiences, more than one CoP member felt that women were forced into using their supposedly feminine qualities or being expected to hide these qualities (e.g., dressing in baggy clothing and changing their behavior). Yu-Wei and Maggie both shared related stories in their journal entries. On November 27, 2020, Yu-Wei described how women must “use their sexuality” or “hide their feminine appearance” in the workplace. Yu-Wei depicted an incident in which the colleague she reached out to for data collection was working in a high-end physical therapy clinic and was told by her female boss to wear tighter clothes, leggings, and flirt with customers. When Yu-Wei’s colleague changed roles to do marketing for the clinic, she learned she was expected to keep up a certain appearance and flirt with doctors to attract business. On November 30, 2020, Maggie journaled about a contrasting experience she and her colleague faced in which women in their master’s program were expected to hide their bodies. She explained, the women were expected to “desexualize” the human body and dress modestly so the men in the class would feel comfortable. Maggie expressed aggravation with this expectation, noting how it placed responsibility on the women and removed the onus from the men to practice as ethical and professional health care providers. Maggie shared that she and her colleague felt it “hindered the experiences of females” in the class. These stories were exemplary of the challenges women faced due to people’s inappropriate behavior and expectations for women athletic trainers.

The Systems Are Broken: Where Is the Protection for Women in Athletics? In a work setting, there should be systems (e.g., policies, departments, staff) in place to

prevent these behaviors from occurring. Dani believed the college setting had systems to support staff and prevent this type of behavior from happening but did not feel that was the case at the professional level. In the fifth CoP meeting, Dani shared that while working with elite athletes, she was told that if an athlete had a problem, coaches and administrators were going to side with the athlete. This precedent that Dani, a woman athletic trainer, was less important and expendable was demonstrated in her experience after reporting misconduct of the team physician she worked with. Dani's result was her being told she was wrong and subsequently losing respect from her coworkers. Despite Dani's continued desire to work with elite level athletics, her experiences working at this level left her angry and feeling hopeless at times. Dani expressed the desire to learn how other women athletic trainers that worked in elite and profession athletics, such the National Football League and Major League Baseball, handled issues of sexism and harassment.

Experiences like Dani's, with administrators' mishandling inappropriate behaviors, were not exclusive to elite athletics. I shared a story in the first CoP meeting which demonstrated that this type of culture which protects sexual harassers and shuns whistleblowers also occurred at lower levels of athletics. I reported concerns about inappropriate behavior of a track coach toward a female student-athlete to the athletic director at a Division III university. The athletic director, a woman who should have had the interests of the student-athlete in mind, told the track coach that I reported a complaint against him. This resulted in me having increased conflicts with the coach and him speaking poorly of me to the student-athletes. In the fifth CoP meeting, I reflected on

this experience again, sharing that when the student-athlete met with the athletic director and coaches, they told her that she was making the incidents up, and the inappropriate behavior was not happening. The systems set up to protect the student-athlete failed to do so. The athletic director mishandled the report of misconduct. In fact, she made the student-athlete meet with her accused harasser. She failed to protect a student-athlete in favor of protecting a coach who had a history of being disagreeable and disregarding athletic training staff. The athletic director's actions cultivated a culture of complacency with inappropriate behavior and indirectly created a hostile work environment for the person who reported the misconduct (myself). This example highlighted how leadership influences the culture and experiences of their staff and beyond. This also exemplified how incidents get swept under the rug in the workplace.

As we reflected on topics that had been discussed during the fourth CoP meeting, Laura pointed out that many of these gender-related topics were not new to women in the workplace. These issues were ones that many women and women athletic trainers encountered in the workplace. In the second CoP meeting, Maggie demonstrated her awareness of the structures that impacted workplace experiences, noting that it was not one system in athletic training, athletics, or health care that was failing people. She felt the barriers women athletic trainers encounter were societal issues. Yu-Wei delved into this concept during the same meeting when we discussed potential solutions for issues women athletic trainers encountered. She prudently explained that organizational, systemic, and societal changes would take a long time and that she felt the only way to

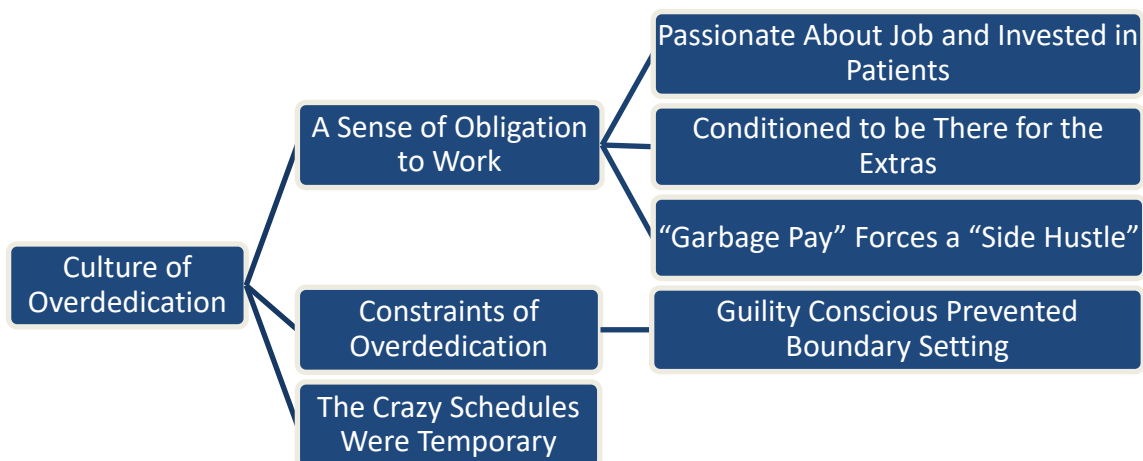
make changes was for the information being discussed in CoP meetings to be shared with those who were in positions of power and had seats at the table.

Culture of Overdedication

Among the women who made up the CoP, an altruistic culture of dedication to their jobs emerged (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The participants in this group had a strong sense professional identity, or “the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group” (Adams et al., 2006, p. 56) which seemed to impact their behaviors and experiences. This culture of overdedication seemed to result in working excessive hours or feeling as if they could not take time away from work. It was rooted in the historical male hegemony and cultures of athletic training. The structures surrounding this culture of overdedication stemmed from men athletic trainers who were expected to be the breadwinners, devoting their time to their jobs with little restriction on the amount of time they were able to commit. Women athletic trainers’ extreme commitment to their jobs seemed to be a part of their professional identity. This behavior and expectations pervaded the mindsets of women in the profession despite the profession, the type of people who worked in the profession, and societal expectations evolving. The ramifications of this extreme dedication included a lack of boundaries around work which resulted in conflicts with work-life balance. The perception in the profession seemed to be that if an athletic trainer was willing to put in long hours and dedicate time, he or she was a good athletic trainer. This also seemed to be what was considered a pathway to get coveted career opportunities.

Figure 4

Themes in Culture of Overdedication



A Sense of Obligation to Work. Women athletic trainers in this study felt a sense of overwhelming obligation, which included a need to work long hours and an inability to take time off from work. This overpowering sense of dedication to their job appeared to be rooted in the historical hegemony of the profession. The long hours seemed to be associated with a requirement for the profession and considered a characteristic for a good athletic trainer. There was a shared understanding that this behavior was expected in the field, despite a resistance to it. It also seemed the sacrifice would result in rewards to obtain jobs in Division I and professional athletics.

In the first CoP meeting, Laura explained why she felt more men athletic trainers worked at the professional level. She believed men felt a greater a sense of freedom compared to women. In her opinion, men were able to work for low pay, travel extensively, and work long hours which allowed them to work their way up in the profession. This apparent sense of freedom for men was a part of what contributed to the

“boys’ club.” Laura mentioned that men athletic trainers talked about how they would sleep in the athletic training room to prove their dedication and further emphasized this perceived sense of freedom with a story about her classmate from her master’s program.

One of the guys, I went to school [with]...he was like, oh yeah, this is awesome; minor league baseball traveling for like you know two-thirds of the year and doing this. ...He was like 24, single. He got paid in like Gatorade chews, [Laughter from group] and it was like the perfect job for him, right? ...I had like a nontraditional route to graduate school and coming out of school I’m like, “No, I’m like 33, dude. I need to like have a job that actually pays me. Like that’s, that’s not even in my realm of possibility for like the jobs that I could be looking at right now.” (Laura, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

Laura’s story highlighted the culture and shared mindset that permeated the athletic training culture. Despite career decisions, multiple women athletic trainers appeared to be constrained and work in a way that sustained this mentality.

CoP members shared stories during the first CoP meeting that highlighted that working long, nontraditional hours seemed to be an expectation of their work culture. I shared an experience working long hours in my time working at a Division III College in which I was lucky if I got 1 day off a month and getting off at 10:30 or 11 o’clock at night was normal. This schedule and the expectations for staff to work long hours was commonplace at my job, and likewise commonly expected when working in the sports industry. The nontraditional hours and expectations set by the culture of the department

where I worked perpetuated the culture of excessive dedication that women athletic trainers have been conditioned to understand as normal.

Women Athletic Trainers Were Passionate About Their Jobs and Invested in Their Patients. There was more than just guilt and obligation that fueled dedication to one's job. There was also a sense of passion and for one's work. This feeling that the athletic trainer could not take time off stemmed from the notion that the athletic trainer must be present in the workplace and devote long hours despite outside obligations and personal needs. This excerpt from Dani's journal entry underscored the deep sense of dedication and passion she had for her job and athletes.

Like many, that balance is hard to obtain. There are always family priorities and work priorities but at some point, putting your family first, could potentially compromise the care you provide for your athletes. In saying that, it isn't basic care of being at practice or at the game, but merely wanting to be the best athletic trainer for your athletes, there for the hard moments (potential suicide attempts, an ER trip at 2 am, the silly weekend injuries). As athletic trainers, do you have to be there for them for some of those extra things? Probably not, but for some people it is hard to turn off their investment in the athletes, because at some point, aren't these athletes our family too? (Dani, Journal entry, December 1, 2020)

This excerpt made it clear that Dani had a passion for and was extremely dedicated to her career. Dani's dedication seemed to stem from the expectations of her work culture but also wanting to provide the best care for the athletes she worked with. There are number of meanings one can gather from Dani's statements (see e.

). She cared greatly about the athletes she worked with and worried about the consequences if she set boundaries with her job. Dani's investment in her athletes may be explained by her desire to be a good athletic trainer and ensure each athlete received appropriate care as soon as possible. She cared for and was invested in the people that she worked with. If she did not provide what she perceived as the highest quality care, Dani felt a sense of guilt. Part of this guilt stemmed from the historical notion that a culture of overdedication was what made a good athletic trainer. Dani may have felt that if she set boundaries and took time away from her job, something bad may happen. If an athlete got injured during Dani's time away from work, she may have felt as though she was a bad person for prioritizing her needs when one of her athletes needed help. This standpoint made it difficult for Dani to separate herself from her work life.

Table 3*Reconstructive Horizon Analysis – Dani*

	Objective	Subjective	Normative	Identity
Foreground	Prioritizing personal needs may result in athletes not getting appropriate care.	I feel guilty when I prioritize my personal needs.	My behavior is typical of other athletic trainers.	I am a health care provider.
Mid-Ground	Something might go wrong if I am not working.	I worry that if something bad happen, and I'm not there, I failed my athlete.	Athletic trainers should provide the care needed for their athletes to succeed.	I am a successful athletic trainer.
Background	I want to ensure the best care possible for my athletes.	I feel like a bad person if I step away from my job and someone gets hurt.	Good people are nurturing and care for others.	I am a good and caring person.

As a reminder, reconstructive horizon analysis helped to uncover layers of meaning within the data to understand the claims made in a social context and highlight the potential meanings in a speech act (Carspecken, 1996). The reconstructive horizon analysis of Dani's statement helped reveal the layers of meanings embedded in her words and allowed me to make explicit what was implicit about her statement (Carspecken, 1996). This analysis allowed for a better understanding of the professional identity and sense of dedication Dani had to her work. Women athletic trainers' apparent need to be working unremittingly may be due the some of the typically implicit meanings which were made explicit through the reconstructive horizon analysis. For example, the shared

cultural understanding that the ability to provide quality care to patients reflected a sense of perceived abilities and self-worth.

Women Athletic Trainers Were Conditioned to Be There for the “Extra”

Things. Even when a woman athletic trainer observed incidences that did not make sense to her at one point in her career, once she was indoctrinated into this culture of overdedication, it pervaded her mindset. I, like Dani, made choices to be there for the “extra things.” In the third CoP meeting, I shared how I was baffled by an athletic trainer that I worked with at my undergraduate school who got up after getting a call at two o’clock in the morning about a lacrosse player who broke her collar bone. However, a few years later when I was working as an athletic trainer, I got a phone call from a student-athlete who was drunk and lost at three o’clock in the morning. Subsequently, I got out of bed, got dressed, picked him up, and took him home. I followed the same pattern I observed a few years previous. I was invested in him and worried about “what if they didn’t make it home?” My sense of obligation and compassion drove me to do what I felt was right as a human who cared about this person. As a result of that decision, I compromised my sleep and personal time. Was it my job to shuttle a student-athlete home in the middle of the night? No. However, women athletic trainers seemed to be conditioned to believe it was their sole responsibility to provide care for and ensure the safety of their patients.

“Garbage Pay” Forces Women Athletic Trainers to Find a “Side Hustle.” The underlying compulsion to being overworked and overextended was explored throughout the course of the study. In the first CoP meeting, Maggie offered the explanation that this

culture of being overworked was societal. She noted “Everybody is like, ‘Oh, when I did this side hustle,’ ‘When I did this side hustle,’ ‘When I worked these 12 jobs at one time.’” She explained that the need to work multiple jobs was necessary because “the pay is garbage, and you need it just to survive,” but that society also placed pressure on people to do more to appear successful.”

For many women athletic trainers, their response to the challenge of low salary was to seek additional sources of revenue to supplement their income. Women athletic trainers were constrained by their employers’ failure to provide a viable income. The inability or unwillingness of an employer to appropriately pay women athletic trainers constrained them, often resulting in them seeking secondary sources of employment or income. This “side hustle” may contribute to athletic trainers overextending themselves. In the first CoP meeting, Grace spoke about the high frequency that she picked up extra athletic training work to supplement her income until she had a significant health event. Grace shared she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer shortly after she began working for the hospital. This diagnosis made her realize she didn’t have to “kill myself” to pick up extra work every weekend. Prior to her diagnosis, Grace was overextended. She shared that the schedule she previously maintained negatively impacted her personal life and mental health. Laura agreed with that sentiment, noting that the challenge of low salary contributed to a high rate of burnout and conflicts with work-life balance in the profession.

The Constraints of Overdedication. When women athletic trainers adhered to this culture of overdedication, the failure to set boundaries to protect personal time

seemed to pose personal challenges. Women athletic trainers appeared to be constrained by a feeling that they could not take time off or mentally separate themselves from work. Despite the passionate drive a woman athletic trainer may have for her work, these acts of dedication may result in a struggle with how it interferes with her personal life.

On December 1, 2020, Dani journaled that she felt fortunate for the professional opportunities she has had. However, a byproduct of her successful career and intense dedication to her work was her grappling with how to balance her work and personal life. Dani struggled with her inability to mentally distance herself from her work.

Personally, I want to be the best at everything that I do. This passion, this competitiveness within myself has led to having a hard relationship with the work-life balance. When working with athletes, I have had a hard time distancing myself from not doing everything for them and/or not taking it personally when advice is ignored (the good ol' I told you so without actually being able to say it). There are so many moments where I want to leave the profession and go work for the Post office or be a secretary or personal assistant. I want a position that I don't take home with me, that I don't spend hours worrying about the athletes/coaches and planning. (Dani, Journal entry, December 1, 2020)

Dani's passion for her job, the obligation she felt, and inability to set boundaries around her work life resulted in her carrying a great mental burden. The consequence of this pressure made her feel like the only way to resolve the issue was to escape by leaving the profession. Dani pushed herself to the limits with her job. When she reached a breaking point, she questioned why she remained working in the profession. The way she

dedicated herself to her work made it seemingly impossible to find the balance she desired.

In the first CoP meeting, Dani noted that she constantly evaluated what she could do to ensure the athletes she worked with were successful. Despite having a “great” work schedule (8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with occasional travel), she could not figure out how “to care less,” so that it did not affect her personal life. While she wanted to live a life so “that I do make medical appointments for myself; I do have time for my partner; I do have time for my family that lives 13 hours away,” she had a hard time breaking away from the constraints of obligation. As mentioned in the reconstructive horizon analysis (see e.

), Dani seemed to liken her sense of self-worth to her dedication to her work. She worried that if she took time for herself, someone's well-being could be in jeopardy. If someone got hurt, she failed her athlete. She was a bad person if she was not there for every instance an athlete got hurt or to help them make decisions about their health care.

In the first CoP meeting, Katelyn reflected on the impact of working in the evenings and at night, highlighting that it posed challenges for social gatherings, dating, and making time for family. This dedication and feeling that one could not take off from work impacted more than social life. The inability to or feeling that one could not take time off resulted in CoP members not taking care of their basic personal needs. In the first CoP meeting, Maggie shared that she had been dealing with a recent health issue. She had to attend multiple doctor's appointments and expressed that because of the coronavirus pandemic, she was not "in season." She discussed that she would not be able to go to these appointments in a normal year. This seemed to trigger something in her "Fuck that! This is my health." Maggie's work culture appeared to make her feel like she could not take time off from work. This may be because she felt judged or as if she would be viewed as doing a poor job if she took time off. This cultural mindset limited women athletic trainers, resulting in neglecting to take care of themselves and sometimes in not addressing some of their basic needs.

Maggie was not the only CoP member whose obligation to her work impacted her ability to focus on her health. Katelyn shared how she had a significant health issue and had a hard time accepting that she had to take time off from work. She had a life-

changing experience which made her recognize the need for a change in how she approached her job and life.

I had a stroke, actually, like a year and a half ago, and it forced me to be out of work. And I was miserable being like...I like cried being out of work, but I think like it was kind of essential for that to happen to...realize like the world still goes on without me there. Like at my school, like it was okay, like, yes, they made me feel missed, but um but also to like truly focus on myself. And I think from that, like, it made me start like a more of like a health journey and like you know just like well-being and like all different aspects. Um and honestly, I don't know if that would have happened if I didn't have like something that made me kind of hit the wall. Um, but with that being said, like if I didn't have that happen, I don't think I'd be in like where I am now in such a good position. (Katelyn, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

Katelyn reflected on that experience and recognized that she should have been taking time to heal and focus on herself. However, her extreme dedication connected to her professional identity hindered her from mentally separating herself initially. In the second CoP Meeting, she reinforced how her mindset constrained her, sharing that during her recovery from her stroke, she “was a mess” and focused on how she was not allowed to work instead of focusing her healing. This mindset stemmed from the roots of the profession and the shared mindset athletic trainers seem to have about over-dedicating themselves to their jobs. In fact, Katelyn further exemplified the constraints of dedication during the second CoP meeting, revealing that it took her 8 years before she asked

someone to cover for her at work. This behavior and the feeling that she could not ask for help to take time off work resulted in conflicts with work-life balance.

A Guilty Conscience Prevented Boundary Setting. Women of the CoP gave deeper insight on the constraints of the culture of overdedication in the field. It appeared women athletic trainers' profession identities and the expectations of their jobs limited their ability to set boundaries to protect their personal life. In the second CoP meeting, Katelyn emphasized the sense of guilt she had when she took off from work. She further explained "I don't know what it is about our profession, but you just feel like it's like this need." The cultural norm could be indicative of what women athletic trainers viewed as a good athletic trainer. Women athletic trainers' strong professional identity seemed to result in this sense of guilt. The guilty feelings Katelyn reported may be due to her feeling like she needed or wanted to be present at work to care for her student-athletes. It almost seemed as if it was requirement to be unwavering in one's dedication to their job. This may be reflective of what was engrained in women athletic trainers of what constitutes a good athletic trainer. She may have felt that if she took off from work that she was not doing her job well or may have feared that something could go wrong while she was off. This guilt and the subsequent inability to set boundaries around work created conflicts with work-life balance.

In the second CoP meeting, Yu-Wei shared her thoughts about the guilt and stress that CoP members expressed about taking time off from work. She stated that in the athletic training industry it was difficult to take time off regardless of gender but that women felt more guilt than men. This sense of guilt prevented women athletic trainers

from setting the boundaries needed to create a culture which supported a work-life balance. The women athletic trainers in this study seemed to feel a sense of guilt with the idea of breaking from the cultural norm of dedicating long hours and not taking time off.

This sentiment was discussed by Maggie in the second CoP meeting. She grappled with her obligation to work and attending to her personal needs and obligations. Despite working with eight other athletic trainers, she felt guilty asking a coworker to cover for her. This guilt constrained her. She felt everyone she worked with was overworked and underpaid. However, there seemed to be a precedent set about work expectations in her department. As a result, Maggie felt bad asking someone to help her when she needed support. She shared an anecdote in which she apologized to a coworker who she asked to cover for her when she had to attend a funeral. Despite her coworker's willingness to help, Maggie still felt that she was wrong for asking. This sense of obligation and guilt precluded women athletic trainers from "being a human being and not be at work for 5 minutes," explained Maggie. Despite Maggie's recognition of people having personal needs outside of work, the culture and expectations set by her department appeared to cultivate her sense of guilt, as a result she did not feel like it was acceptable to attend to those needs.

Women Athletic Trainers Planned for the Crazy Schedules to Be Temporary.

In the first CoP meeting, Grace shed some light into the mindset of athletic trainers and their willingness to work long hours in their early careers. She felt many women athletic trainers thought they could work the "crazy schedules" early in their careers then switch settings when they had a family. Grace seemed to think this was the expectation most

women athletic trainers had as they planned for their careers. Women athletic trainers appeared to be willing to accept this culture of overdedication when they entered the field as the draw of the job seemed worth the sacrifice.

However, women athletic trainers may not fully understand the consequences of working for an organization which reinforces a culture of overdedication. The impacts of this culture did not appear to be understood or made clear to women athletic trainers prior to starting their careers. Grace had the opportunity to change settings early in her career. She was grateful to have found a role that allowed her to find a better work-life balance, sharing she did not realize the mental toll it took on her until after she made the switch to her current position. I agreed with this sentiment, sharing that when I was younger, I did not recognize the how working the long hours would impact me and that I did not think it matter to me as much when I was younger. This statement was met with head nods of agreement from the group. It seemed this obligation women athletic trainers had to their jobs was normalized by the athletic training profession yet posed threats to athletic training being a sustainable career.

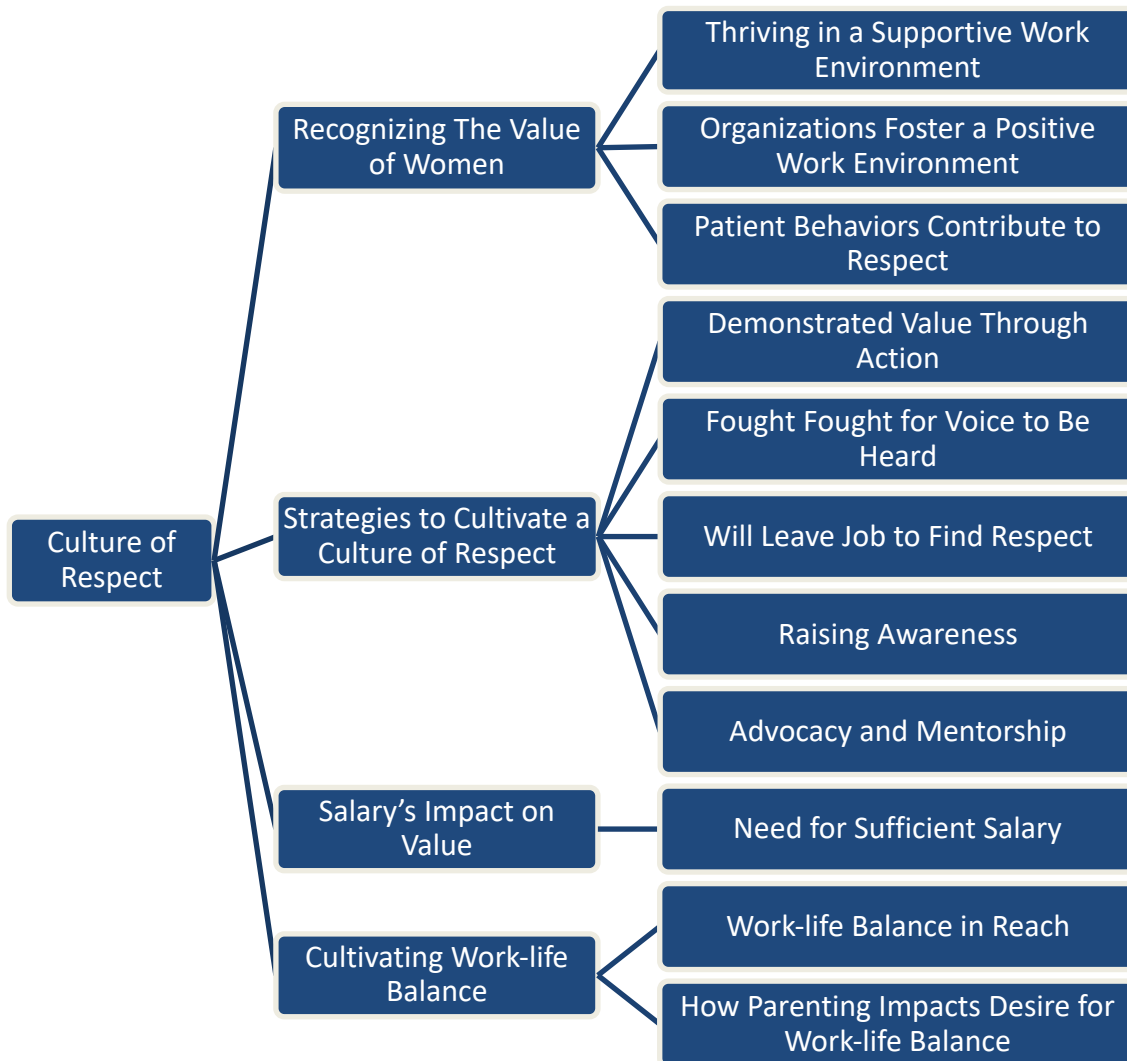
Culture of Respect: A Counternarrative to the Male-Created Narrative of Meritocracy in Athletic Training

The women athletic trainers in this study seemed to resist the structures of gender and desired to break free from the constraints of a culture of overdedication. As CoP members spoke, it became clear that respect was a consequential element in their professional experience and, attaining respect in the workplace, contributed to their desire to remain working in the profession. The women who constituted the CoP were primarily

mid-to-upper 30 years of age who were still actively practicing as athletic trainers. Through the critical structural analysis, I gained a better understanding as to why and how CoP members were able to remain working in clinical settings. The culture of respect (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) served as counternarrative to the existing male-created narrative which dictated who was worthy of success in the profession. The findings of this study unearthed acts of opposition toward the male hegemony in athletic training and a hunt for a culture of respect in the workplace.

Figure 5

Themes in Culture of Respect



The women who made up the CoP appeared to seek and develop a culture of respect around them. Analysis revealed CoP members desired a culture in which they felt valued; were treated in high regard by administrators, coaches, colleagues, and patients/athletes; were recognized and acknowledged for their contributions; and that cultivated a healthy work environment which supported a work-life balance. The women

in this study wanted or sought work environments which embodied this culture and seemed frustrated when certain elements were absent. The analysis revealed women athletic trainers were seeking respect, grateful to have it, or desiring change to foster it. The concept of respect was both explicitly and implicitly stated throughout the dialogue of the study.

Recognizing the Value of Women Athletic Trainers. The environment in which CoP members and their colleagues worked, and the people that they worked with, appeared to determine if women athletic trainers felt valued and respected. The dialogue from women of the CoP divulged a desire to be treated in high regard by those they were surrounded by at work. Women athletic trainer were conscious that many women in the profession battled a perception that they were incapable of doing their job well because they were women working in a historically male-dominated field.

Women athletic trainers seemed to feel valued from the staff or patients they worked with. In the second CoP meeting, Maggie shared that the colleague she reached out to shared that patients in a physician's clinic assumed she had knowledge and would provide quality care. In the first CoP meeting, we reflected on some of the issues that had been discussed that day. In our dialogue about why women of the CoP continued to practice clinically despite challenges that they faced, Maggie revealed that seeking an environment that valued her was something that kept her working in the profession. At a camp Maggie worked at, the staff and coaches listened to her because she was a part of the medical staff, and the athletes expressed their gratitude for the care she provided. She noted this experience gave her hope that people can, and do, have the capacity to show

respect for her and her work. In response, I shared a similar experience working at a Division III university on the East Coast. I was thanked often and felt appreciated. I shared that I loved working there and often regret leaving that job.

Women Thrived in Supportive Work Environment. While biases against women and acts of sexism perpetuated a lack of respect for the skills and knowledge women athletic trainers offered, a supportive work environment helped women athletic trainers to thrive. When women athletic trainers were empowered to showcase their skillsets, they contributed to their jobs and profession in their unique ways and were satisfied with their roles. In the second CoP meeting, I shared that the colleague I spoke with for our data collection talked about a time in her current job in which she was able design and create an athletic training clinic which aligned with her ideals about practicing as a health care provider. She had a great sense of pride about the holistic approach (which treated the mind and body) her and her team took, and the level of care they provided to the student-athletes. As things changed at her job, budget cuts and changes within the university forced them to cut staff and relocate to a different building. They no longer had the staffing capacity or physical space to support the model. This contributed to a sense of dissatisfaction, lack of pride for her work, and motivated her to take steps toward starting her own business. My colleague wanted to provide high quality health care that served the total person, not be constrained by her organization, and forced to provide limited services.

In response to this anecdote, Yu-Wei shared the colleague she spoke with for our data collection started her own athletic training business during the coronavirus

pandemic. Her colleague's business provided an opportunity to create an environment that she wanted to work in and allowed her to address other concerns such as hectic schedule and low pay. Yu-Wei's colleague was fortunate to have support, a client-base, and a state practice act (statute outlining the scope of practice and responsibilities for athletic trainers) which allowed her to start her own business. Yu-Wei recognized it was not always possible to make sweeping systemic and cultural changes in an organization. Her reflection highlighted the need for fundamental cultural changes in organizations, or else they risk having challenges with retention and employee satisfaction.

When women athletic trainers were in positions where they felt valued, they were able to thrive and wanted to remain in their position. Through the study, Tina expressed gratitude for the respect and sense of value she had from the coaches and student-athletes she worked. Her supportive work environment contributed to Tina's ability to thrive as a professional. During our study, Tina was recognized nationally for her contributions to the profession. In the WhatsApp chat on February 6, 2021, I highlighted Tina's recent accomplishment. CoP members were excited for Tina, describing it as "amazing" and offering words of support. Tina was able to make a significant impact on the profession in part due to the support she had at work. Tina recognized the value in her work culture and wrestled with the thought of moving closer to family, sharing she did not want to lose her job because "I absolutely adore my job, the people I work with, the kids that I work with, the families that I work with." Tina's journal entry from December 1, 2020, also revealed she had a sense of dedication to her job, sharing that she did not "want to leave a great situation and be forced into a situation where I am discriminated against because of

my gender” and speaking with her friend (about her experiences with sexism and inequity) “clarified this” for her.

Organizations Can Foster a Positive Work Environment. The women in this study shared how they sought work environments which provided them with a sense of value and respect, free from previously discussed gender biases. In the first CoP meeting, Laura shared that she valued the environment in the all-girls’ school she worked at. From how she spoke about her school, it was clear she felt comfortable and was championed by the athletic director. Laura appreciated how respect and value for women and girls was embedded into the culture at the school.

I really appreciate having that kind of support, and the fact that it’s like in my school’s ethos, basically, to give female athletes every possible resource because they’re the only athletes, we have, but also that’s—as an all girls’ school that’s what we stand for. (Laura, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

In the same meeting, Laura shared that she had great respect from the coaches and administration at her current job but questioned if it would be the same if she worked elsewhere. She explained that she served as the strength and conditioning coach in addition to her role as the athletic trainer and wondered if her programming and mobility workouts would be taken with the same level of seriousness if she worked with a stereotypical male athletic director and coaches. Laura’s statement demonstrated her awareness of the societal challenges women athletic trainers faced and her gratitude for the culture of respect she found in her current role.

Yu-Wei agreed with Laura's statement about the positive work environment of an all-girls' school and the leadership in the workplace. While Yu-Wei worked at a coeducational school, she shared she had a similar relationship her athletic director.

I'm pretty lucky because my boss is also a woman, like she's the only female AD in our league, but she's like a woman of color who happens to also be queer. So it's like, like the stars aligned for me. (Yu-Wei, CoP Meeting 1, November 9, 2020)

Yu-Wei explained that who you worked with, if they trusted your judgement, and if they viewed you as the expert was important to feeling valued at work. It was clear that having colleagues who respected and valued the expertise of women athletic trainers brought them a sense of self-worth and validation. I echoed this sentiment, sharing I found a great sense of value working at a women's college and appreciated the trust the women placed in me.

Likewise, Katelyn discussed how the leadership in a workplace can develop a culture of respect. On November 30, 2020, Katelyn journaled about how the colleague she reached out to for our data collection worked in the military setting with a commander who ensured she knew he supported her and that they would not tolerate disrespect. This action by the commander and other administrators created a culture of respect in the workplace. Katelyn noted her colleague had been treated with "perfect respect," adding it "helps that my friend has a strong personality and wouldn't put up with any bullshit, but it's nice to know her commander and others higher up support her and made it noted."

Similarly, when CoP members felt respected by their colleagues, it seemed to contribute to a positive work experience. Dani shared a story in the first CoP meeting that demonstrated how one's coworkers could help foster a culture of respect. She shared that working synergistically with a strength and conditioning coach at one job allowed them both to succeed at work. This relationship afforded them the opportunity to confront issues as a "united team" and to have more leverage when they addressed the coach. Dani seemed to appreciate the collaborative work environment and felt respect was reciprocated between her and the strength and conditioning coach.

In the second CoP meeting, we dug deeper into how respect could be cultivated in the workplace. CoP members agreed that showing and treating others with respect was a skill that could be taught, and the environment which supported that could be developed. I shared that in my master's degree program, the professors and athletic staff held themselves, student athletic trainers, and the student-athletes accountable. All parties were expected to show respect and that respect was given to one another, regardless of gender.

In the second CoP meeting, Maggie talked about how this effort could be part of an educational shift. She felt that treating people with respect needed to be taught from the top of an organization and explicitly stated, not assumed. Maggie's statement suggested that administrators of athletic departments, executives of companies, and supervisors needed to show and expect their staff to show respect. Yu-Wei came back to this suggestion in multiple meetings, stating she felt there needed to be support from the top of organizations. She noted the people (men) in power needed to help support women

athletic trainers and the cultural shift. These statements emphasized how the culture in an organization must be created and supported by those who have held power in the industry.

Patients' Behaviors Contributed to a Sense of Respect. Women of the CoP also shared examples of how they felt valued by the patients in their workplace. Women athletic trainers provided examples of feeling valued and respected across a variety of settings. In the first CoP meeting, Katelyn, who worked at a coeducational high school, revealed how she felt valued at her work by sharing that she believed her student-athletes trusted in her skills and sought care from her regardless of their gender. Student-athletes seeking care from Katelyn despite her being a woman demonstrated that they recognized that she offered valuable skills and provided quality health care services. Likewise, Dani also had a positive experience at her first job at a military academy, referring to it as “a blessing” in the first CoP meeting. She noted that she was not very confident initially but her male rugby players built her up. She felt fortunate for her experiences working in the military setting.

Women of the CoP explicitly shared examples of women athletic trainers feeling respected by patients. In her journal entry on November 30, 2020, Katelyn shared that the colleague she reached out to for data collection also worked in the military setting and stated she felt nothing but respect working in the male-dominated military setting. Similarly, on December 1, 2020, Dani journaled that the colleague she reached out to for our data collection felt she had complete respect from the individuals she worked with in her industrial job. Maggie also found respect and felt valued working with the football

players in her current Division I university setting. She shared that the football players made statements expressing their appreciation for the care she provided when she was on a temporary assignment to work with the team.

Strategies Women Athletic Trainers Employed to Cultivate a Culture of Respect. CoP members discussed ways to demonstrate value and earn respect at work. In the fifth CoP meeting, Yu-Wei shared that young women athletic trainers should know there were ways to command respect, and this often started during the interview process. She shared that a woman athletic trainer can establish herself as a knowledgeable professional before beginning a job by acting professionally and showcasing her knowledge with everyone she encountered during an interview. She felt it was important to maintain this level of professionalism even during seemingly casual portions of an interview like meeting with student-athletes.

Women Athletic Trainers Demonstrated Value Through Actions. Women athletic trainers were able demonstrate value through the care they provided. The culture, administration, and coaches in a work environment needed to recognize the care women athletic trainers provided as valuable and not as a problem. In the first CoP meeting, I shared that the number of injuries doubled from my first year to second year at one job. Tracking treatments allowed me to demonstrate my value to the athletic director and assistant athletic director who recognized the increase in injuries as positive, identifying the cause to be student-athletes trusting me and seeking care from me. Others' experiences contrasted this, and so I asked, how do we change the mindset of administrators and coaches to understand that more athletes getting seen by the athletic

trainer allowed for injury prevention, safety for the student-athletes, and a better functioning, healthy team?

In the first CoP meeting, Dani spoke about how she had to change the mindset of some of the athletes she worked. Some athletes seemed to have a difficult time with her pushing them to do more compared to the athletes' receiving similar direction from a coach or a strength coach. As she worked with them, it seemed the athletes recognized her value and the benefits of her workouts. In the same meeting, Maggie highlighted that it was unfortunate that sometimes the catalyst for that change was a catastrophic incident. She recalled an anecdote Dani shared in which Dani responded to a spinal cord injury early in her career, "Nobody would ever wish that, nobody wants to do that. Like, it's just so unfortunate that ends up being, that ends being what the catalyst for respect is. Somebody has something catastrophic happen, and that just sucks." Maggie's comments appeared to show that she recognized that it was commonly understood that good athletic trainers are able to respond appropriately to emergency situations, but she felt it was sad that there was a need to demonstrate this ability to combat the misconceptions about women athletic trainers' capabilities as health care providers. She also implied women athletic trainers may not get the respect they deserved until they showcased their skills in a similarly unfortunate event.

CoP members seemed to think it was important for women athletic trainers to take action to build a culture of respect. In the first CoP meeting, Yu-Wei offered a potential way to help change society's expectations and for people to gain comfort with women as health care providers. She felt that to change the mindset in the historically male-

dominated sports industry, it was important for women athletic trainers to be present in men's and boys' sports settings. The only way for people to get comfortable and for them to recognize the value women athletic trainers offered was through exposure to women who provided quality health care.

On November 24, 2020, I journaled about other strategies that the colleague I reached out to for data collection shared. She believed some of these strategies could help women gain respect in the workplace and establish themselves as trustworthy health care providers. My colleague, a young, blonde woman, was the head athletic trainer at a Division II university. She recognized that her appearance and gender put her at a disadvantage, so she took measures to establish boundaries and herself as a competent health care provider. She shared that she created a new sports medicine email address to provide a sense of objectivity, used objective information to back her decisions and statements, and used examples from respected organizations to help gain support for changes she wanted to implement. These measures appeared to be an effort to oppose the gender biases she recognized were held against her and to demonstrate that she made objective (as opposed to emotional) decisions.

Women Athletic Trainers Fought for Their Voice to Be Heard. When women athletic trainers did not have respect, they seemed to become frustrated but recognized the need to stand up for themselves. In turn, women athletic trainers tried to combat the forces that silenced them. Sometimes supervisors did not support or opposed a woman athletic trainer's efforts to improve care for patients. In the first CoP meeting, Maggie, who held a Doctorate in Athletic Training and worked at a Division I university,

expressed that she struggled to be heard and gain support from her boss (head athletic trainer) to implement new ideas or ensure best practices were followed. Maggie described clashes with her boss as “frustrating” and “really hard.” She worked to expand her knowledge and better her skillsets but was met with resistance despite the value she knew she offered. Maggie explained that her boss often put others down and was set in his ways. She added that she held her tongue when she first started her position because was a temporary hire. However, when her position became permanent, she felt empowered to advocate for change and stand her ground on what she thought was best. This candor resulted in multiple conflicts with her boss. Maggie’s actions seemed to be an attempt to combat the structures that silenced women athletic trainers and to stand up for herself and what she felt was the best options for the work that needed to be done. However, it seemed she had barriers to overcome in her current role.

In contribution to the discussion in the first CoP meeting, Dani shared that she also had to speak up to address a problem to ensure the best care for the athletes she worked with. In one position working in with military athletes, she confronted an unqualified strength coach on issues related to athletes getting injured due to the strength and conditioning programming. Dani expressed frustration with the strength coach’s response, viewing the issue as emotional (Dani being mad at him) instead of recognizing her desire to ensure athlete safety and fix the problem. Dani, like Maggie, seemed to try to make her voice heard and was frustrated by her colleague’s inability or unwillingness to listen her. Despite any preconceived notions the strength coach had, Dani’s primary goal was to ensure the best care and safety for the athletes she worked with. Tina, Grace,

and I also shared stories from our early careers in which we stood up to coaches to defend our positions, treatment decisions, or explain proper protocols to coaches. These actions served as acts of opposition to the culture of silencing women and contributed to establishing a culture of respect in the workplace.

Women Athletic Trainers Will Leave a Job to Find Respect. When women athletic trainers were unable to make the changes needed to create a culture of respect in their current place of work, it seemed they sought opportunities that allowed them to find the sense of value and respect they desired. On November 24, 2020, I journaled about how the colleague I reached out to said a huge drawback of the state of her current job was the inability to practice the way she wanted to. For the first few years in her current role, she was able to practice the way she wanted, able to give her staff autonomy, and support them in their goals. However, things changed, and these changes limited her ability practice the way she wanted to. This change seemed to leave her feeling a lack of recognition for the value she brought to the department and resulted in her contemplating leaving the job.

Repeated incidents of sexism and inappropriate behavior seemed to when women athletic trainers drew a line. On December 1, 2020, Dani journaled about how she left a job after her work did not address her report of inappropriate behavior from a physician toward her, explaining she could not be in position in which she was not respected. This experience also resulted in her contemplating leaving the profession entirely. Similarly, the colleague Yu-Wei reached out to for our data collection experienced a lack of respect in her work environment and subsequently decided to start her own business. In her

November 27, 2020 journal entry, Yu-Wei shared that her colleague started her own business because she was “tired of either being hypersexualized or having to hide her feminine qualities to be ‘one of the boys.’” Starting her own business allowed her to create a culture that she would be respected in. Yu-Wei wrote that her colleague wanted her contributions and value to be recognized by clients, sharing that “starting her own brand and dictating the type of culture she wants to establish” allowed her to “draw the type of clientele that is attracted to what she has to give—not focused on her gender, but on all the qualities she has to offer which includes her feminine qualities.” Likewise, managers’ and administrators’ actions seemed to impact a woman athletic trainer’s experiences, both positively and negatively. These sentiments were shared by Yu-Wei in her journal entry on November 27, 2020, “It feels like no matter what, how a woman is or should be is completely dictated by the people who determine how their specific practice is run.”

Raising Awareness About Biases Against Women Athletic Trainers. As women working in health care, CoP members recognized that there were challenges to establishing a culture of respect in the workplace and ensuring that their voices were heard. In the fourth CoP meeting Yu-Wei shared that young women athletic trainers should be made aware that people have an implicit bias in which they do not respect women as much as men in professional settings. She seemed to think women athletic trainers’ awareness of this bias could help them be prepared for and better understand the challenges they will face as they enter the profession.

Women of the CoP hoped that one day women athletic trainers would have respect and that their successes in the field would be normalized. In the first CoP meeting, Katelyn drew attention to the fact that the members of the CoP were a group of diverse women who were all very successful. She hoped that eventually there would not be a need to highlight a woman athletic trainer's success because it would become the norm. Tina journaled about this as well.

Every day I strive to be the best Athletic Trainer I can be, not just a woman athletic trainer. My hope is that in 20 years it won't matter that you are a woman, but just a damn good athletic trainer. (Tina, Journal entry, December 1, 2020)

Advocacy and Mentorship Supported the Cultivation of a Culture of Respect.

Another factor that seemed to contribute to supporting women athletic trainers in the workplace was finding people who would support them. In the fourth CoP meeting, Maggie expressed the need for women athletic trainers to feel empowered to use their voice and find advocates in the workplace. She felt young professional women needed to be aware that they should seek people in their place of work that would help advocate for them. Maggie's statement demonstrated that she believed that women athletic trainers may need support to face challenges in the workplace. If women athletic trainers were supported, it may help them succeed in the profession. Tina demonstrated this in her December 1, 2020, journal entry, sharing she had great mentors who encouraged her without consideration of her gender. Having supportive mentors seemed to allow Tina to gain confidence and helped her succeed as an athletic trainer.

Women athletic trainers' actions demonstrated how they valued advocacy through their desire to mentor and guide other women athletic trainers. CoP members seemed to share an altruistic desire to improve the environment and experience for women athletic trainers. Examples of this desire were shared in multiple journal entries. Maggie and her colleague felt the need to be a good example for women they worked with, including athletic training students and patients. She shared that they wanted to contribute to the creation of a more respectful work and learning environment for the profession. On November 30, 2020, Katelyn journaled about her colleague's positive experience mentoring her female coworker and how it made Katelyn realize the impact she can have at her high school. Katelyn seemed to find a greater sense of value and purpose through this conversation with her colleague.

The desire to help others and set an example for women and girls was accentuated by Laura in her journal entry from November 30, 2020. Laura's colleague felt empowered to help her athletes and felt her position was more about being a woman who was a health care provider as opposed to a woman who worked in athletics. In the second CoP meeting, Yu-Wei shared a story that recognized the sense of value women athletic trainers seemed to get from serving as a mentor. She stated that the colleague she reached out to for our data collection served as an adjunct faculty member at her alma mater and was happy to give back to her profession through this service. Yu-Wei shared this to express her support of the CoP's idea to provide women athletic training students and young women professionals with an opportunity to discuss topics specific to women athletic trainers with women who were successful in the field.

Similarly, in the second CoP meeting, Laura wondered if NATA offered a women athletic trainers' special interest group. She felt that a resource that provided opportunity discuss issues and create change was needed at a national level for women athletic trainers to gain respect. She felt this resource would help establish broader recognition and the ability to address women-specific issues for the profession at large. I followed up on Laura's inquiry for the third CoP meeting. I searched for a women athletic trainers' special interest or advisory committee on NATA's website, was unable to find one, and shared this in the third meeting. Maggie added to this conversation noting that this was an area for growth, to provide resources which supported women athletic trainers and platforms which provided opportunities to address issues. While I mentioned the Women in Athletic Training Facebook group to CoP members, most seemed unaware of the resource which appeared to be independent of athletic training's professional organizations.

Salary's Impact on the Perception of the Women Athletic Trainers' Value.

Another area women athletic trainers were concerned about was salary. Women athletic trainers conveyed that they felt appropriate compensation reflected the sense of value employers had for their employees. On November 30, 2020, Grace journaled, "It is sad that we are health care professionals that are board certified and licensed by the board of medicine, as well as have masters [*sic*], and still get low pay." She noted that an increase in pay would help the perception of the profession and result in it being taken more seriously, "We are the first line of health care for many athletes in many settings. We get unappreciated due to having such low pay." It seemed Grace felt that if athletic trainers

were paid appropriately, it would show that the profession was respected and that employers valued their services.

Women Athletic Trainers' Need for Sufficient Salary. Appropriate compensation seemed to be needed for women athletic trainers to support themselves and feel dignified. On November 30, 2020, Grace journaled how her and the colleague she spoke to for data collection believed the reason many women did not work in Division I settings was that they were not willing to accept the low salary associated with those roles. She shared she was unsure why men athletic trainers seemed to accept low pay and the benefits of new clothing and shoes rather than higher salaries. In the second CoP meeting, Maggie shared her boss at the Division I university regularly talked about the low salary that he made at his first job.

I'm sorry, but like I still don't make very much money. So like don't you just want better for everyone? Instead of like having everyone suffer the way that you did.... Why do you want that for everyone? Why do you want the profession to dry out like that? (Maggie, CoP Meeting 2, December 2, 2020)

Maggie's statement implied athletic trainers would not stay in the profession if salary was not sufficient to support their needs.

In the second CoP meeting, I shared that the colleague who I reached out to for data collection accepted the constraints of her job until she turned 30 years old and started to plan for her future. When she thought about her future, her salary and lack of merit increases seemed to be a barrier in her plans to expand her family. On November 24, 2020, I journaled about the challenges she had with low salary after

speaking with the same colleague. I was surprised to learn she only received one raise in 8 years. When my colleague asked for an increase in her salary, her employer offered to eliminate one of her athletic training staff's positions to accommodate her request. She declined the offer. At the time we spoke, she was planning to start her own business which would allow her to focus on the aspects of her clinical practice she was passionate about and hopefully provide a better income. Dani expressed her frustration with salary for the profession as a whole in the second CoP meeting, sharing she thought it was sad that women have to look outside of the traditional settings to earn a better salary and that there was not a mechanism to significantly increase one's salary while working in athletics unless you became the head athletic trainer. Dani noted that other settings (i.e., industrial) may pay better but the draw of the profession was where she was passionate (working in athletics).

In contrast, it seemed that when women of the CoP felt they were compensated appropriately, it helped to retain them in their workplace. In the first CoP meeting, Laura stated when she considered moving out of New York City, she thought, "Can we, like, find another progressive all girls' school that I can work at that um will pay me decently? Because this is like the perfect situation." This was met by laughter and head nods of agreement from other CoP members. Appropriate compensation appeared to influence women athletic trainers' career choices. In the second CoP meeting, Dani mentioned the colleague she reached out to changed settings from working at a Division II university to an industrial setting because of an increase in salary in addition to accommodating a work-life balance. CoP members felt athletic training students and young professionals

needed to have the knowledge and skills which enabled them to improve their income. This was highlighted in the third CoP meeting when Yu-Wei mentioned that women athletic trainers could benefit from strategies to ask for more resources and a raise.

Cultivating Work-Life Balance. A healthy work environment and the ability to maintain a work-life balance was something that every CoP member recognized as important to them. Women of the CoP shared multiple incidences in which they chose to protect their personal time or made career choices to support their ability to do so. In the first CoP meeting, Maggie spoke about the seemingly shared view among women athletic trainers wanting to protect personal time. She noted that the only people she knew who “love everything about” Division I were men, and many of her women colleagues shared that the stereotypical lifestyle associated with those roles was not desirable. Maggie further emphasized her priorities, sharing that she valued her friends and spending time with them. She also noted that prior to obtaining her current job, she said she would “never work” in a Division I setting. Her mindset was that her working in Division I was temporary, and she did not view it as a long-term position as she wanted a position that supported her goal of obtaining a work-life balance. In the same meeting, I shared how I made efforts to protect my time outside of work in my second job at a Division II University. I spoke with the athletic director and head athletic trainer about my needs, “Look, I’m not happy. I can’t build a life in [city] because I don’t get time off. I’m not happy in my job. Um, and if things don’t change, I will leave.” While the hours improved, the work culture was unhealthy, and the environment it created made me

unhappy and angry. Therefore, a year after the conversation with the athletic director, I left my job.

Because of my experiences at that university, only 3 years after completing my master's degree, I shared that I considered leaving the profession. In response to my story, Dani shared how she took a year off after working a position with elite athletes. She needed time to "regroup and refresh" after working 18-hour days for 1.5 years. She stated that she initially accepted the grueling hours because they were preparing for the Olympics. However, she expected downtime afterwards which was never given. Like me, Dani left her position due to the stress it caused her. She shared the workload and work culture at that job made her question if she wanted to stay in the profession. How do we maintain a career we love and protect our personal time? Is it even possible?

A Work-Life Balance May Be Within Reach. Katelyn recognized that an individual's needs and the balance in one's life changes. These needs may result in changing work settings. Some members of the CoP found it was possible to find fulfilling jobs that supported a work-life balance. In the first CoP meeting, Yu-Wei described the contrast between her job working at a physical therapy clinic which also involved doing outreach to a high school, and her current role solely working at a secondary school. When she worked for the physical therapy clinic, she was at work by 6:30am, got off at 1:00pm, only to head up town to the independent school for the afternoon and evening. In her current role, she got up leisurely and worked from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tina, Laura, and Katelyn agreed that the secondary school's schedule was accommodating to a work-life balance. Katelyn shared it allowed time to work out and take care of personal matters in

the mornings. Tina concurred with Katelyn, sharing she had time in the mornings before work and still had her evenings most days. Laura's journal entry from November 30, 2020, reinforced the perception women of the CoP had about the secondary school setting. She reflected on her conversation with the colleague she reached out to for our data collection. Her colleague's original dream was to work college basketball; however, during clinical rotations, she realized the high school offered better pay, hours, and work-life balance. Her colleague was happy in her current job and worried that in 10 years when she planned to have children and relocate to be closer to family, she would not be able to find a workplace that supported this culture of respect.

Sometimes the culture at one's work can help teach an individual to create and maintain a work-life balance when they were conditioned to behave otherwise. In the first CoP meeting, I shared that at one university I worked for, I learned to have a work-life balance. The student-athletes respected my time; they expected me to take time for lunch and workout during the workday. Carving out and protecting time for myself was something I had to learn to do, and I was grateful for the student-athletes and staff that encouraged me to do so. This mindset was a change to the expected extreme dedication that had been engrained in me from my previous job.

Implementing strategies at work to support a work-life balance can also support a culture of respect. As mentioned in the "Culture of Overdedication" section, multiple CoP members spoke about the guilt associated with taking time off and concerns about lack of coverage. In the second CoP meeting, I shared how I developed a list of athletic trainers who could be contacted to cover events for me if I needed to miss work. My

athletic director had the list in the case of an emergency. The use of list allowed for consistent coverage when I was unable to be there, and for me to take time off knowing there was someone to cover for me. If I was unable to get it covered through someone on the list, I used the listserv through the state athletic trainers' association. However, Tina expressed that the same listserv did not seem to yield positive results in finding coverage and her colleagues were unable to cover because they would be working at their own schools.

How Being a Parent Impacts the Desire for Work-Life Balance. While only Tina and I had children, the members of the CoP recognized the challenges women athletic trainers faced with raising children and working as an athletic trainer. Women athletic trainers were appreciative of a work culture which was adaptable and gave them flexibility to adjust for the needs of their family. In Dani's December 1, 2020, journal entry, she shared the colleague she reached out to for data collection was able to adapt her work schedule to fit her family's needs and had flexibility to adjust it if those needs changed.

CoP members shared stories of how women athletic trainers' perceptions about their career changes when they had children. On November 30, 2020, Grace journaled about how women athletic trainers often changed settings when they had a family. Some of positions that she considered accommodating to having a family were durable medical equipment sales representative, teaching in higher education, or working in a physical therapy or physician clinic. If traditional settings were able to adjust their models and implement strategies to support women athletic trainers as they become mothers, it may

help to retain them. On December 1, 2020, Tina journaled that she was fortunate to be able to take her daughter to work with her when needed, adding that she was not sure she would still be working in the profession if she was not able to do so.

Despite Tina's gratitude for the flexibility in her job to take her daughter to work, she wondered about her ability to maintain her job in the future. In the first CoP meeting, Tina shared she wanted to make sure she spent enough time at home with her daughter instead of at work. She wondered "in a couple years when she starts playing sports or whatever that might be, it's like am I gonna be with somebody else's kid or am I gonna be with my kid?" She described it as a struggle. Tina's conflict was due to the innate challenges of the structure of a traditional athletic training setting but also in part due to the culture of overdedication that was previously discussed. It seemed this dedication to her job was engrained in her and may result in her questioning her ability to do her job well if she took time off to spend time with her daughter. In response to Tina's comments, I shared that this was part of why I went back to school for my PhD. I thought I would transition to higher education and teach, so I would have better work-life balance when I started my family.

A workplace which provided a support system appeared to be essential to women athletic trainers maintaining their jobs and a balance with their personal life, especially as a parent. Grace emphasized the value in these practices in the second CoP meeting. She shared that she loved her current job and felt valued by her boss, explaining that her boss recognized that everyone needed time off, had a family, and required a work-life balance. In the same meeting, I shared that I did not recognize how good I had it at my first job

until I left and went to a university that had a culture that did not support taking time off. I did not realize the impact this could have when I began that job. The culture of overdedication at my second job was in stark contrast from my first job in which there was culture of respect which supported a work-life balance and encouraged making time for family. In my first job, my coworkers whose family were local covered for me during the holidays, so I could go home and spend time with my family who lived in another state. My coworkers support also allowed me to take a vacation to attend a wedding during preseason (a busy time for athletic training). These actions taken by my coworkers were helped cultivate a culture of respect and encourage the work-life balance that it seemed many women athletic trainers desired.

These policies and strategies which supported women athletic trainers also supported athletic trainers who were mothers. Katelyn noted that women who had children needed support to understand their rights when pregnant and resources to support them as they became parents. She believed there should be information disseminated by athletic training's professional organizations because the job was "very unique." This highlighted that women athletic trainers who have children may have different needs compared to those who do not have children.

Unintended Consequences of Action – Gender Roles and Power

I identified unintended consequences which were actions beyond the intent of the actor which reproduced the features of social structures (Dennis, 2013). When analyzing the data, I found that there were actions that reproduced features of gender-related power

structures and those which reproduced culture of overdedication. I discuss these unintended consequences of action in the following section.

The Unintended Consequence: Preservation of Historical Power Structures.

In an effort to avoid conflict and develop an uncomplicated work environment, some women athletic trainers made decisions that had the unintended consequence of reproducing structures of gender. In this first example, the actions described unintentionally resulted in a continuation of the historical power structures. On November 24, 2020, I journaled about a discussion I had with the colleague I reached out to for our data collection. She shared with me that she gave coaches two choices when making decisions about a student-athlete's treatment plan, both of which were options that were beneficial for the student-athletes and were good options for the sports medicine staff. However, she explained that this approach allowed coaches to feel like they were still in control. While my colleague's intention was to avoid conflict and create a peaceful work environment, this action unintentionally preserved the male-dominated hegemony and allowed the men she worked to retain their sense of power in the workplace. The historical power structures of male dominance were unlikely to change if the male coaches believed they maintained in control over decisions for student-athlete care.

Despite Dani being aware of the misogynistic and sexist issues that impacted her career, in the fifth CoP meeting, she shared that she did not know how to address the incidents of harassment that she encountered in the workplace. Dani asked, "How do you address it when no one cares, other than quitting? Which is what I did because it wasn't

being addressed.” Dani quitting her job did not help the issue get addressed, resulted in no consequences for the physician she worked with, and allowed him to maintain the same mindset.

Dani knew there were other options to report the issue (i.e. human resources department) but chose not to pursue them.

I could have gone to human resources, but I thought our high performance director like should be also doing that. And if he wasn’t going to make the change, then it really wasn’t going to happen because there’s no way they’re firing this coach they brought over from [country]. (Dani, CoP Meeting 5, March 22, 2021)

In this role she faced barriers which lead her believe she could not change the behavior and culture that she worked in. When Dani was hired, she was told that administration and coaches would side with the athlete if there was an issue. The organization set a precedent that Dani was expendable and that shaped her mindset about the culture that she worked in. As a result, Dani did not test the system by reporting the issue to human resources to see if they would help her and address the issue. She appeared to have felt that it would have been overlooked and that correcting the behavior was out of her control. In this case, the physician exerted his position of power to treat Dani inappropriately. While Dani tried to act, she was silenced and made to feel like her claims were unfounded. By not pushing this issue forward and instead leaving the position, the physician was never told his actions were inappropriate and that it needed to change.

In response to Dani's story, I shared a post that I read in a Facebook group. A woman athletic trainer who worked in an industrial setting reached out to the group about issues she had with a client who made her uncomfortable because he hit on her repeatedly. The woman shared she had been harassed in the past and was afraid to set boundaries with this client because she did not want to upset him. In this case, the woman's past influenced her decisions and left her afraid to address the issue. Her decision not to address the problem and use the systems that were in place to protect her, unintentionally allowed the behavior to continue.

Sometimes women athletic trainers initially failed to recognize the power structures that impacted their work environment. Grace denied having experiences with gender role issues in our first CoP meeting. She explained that she never had an issue with respect from men but proceeded to tell the previously mentioned story in which she struggled with an athletic director at the high school she worked at. Throughout the study, she seemed to realize that there may have been a gender bias which impacted her experience. However, since she did not recognize the structures which restricted her at the time, she was unable to appropriately address the issue.

Some women athletic trainers were unsure if the inequities women faced and the successes of women athletic trainers should be highlighted. On November 30, 2020, Grace journaled that she and the colleague she reached out to for data collection felt that workplace issues which impacted women athletic trainers should not be highlighted as women-specific issues as it might make it look like women athletic trainers were "looking for a handout or whining." She added this approach may result in men telling

women athletic trainers to tough it out and work harder when she felt women “in this profession work harder than our male counterparts anyway.” The journal was shared early in the study, but this mindset unintentionally perpetuated the stereotype that women were emotional and should remain silent. Grace’s comments unintentionally did two things: (a) perpetuate a culture of silencing women, and (b) allowed sexist behaviors to persist. As the meetings progressed, Grace seemed to recognize the experiences that she and other women athletic had as gender role issues and that there was a need to address them.

Similarly, some CoP members shared they were not sure that highlighting women athletic trainer’s successes was the best way to address the issue. Despite CoP members recognizing the need to shed light on the issues surrounding gender, they seemed to grapple with the idea of highlighting women and women athletic trainers’ success stories. On December 1, 2020, Dani journaled that her and the colleague she reached out to wondered if women’s successes in sports should be the storyline.

While we want females to be respected in their roles, should attaching the headline to the story be necessary? Is there a way of announcing the importance of the task at hand without talking about the shattering of the glass ceiling, or maybe how do we normalize it? (Dani, Journal entry, December 1, 2020)

Despite Dani recognizing the challenges that women faced, she was unsure about voicing the issue. This mindset unintentionally preserves a culture which silences women. While Dani and her colleague were hoping for a normalization of women’s successes, keeping

silent may allow the successes of women in the field to go unnoticed and to preserve a culture of male-dominated hegemony.

Sustaining a Culture of Overdedication. Women athletic trainers' actions may have unintentionally sustained patterns of extreme dedication. Grace worked for a hospital, providing support to physicians in the clinic and community outreach services. She felt supported by her supervisor and believed her work setting provided flexibility to take time off when they were not in "busy season." While she still felt guilty taking off from work, she recognized that it was acceptable to take time for herself and that it was necessary for her mental health. However, Grace's colleague who she reached out to for our data collection used to work for the same hospital as Grace and had a contrasting experience. Grace noted her colleague put extra stress on herself and felt like she could not take off work despite their boss being supportive. Grace felt her that colleague's devotion to work was excessive and self-imposed. Her colleague's feeling that she was not able to take off from work sustained this sense of obligation and culture of overdedication to work. Grace believed her boss respected and supported her despite her taking time off, yet her colleague, in a similar situation, felt constrained by her sense of obligation.

Grace's colleague was not alone in her intense sense of dedication to her job. In the second CoP meeting, Tina shared how she would feel guilty if she was unable to find someone to cover for her if she missed work. She expressed that despite her employer being supportive of her having a balance and doing things outside of work, she would feel guilty if something happened (i.e., an injury) when she was not there. In the first CoP

meeting, Tina shared that she only missed two football games (which typically occur on Friday nights) in the 10 years she worked at her school. This sense of obligation unintentionally sustained the culture of overdedication. Despite Tina's employer's apparent support for her to have a work-life balance, she had trouble breaking away from that culture. In the second CoP meeting, Tina revealed she scheduled a trip to her cousin's wedding around a championship football game. She flew back for the game because "you work your ass off all season, through preseason, and I'm going to miss the champion game? Hell no! I'm going to be at the championship game." Tina wanted to be there for such a momentous occasion. However, this action unintentionally prevented her from setting boundaries to protect her personal time.

In first CoP meeting, Grace also shared an example of the seemingly shared feeling that one needed to work long hours and belief that one could not take time off. When Grace worked at the high school, she worked 80-hour weeks. Her sense of obligation put her in position where she was covering for a male colleague who had another full-time job as a nurse. During the second CoP meeting, she shared she thought if she covered for her coworker and worked hard, it would result in a promotion for her at work. It did not. Grace's example highlighted the mindset that putting your head down, putting the hard work, and long hours would result in career opportunities and better jobs. While Grace's intentions were to avoid conflict, push through, and hope for her work to be recognized, this behavior also unintentionally perpetuated the culture of overdedication. Grace's long work hours were not solely a result of the demands of her primary workplace. In the first CoP meeting, she shared she picked up extra work to

increase her income, so she could purchase a home. Grace's decisions to support her personal needs and goals also unintentionally continued this culture. For Grace, the long hours and the workload resulted in challenges with work-life balance, exhaustion, and a negative mental impact.

Maggie highlighted another example in which women athletic trainers were bound by this extreme dedication. In the WhatsApp chat, Maggie shared that the two associate women athletic trainers at her job, a Division I collegiate setting, "exhaust" her with how hard they worked. This contrasted with the behavior exhibited by a male counterpart. Women athletic trainers' dedication and eagerness to sacrifice for their jobs seemed to be engrained in them. This could have been explained by the double work women athletic trainers needed to do to prove themselves that was previously discussed. This was not to say that working hard and being dedicated to one's job was a bad thing, but to recognize that certain actions unintentionally reproduced the patterns of being overworked.

Another example of women's overdedication was highlighted by Grace in her journal entry from November 30, 2020. Grace and her colleague who she spoke with, felt women athletic trainers worked more hours and stayed later compared to the men they worked with. She explained women athletic trainers ensured all athletes were taken care of and prepared for the next workday during these late hours. Grace noted this may have been her and her colleague's personal experiences and offered that this behavior may be due to differences in age between them and their coworkers who were older (compared to them) men. However, this may have been due to them unconsciously feeling the need to

put in extra work to prove themselves. Grace and her colleague's behavior demonstrated the care and desire they had to ensure their job was done well. However, it also reinforced the mindset that a schedule with long hours must be preserved to be successful.

Summary

Through this critical structural analysis, I found that there were multiple structures that shaped women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace: (a) structures of gender, (b) culture of overdedication, and (c) culture of respect. These structures both constrained and resourced women athletic trainers (Carspecken, 1996). The traditional athletic training settings and the athletic training profession itself being historically dominated by men (Anderson, 1991) impacted the cultures and conditions that women athletic trainers work in. Subsequently, these structures impacted their experiences, and influenced the actions and behaviors of women athletic trainers in the workplace.

While CoP members felt there have been advances in women athletic trainers' perceived status and opportunities in the profession, they still faced incidences of gender bias, sexism, and inappropriate behavior. Women athletic trainers also appeared to struggle with the culture of overdedication and how it impacted their desire to have a work-life balance. To combat these historically rooted structures, women athletic trainers made decisions about their work setting, took action to set boundaries and demonstrate their value, and fought for respect in their workplace. This culture of respect seemed to become a counternarrative to the male-created meritocracy and an example of how the profession is changing or how it needs to change. The culture of respect demonstrated

women athletic trainers' resistance to the historically influenced structures of gender and overdedication. Despite women athletic trainers' awareness of barriers and challenges they faced surrounding structures of gender and a culture of overdedication, they still unintentionally reproduced some of the sociocultural structures. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of these findings and reflect on the research questions.

Chapter Five

In 1881, a man named James Robinson began his career working with the Harvard University track and football teams to become, what is now considered, the first athletic trainer (Webber, 2014). He and other men athletic trainers worked in college athletics, paving the way for the athletic training profession (Webber, 2014). Eighty-five years later, the first woman athletic trainer, Dorothy Cohen, joined NATA (Pennington, 2019). In 1973, there were 21 universities with athletic training education programs and only 13 of them accepted women (Anderson, 1991). As women joined the profession, they encountered resistance from male coaches and athletic trainers (Anderson, 1991). Women athletic trainers reported facing challenges in the workplace, including experiences of sexism, needing to demonstrate their value, and harassment (Anderson, 1991, 1992; Booth, 2000; Burton et al., 2012; Gorant, 2012; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, & Eberman, 2017; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Ohkubo, 2008). Given the traditional roots and expectations of a traditional setting, women athletic trainers also had challenges with work-life balance (Eason et al., 2014; Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman 2012).

Because of these challenges, many women athletic trainers have chosen to leave the profession after a few years (Kahanov & Eberman, 2011). The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of women athletic trainers using a participatory approach. The collaborative and equitable approach of this project allowed for an in-depth examination of the issues clinically practicing women athletic trainers faced in the workplace. I was able to work with women athletic trainers to collect and create data that provided insights into their experiences in the workplace, their needs and desires for their careers and the profession, and opportunities for improvement and support.

In this dissertation, I presented a more complex understanding of these phenomena and insights as to how women athletic trainers may be retained in the profession. This study was conducted using multiple online and digital sources: Zoom, WhatsApp group chat, and electronic journal entries. These methods of data collection allowed the study to be rooted in dialogue, space for reflection, and for data to be gathered over time. CoP members discussed the issues they faced and recognized the existence of overarching structures that impacted their experiences. The use of critical structural analysis allowed me to honor the expertise of CoP members as I conducted the in-depth analysis and provided an opportunity to make plain the sociocultural structures that impacted the experiences of women athletic trainers across a variety of clinical settings. The data analysis also allowed for a better understanding of the conditions in which women athletic trainers worked and how the sociocultural structures influenced their actions (Dennis, 2013).

I begin this discussion by reflecting on the research questions and comparing the findings of this study to prior literature. Next, I discuss the implications these findings on research, and the policy and practical implications for employers, athletic training's professional organizations, and athletic training education programs. Finally, I provide recommendations for future research and my final thoughts.

Reflecting on Research Questions

In line with my critical feminist framework, a participatory approach allowed CoP members to guide and shape the focus of the study. It also allowed for dialogic practice through multiple sources of data collection which created space for discussion of CoP members experiences and collective and independent interpretation the data while staying true to the viewpoint of CoP members. The critical structural analysis allowed me to reveal the structures which influenced their choices and defined the conditions in which their actions and intentions were interpreted. Likewise, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of barriers that these women faced in the workplace. This approach and the way in which data analysis occurred allowed for a more nuanced presentation of responses to my research questions which are listed here as a reminder to the reader.

1. How do women athletic trainers describe their experiences across multiple athletic training settings?
2. How do women athletic trainers' professional and personal goals and needs impact career planning?
3. What do women athletic trainers need to remain working in the profession?

4. What workplace strategies and policies can be implemented to help support women athletic trainers?

In the following sections, I discuss how the findings of this study relate to the research questions. I organization it by discussing each research question, presenting how these findings and themes relate to each of the research questions. While some of the findings overlapped multiple questions, I chose to discuss topics under the research question or questions that they were most relevant to in order to prevent significant repetition in topics. I begin this discussion by examining the first research question.

How Do Women Athletic Trainers Describe Their Experiences Across Multiple Athletic Training Settings?

The experiences of CoP members varied greatly across different work settings and specific places of work. Across all work settings, the women athletic trainers in this study experienced challenges with gender structures, were confined by a culture of overdedication, and strived to develop and maintain a culture of respect. These sociocultural structures impacted their experiences, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction with their jobs. In this section, I discuss experiences of gender bias and sexism, complacency with sexism and inappropriate behavior in the workplace, and patterns of overdedication.

Women Athletic Trainers Encountered Biases and Sexism in the Workplace.

Women of the CoP were frustrated by the societal structures and barriers that impacted women athletic trainers in the workplace. While women in this study recognized the progress that was made regarding how women and women who were medical professionals were perceived in the sports industry, they felt that women were still

fighting societal challenges. These structures and patterns included stereotyping women athletic trainers into gender roles, acts of sexism, experiences of women athletic trainers working harder than men to prove themselves, battling power structures, and facing a culture that silenced women.

Battling Biased Perceptions. CoP members described instances of coaches and administrators holding stereotypical gender biases toward them, such as being too nurturing, acting like a mother, and to be babying athletes, which has reported in previous athletic training literature (Burton et al., 2012; O'Connor et al., 2010; Ohkubo, 2008). However, in this study, multiple stories were shared in which women athletic trainers stood up for themselves, defended their roles as health care professionals, and explained how they benefited the program when confronted by coaches who described them in this way or tried to undermine them. These acts of resistance may be explained by women athletic trainers' desire for respect in their workplace. Similarly, Shingles (2001) reported that women athletic trainers who stood up for themselves were able to gain respect from coaches.

To battle the “double whammy” in which women athletic trainers must establish themselves “as medical professionals in the athletic world,” societal views and expectations needed to shift. If the administrators in places of employment recognized and accepted that many women athletic trainers were in leadership roles, they may recognize that the qualities that were stereotypical to women such as being nurturing, caring, and vulnerable should be considered positive attributes for health care providers. The incongruity between gender stereotypes for men and women and the perceived

attributes associated with leadership roles resulted in prejudice against women as leaders, even though women's tendency to provide a communal and participative approach to leadership encouraged team building and has been viewed as valuable to organizations (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Despite women-associated attributes such as being friendly and caring contributing to positive provider-patient relationships (Eagly & Wood, 2012), these characteristics were not always viewed positively in athletic training, as evidenced by this study and others (Burton et al., 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2010). Men labeling women athletic trainers as acting like mothers to their athletes and too nurturing undermined them as health care professionals (McKay et al., 2000). The women in this study wanted coaches to understand that when women athletic trainers treated high numbers of patients, it was a benefit to the program, not because they were being too nurturing or too nice. This study highlighted a desire to challenge coaches' biased perceptions and make them understand the value women athletic trainers brought as health care professionals.

Battle of Double Work. CoP members discussed that women athletic trainers had to prove their value through action. They needed to work “smarter” and “harder” compared to men in the field. In another study, women athletic trainers shared that men had “instant credibility” and did not have to prove themselves (Ohkubo, 2008, p. 16). While it took extra work, CoP members seemed to be able to prove themselves and establish themselves as valuable health care providers in their places of work. Athletic directors and coaches eventually seemed to recognize that the care athletes received from women athletic trainers was valuable and that when an athlete sought treatment from a

woman athletic trainer, it meant they trusted them. This pattern of women athletic trainers needing to prove their worth and knowledge was reported in previous literature (Ohkubo, 2008).

Sometimes earning respect occurred through responding to a catastrophic injury which was frustrating for members of the CoP. Similarly, Pike et al. (2017) reported that women athletic trainers gained positions working with collegiate men's sports team due their supervisors' observation of their skills and abilities. While these women felt their ability to showcase their skills allowed them to gain access to working with a men's sports team, this need to prove their abilities demonstrated the work women athletic trainers must do to earn the opportunities that were more easily obtained by men.

Similarly, women athletic trainers had to be conscious of their actions and reactions in the workplace. They were careful to ensure that colleagues did not perceive their responses as emotional, even if having emotional response was appropriate for a situation. Prior research confirmed that women athletic trainers altered their behaviors so as not to respond like a woman were not uncommon (Ohkubo, 2008). This study highlighted the challenges women faced, such as needing to break stereotypes and combat the assumptions that supposed masculine characteristics were "good" and supposed feminine characteristics were "bad." The power differences that resulted from structures of gender can be explained by hegemonic masculinity which has been characterized by the societal pattern in which stereotypical male traits were idealized and ensured men were in a dominant position while women remained subordinate (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Women Athletic Trainers Were Silenced. Stories in this study highlighted a culture that silenced women athletic trainers. Women athletic trainers were told by men how to do their job and were treated differently from men for speaking out. When people diverted from expected social roles, it may result in negative consequences (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Shingles (2001) shared a similar incidence in which a woman was disrespected by a coach who questioned her medical decision. Women of the CoP were resistant to this pattern of silencing women, speaking out and up for themselves. Incidences of women athletic trainers taking an assertive role may have been viewed negatively by work colleagues as this behavior diverted from expected social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, it seemed the benefits of speaking up outweighed the risks of staying silent. Therefore, women athletic trainers resisted the expectations that men were supposed to be the assertive and dominant gender (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

There were instances when a women athletic trainer voiced her concerns about the proper care of athletes or how to solves problems at work, and it resulted in her ideas being dismissed or opinions being interpreted as emotional complaints. Stereotypically women have been viewed as emotional (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Parson & Bales, 1955) which may partly explain the reactions and perceptions of coaches and supervisors. Women athletic trainers' coworkers holding these biased opinions prevented the cultivation of a collaborative work environment in which colleagues worked together to improve the care and experiences of patients. This study highlighted that the culture of silencing of women athletic trainers may begin in academic programs. Oppressed groups have been silenced, and the education system has been a part of maintaining that pattern

(Freire, 2018). Despite Maggie and her colleague's efforts to resist this effort to silence them, this professor's actions taught women to govern their speech and had a negative impact on their experiences as young professionals.

Women athletic trainers being were also silenced through the act of coaches or athletes bypassing them and seeking care from a man. This was also observed in previous research about black women in athletic training programs (Siple et al., 2018). Yu-Wei explained this behavior to be caused by men trusting those they were used to working with and were similar to them (other men). Other research supported this explanation, noting that women athletic trainers experienced coaches going to men athletic trainers to follow up on their medical decisions or for advice (Burton et al., 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015).

Women Athletic Trainers Battled Power Structures. Women athletic trainers faced challenges with men exerting their power over women. In this study, Katelyn's experience at her undergraduate institution, being told by staff and athletes that she could not succeed as an athletic trainer at the professional level, prevented her from pursuing a job at higher levels of athletics. The men she worked with made Katelyn feel that she was incapable of success because she was a woman. Similarly, the good ol' boys' club has been noted as a barrier for career opportunities for women athletic trainers (Anderson, 1992; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Historically, gender stereotypes, men promoting men in athletics, hiring, and recruiting practices have been reported as constraining for women athletic trainers, limiting career opportunities and having a negative impact on the work environment (Booth, 2000; Burton et al., 2012;

Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Ohkubo, 2008).

Women athletic trainers being denied opportunities to work with men's sports has been reported the literature as early as the 1990s (Anderson, 1991, 1992) and is something they are still battling today. This study highlighted men coaches' exertion power through reassigning of women athletic trainers to work with different (women's) sports instead of football in the Division I collegiate setting. Prior research demonstrated that administrators did not think women athletic trainers should work with men's sports like football (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Moreover, Yu-Wei's colleague was labeled as a sexual distraction to the athletes by the coach and prevented from interning with the football team at a Division I university. Women being identified as sexual distractions by coaches has been noted in previous literature (Burton et al., 2012).

Athletic directors and coaches also tried to exercise power by questioning women athletic trainers' decisions and them working altogether. These actions demonstrated an unwillingness of administrators and coaches to accept women athletic trainers as leadership and decision makers. Coaches' and administrators' unwillingness to accept women in positions of power has been reported by other researchers (Anderson, 1991; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). Women athletic trainers were also treated as if they were a burden when it came to traveling with a men's team, with coaches stating it was expensive to travel women athletic trainers with a men's or boys' sports team. While this barrier has not been noted in prior literature,

women athletic trainers have reported greater barriers to obtaining resources to do their jobs compared to men they worked with (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015).

Moreover, in one study, a participant explained the organizational constraints women feel were due to the good ol' boys' club that women will never get invited to, regardless of education, experience, or skills (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015).

A Workplace Complacent With Inappropriate Behavior and a Broken

System. The boys' club of athletic training and the consequential culture that developed contributed to complacency with inappropriate behavior in the workplace. Examples of complacency were highlight in Division I athletics, with women athletic trainers being asked inappropriate questions (e.g., sexual preference, relationship status) and to feel as they were responsible for the actions of the men she worked with. Similarly, prior research highlighted how colleagues and athletes made assumptions about women athletic trainers' sexual orientations based upon other characteristics they held (e.g., age, marital status, who they held professional relationships with, etc.; Shingles, 2001). This study also highlighted that inappropriate behavior and expectations for women athletic trainers occurs in nontraditional settings such as physical therapy clinics, with these women being expected to act in certain ways and dress provocatively to attract and retain clients.

This study revealed that a culture that excuses men's behavior may begin in women athletic trainers' education programs. Women athletic trainers in Maggie's program were told to dress in a way that desexualized their bodies. In a previous study, women athletic trainers reported having to dress conservatively to appear professional

(Burton et al., 2012) and in oversized clothes to “de-feminize” themselves to fit in (Ohkubo, 2008). These requests and expectations are offensive to women in the field and do not create a culture which holds men accountable for their actions.

This study highlighted a culture which excused inappropriate behavior and punished those who spoke out against it. These instances were observed in multiple settings including collegiate athletics, elite sports, and professional sports. The patterns of complacency and inaction toward the problem may leave women athletic trainers feeling hopeless about their ability to take control of a situation. Prior literature documented improperly handled incidences of sexual harassment of black women athletic training students (Siple et al., 2018). As evidenced in this study, these experiences may result in women athletic trainers leaving their jobs. The International Olympic Committee recognized the challenge of complacency with harassment in sport by producing a consensus statement which addressed harassment and abuse in sport, labeling it a “blind spot for many sport organisations through fear of reputational damage, ignorance, silence or collusion” (Mountjoy et al., 2016, p. 1). Excusing such acts enables misconduct and perpetuates the problem women and women athletic trainers face in these settings.

Women Athletic Trainers Faced a Culture of Overdedication. Women athletic trainers encountered a culture which expected and assumed extreme dedication to be a part of the role. A culture of overdedication appeared to be normalized for women athletic trainers. Because of these expectations and the resulting actions, women athletic trainers described how they struggled to find and maintain a work-life balance. These conflicts did not escape any member of the CoP.

Multiple women in the study shared incidences that highlighted that the expectation of being overworked, combined with the long, nontraditional hours of traditional athletic training settings precluded women from feeling like they could take off work. This behavior and expectations were normalized among CoP members. This need to be overdedicated to work may be due to women athletic trainers feeling like they must conform to the historical behaviors in the field to be viewed as a good athletic trainer.

The constraints of this culture resulted in CoP members feeling guilty taking time off or asking for support at work. This guilt seemed to be due to the idea of leaving events uncovered or burdening colleagues with their request for help. Despite women athletic trainers recognizing that all people have needs outside of work, there was a shared sense that they could not alter their work commitments or schedule to accommodate personal needs. Women athletic trainers' sense of extreme dedication and feeling like they were unable to take time off due to organizational expectations was documented in previous literature (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Moreover, a recent study showed that women athletic trainers were more at risk for compulsive tendencies which may put them at higher risk for becoming workaholics (Eason et al., 2020).

Evidenced in this study, women athletic trainers experienced jobs that did not respect their time. While women athletic trainers may tolerate working long hours and extensive travel for a period of time, it seemed that at some point women realized this pattern of being overworked and dedicating long hours was unsustainable. Women

athletic trainers grapple with their desire to pursue the career they want and their ability to sustain what is required to remain working in the profession. To combat this culture, women athletic trainers cited speaking to their supervisor in an effort to improve the situation or quitting their jobs to escape the situation altogether. Long hours, inflexible work schedules, and burnout were previously cited as reasons women athletic trainers left the profession (Kahanov et al., 2013, Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017)

How Do Women Athletic Trainers' Professional and Personal Goals and Needs Impact Career Planning?

Women athletic trainers' professional and personal goals were impacted by the cultural and social structures described in this study. These structures and resulting barriers impacted women athletic trainers' career planning. Factors that influenced career planning included the desire to practice in certain ways, to be in certain settings, and to plan for having children.

Women Athletic Trainers' Desire to Practice in Certain Ways or Settings Influenced Career Path. Some women athletic trainers seemed to have a passion and drive to accomplish certain goals in their career. If women athletic trainers did not find the support they needed or culture they desired at work, they may leave their position to find or create it. The desire to create an ideal work environment was showcased by two women athletic trainers that CoP members reached out to for data collection. These two women used the experiences and barriers they encountered in the workplace as motivation to plan for and create an environment with an ideal work culture. Women athletic trainers' entrepreneurial drive and experiences with starting their own businesses

is absent in athletic training literature. Women starting a business is a divergence from stereotypical gender roles. Women in leadership roles diverged from stereotypical gender roles, which has resulted in resistance from others (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For people to veer from stereotypical gender roles, the benefit from the behavior must outweigh the risks (Eagly & Wood, 2012). For these two women, developing a business would provide the benefit of creating a culture of respect and a positive work culture that allowed them to showcase their knowledge and skillsets in areas of athletic training that they were passionate about. Similarly, Dani desired to be successful and to work in certain settings. Her passion and drive allowed her work in the military and elite sports settings. These opportunities outweighed the risks of clashing with gender stereotypes. As more women took on positions of power and developed their own businesses, researchers anticipated observing a shift in expectations and attributes associated with men and women (Eagly & Wood, 2012). This shift had already started, as there has been an observed an increase in women's desire to have positions of leadership and power (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Motherhood Changed Women Athletic Trainers' Needs and Goals. CoP

members recognized the challenges women athletic trainers may face regarding family planning and as mothers. Systemic barriers such as long hours and lack of support in the workplace created conflict between having children and working as an athletic trainer. The findings of the study reveal that women athletic trainers may be willing to accept the long and nontraditional hours early in their careers but may make a change if they have children. This mindset supports prior observations of women leaving the profession between age of 28 to 35 years, which are ages when many women have children (Eason

et al., 2018; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Mazerolle, Eason, & Eberman., 2017).

Certain work settings were considered incongruent with sustaining an athletic training career and having children while other settings were viewed as more conducive to supporting these goals. In previous research, women athletic trainers reported wanting a work environment that allowed them to focus on their families (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). In this study, clinic settings, industrial settings, and nonclinical roles such as teaching or sale associates for durable medical equipment were viewed as favorable settings when raising children. Athletic trainers working in faculty roles perceived the academic setting (higher education) to be challenging for work-life balance but also to be flexible (Mazerolle & Barrett, 2018). Prior research also demonstrated that the outpatient clinic setting with no outreach requirements was viewed as conducive to working as an athletic training and having children (Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012). These settings had more consistent and limited hours, limited travel, and flexibility in scheduling. While this study demonstrated that women athletic trainers viewed the high school as a setting that was accommodating when children were young, they also recognized that it may not be a viable option as children got older. Prior research reported that working in the high school setting resulted in work-family conflicts (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

Tina's colleague faced blatant sexism causing her to leave her job when she was pregnant. These instances of mistreatment may force women athletic trainers out of the profession. After a thorough review of the literature, no studies were found that examined

the challenges women athletic trainers encountered in the workplace while pregnant. However, women athletic trainers have reported they felt administrators believed that women could not be a head athletic trainer at the college level because they would pursue a family and that those responsibilities would prevent them from fulfilling their duties (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a). These instances perpetuated the mindset that it was a women's responsibility to modify themselves or their needs to fit the athletic training job. Women athletic trainers should not be made to feel as if they should not have children if they want to be successful in the profession.

The findings of this study indicate that women athletic trainers thought about how having children impacted one's life and recognized those changes may impact their career path. Previous literature on being a mother and working as an athletic trainer was conflicting. Some women athletic trainers thought that having children and working as an athletic trainer was possible with support while others believe there was an incongruity between an athletic training career and having children (Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015). Women athletic trainers appeared to have concerns about their ability to sustain an athletic training career if they had children. This deliberation may be because even in dual income families, women shouldered the majority of childcare and household responsibilities (Bianchi et al., 2006; Pew Research Center, 2013). Researchers reported that women were more likely to leave the profession than men due to the challenges of parenting and working as an athletic trainer (Eason et al., 2018; Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov et al., 2010, 2013; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Naugle et al., 2013).

What Do Women Athletic Trainers Need to Remain Working in the Profession?

The findings of this study indicate that women athletic trainers needed a culture of respect to remain working in the profession. This culture of respect centered around three areas: (a) a respectful work environment, (b) a work environment that supported a work-life balance, and (c) sufficient salary.

Women Athletic Trainers Needed a Respectful Work Environment That Recognized Their Value. Women athletic trainers sought an employer that created a respectful work environment in which their coworkers valued their services. When women athletic trainers' expertise and unique contributions were recognized and supported, it seemed to help contribute to a respectful, positive work culture. Previous studies discussed that creating a positive work culture was a strategy to retain women athletic trainers (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). In this study, women athletic trainers seemed to have improved morale when they felt valued by supervisors. When women athletic trainers felt empowered, that their voices were heard, and supported in their place of work, it seemed to help with job satisfaction and retention. Prior research supported this, reporting that supportive colleagues and supervisors were important to women in the field and helped them navigate the challenges of gender bias (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). Similar to Dani's experience working synergistically with a strength and conditioning coach in an elite sports setting, researchers found athletic trainers who worked in the professional sports setting reported that a collaborative work environment made the work environment enjoyable and attractive (Zweigle et al., 2020).

These examples also demonstrated that the culture may be specific to the colleagues you work with, not necessarily to the setting.

Women of the CoP shared that organizations existed that had a positive work environment and that respect could be cultivated in the workplace. When women athletic trainers found a job that had a positive work environment, they felt a sense of gratitude and loyalty to their place of work. It seemed that a supportive workplace, free from gender bias was engrained in all-girls' schools or women's colleges. Working under athletic directors who were women also seemed to support a respectful and positive work environment. Having administrators who support their staff has been identified as important to the culture in a workplace (Dominick, 2018). The military setting also seemed to be an environment where respect was cultivated by leadership. With one exception, the high school seemed to be a setting with a positive work environment. Moreover, positive experiences with patients helped contribute to a sense of respect in the workplace. Feeling valued by patients seemed to occur across multiple settings, including high school, college, military, physical clinics, and industrial settings.

Contrastingly, working in a toxic environment can make women athletic trainers reconsider their career path. When organizations did not embody a culture of respect, it resulted in conflict for some women athletic trainers, may result in them leaving their jobs, and contemplate leaving the profession altogether. As demonstrated in this study and in previous studies, toxic work environments and an organization's lack of respect for women athletic trainers can have a negative impact on well-being, happiness, and ability to obtain a work-life balance (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle,

Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011, Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Experiences of sexism, inappropriate behaviors, and being overworked created challenges in the work environment that resulted in women athletic trainers being discontent with their place of work. Previous literature supported this, highlighting that women athletic trainers reported that organizational barriers such as experiences with sexism and an inability to escape the constraints of work schedule were reasons they departed the profession (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

The Cost of Dedication Was Work-Life Balance and Mental Health. The culture of overdedication may contribute to conflicts with work-life balance. Katelyn shared that the long hours and working in the evenings required of traditional athletic training settings resulted in conflicts and challenges for spending time with family and friends. This has been demonstrated in previous athletic training research (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011, Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). The findings of this study demonstrated that the hours of athletic training jobs may result in challenges with dating or making time for a partner. Women athletic trainers' jobs resulting in social conflicts was documented by other researchers (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). In addition to social conflicts, women athletic trainers in this study revealed that the long hours worked in athletic training settings and the expected dedication one was supposed to have to their job made it challenging to take care of their own health needs. Moreover, long hours and extreme dedication to work may result in overextending oneself and negative impacts on mental health. Previous literature also noted that lack of work-life balance had

detrimental impacts athletic trainers' well-being (Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

Without a change in workplace culture, women will continue to be overextended and feel constrained by this precedent of overdedication.

A Work-Life Balance Helped Women Athletic Trainers Remain Working in the Profession. Women of the CoP sought a work environment that allowed them to thrive both professionally and personally. This included the ability to obtain a work-life balance. The desire for a work-life balance was cited extensively in the literature (Eason et al., 2014; Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, et al., 2011). CoP members made career decisions to protect their personal time and sought out places of employment which allowed them to achieve this goal. As noted in the findings of this study, and in previous literature (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017), traditional athletic training settings had barriers which prevented women athletic trainers from taking time off work, including to take care of basic needs like going to the doctor.

Professional and Division I collegiate athletics were viewed as unappealing because they were associated with long hours and lack of flexibility which was incongruent with attaining a work-life balance. Previous researchers reported that the Division I setting was viewed as exceptionally demanding due to time and travel requirements, work schedule changes, and pressure from coaches (Mazerolle & Eason,

2016a; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Pike Lacy et al., 2020a, 2020b). My experiences working in Division III collegiate athletics demonstrated that it was not just the work setting but the culture of the particular organization that impacted the ability to obtain a work-life balance. In previous research, the Division II and Division III settings were reported as more accommodating to a work-life balance compared to Division I (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016c). The findings of this study revealed that clinic coverage with high school outreach may not provide a schedule that allowed for work-life balance. This was also demonstrated in previous literature (Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012). This study found that women athletic trainers viewed clinic without outreach responsibilities and the high school setting as desirable for these goals. Prior research also showed that the clinic settings with no outreach coverage were viewed as favorable for work-life balance as there were set schedules and more flexibility than traditional settings (Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012), but the high school setting had unrealistic hours and an inability take time off from work (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Uniquely, this study showed women athletic trainers may find a positive work culture in the hospital outreach setting. There has not been literature demonstrating this observation in hospital settings with community outreach. The military and industrial settings seemed to provide an environment where patients respected the women athletic trainers they worked with. There has been little research on athletic trainers' experiences in the military, and it did not address work-life balance (Radzak et al., 2020). There seemed to be an absence of research conducted on athletic trainers' experiences in the industrial setting.

Women athletic trainers appeared to make career decisions based upon their desire to have a balance among their work and personal commitments including spending time with friends and family. When women athletic trainers were unable to attain a work-life balance, and they felt the expectations of their employer were unrealistic, they made the choice to leave their job. Similarly, previous literature showed that women athletic trainers left the profession due to extreme time commitments, work schedules, and conflicts with work-life balance (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017).

The need for improvement and support was recognized by NATA and evidenced by their position statement on work-life balance (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). Women athletic trainers would like to be able to care for themselves and take time off, and for this behavior to be supported by their place of work. However, they also seemed to feel they must work long hours, could not take time off work, and for some they were unable to mentally separate from work (even if they had an accommodating work schedule). Researchers have suggested that creating a work environment which supports work-life balance may help retain athletic trainers (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). In this study, some women athletic trainers failed to set boundaries around their jobs which caused conflicts with work-life balance and resulted in one person contemplating if the only way to escape this cycle was by leaving the profession. However, those who had support to take time off from work colleagues and supervisors to take time off were grateful. This type of behavior and culture should be normalized, and organizations should encourage employees to take time off without guilt. Prior research supported this, highlighting that supervisors encouraging their employees to

build a life outside of the workplace helped women athletic trainers achieve a work-life balance (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2013).

Sometimes, the catalyst for change and decision to prioritize self-care occurred after a significant health-related event. For two women athletic trainers in this study, they were stuck in a cycle and accepted the culture of overdedication they were accustomed to until these events occurred. Despite this realization, the decision to set boundaries, take time off, and establish a work-life balance was still difficult for the women in this study. These nuanced explanations as to why athletic trainers made changes in their approach to work are unique to athletic training literature.

Sufficient Salary Supported Sense of Value and Aided With Retention.

Sufficient salary seemed to be a consideration during job searches, selecting work settings, and essential to women athletic trainers' ability to remain in their job. Some women in this study felt appropriate salary was reflective of perceived value by employers and felt that salaries in the profession were not reflective of athletic trainers' training and education. Women athletic trainers wanted to be compensated appropriately for their work and thought appropriate compensation was essential for the profession to gain respect. CoP members did not desire a job with low pay and long hours, and made career choices to earn a higher salary. Prior researchers reported that women who left the profession shared similar concerns about salary, stating compensation was not appropriate for athletic trainers' education, when compared to other roles within athletics, and that the number of hours worked was not reflective of the compensation received (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Women athletic trainers sought employers and

work settings that compensated employees appropriately and continued showing that they valued their employees by providing annual merit increases. The Division I setting was viewed as a setting with low salary while the findings of this study indicate that women athletic trainers were able to make a suitable salary in the secondary school and industrial settings. Findings of this study indicate that if salary was not sufficient for women athletic trainers' financial needs and goals, they may depart the profession.

Specific to women athletic trainers was a glaring gender pay gap, in which women made significantly less compared to men (McKinley Advisors, 2019). It would benefit women athletic trainers and the profession to close the gap. Low salary may constrain women athletic trainers. Insufficient salary appeared to limit financial independence and resulted in the need for a "side hustle." A "side hustle" increased one's workload and could contribute to mental exhaustion. As mentioned by participants in this study, picking up extra work contributed to conflicts with work-life balance and burnout. Researchers reported that women athletic trainers showed higher levels of burnout compared to men in the field (Naugle et al., 2013). However, no prior research has explored an athletic trainers need for a "side hustle" to supplement their salary. The NATA supported the effort for transparency in salary of athletic trainers and provided a resource for athletic trainers by providing a salary survey every 2 years (NATA, 2021b). However, women of the CoP hoped to see more research and increased support from professional organizations to assist with the improvement of athletic trainers' salaries on a widespread scale. CoP members also felt a way to combat this barrier was through mentorship and networking opportunities in which the issues of

salary, pay gap, and salary negotiations could be addressed with young professional women.

What Workplace Strategies and Policies Can Be Implemented to Help Support Women Athletic Trainers?

CoP members discussed some strategies and policies which would support women athletic trainers in the workplace. These ideas reflected structures of gender, the culture of overdedication, and promoting a culture of respect. These thoughts included strategies and policies surrounding protecting women from sexism and inappropriate behavior, that created a supportive work environment, and that encouraged a work-life balance.

Strategies That Protected and Supported Women Athletic Trainers From Biases and Harassment. During the CoP meetings, we discussed the need for strategies that protected women against instances of gender bias and inappropriate behavior. Women of the CoP believed respect could be taught and cultivated, and that organizations could create a culture of respect. The women of the CoP felt that administrators and executives of companies should explicitly state that they expected employees to treat others with respect. The findings of this study indicate that a culture which excused inappropriate behavior and punished those who spoke out against the offenders enabled misconduct and perpetuated problems of sexism, harassment, and inequity. Women athletic trainers wanted to see people held accountable for their actions.

Strategies That Demonstrated That Women Athletic Trainers Were Valued and Cultivated a Supportive Work Environment. A culture of respect included

treating others fairly, humanely, and as valuable members of a staff. Administrators and coaches should recognize that women athletic trainers provided a valuable service that ensured the safety of their patients and delivery of high-quality health care.

Administrators and coaches needed to understand that women athletic trainers could help save time on injuries and ensure that performance was maximized for sports teams.

Women of the CoP felt this shift in mindset needed be more widespread. If an organization can cultivate an environment that respects their employees, recognizes the value and expertise that women athletic trainers provide, and encourages coaches and administrators to show respect for their skillsets, they may be able to create a culture which is appealing to current and future employees.

Cultivation of Work-Life Balance Through Culture and Benefits. The women in this study emphasized the desire to have a work-life balance and their concerns for conflict when expanding their family. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to examine their culture and policies to support women athletic trainers with families. Family-friendly work policies mentioned in this study included maternity leave, paid time off, sick days, and flexible work schedules. These benefits, in addition to telework, were previously discussed in the literature (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018; Smith, 2016). Additionally, Tina noted that her ability to integrate her personal life into her work by taking her daughter to work allowed her to remain working in the profession. Likewise, previous research identified this strategy to be one that supported women athletic trainers to remain in traditional athletic training settings (Mazerolle & Eason, 2016b; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013).

Women athletic trainers appeared to be grateful and happy in roles with supervisors who recognized the importance of prioritizing personal life and family, encouraged a work-life balance, allowed for flexibility to take time off, and allowed for adjustment in work schedules to accommodate personal needs. Pitney et al. (2011) reported that support, understanding, and encouragement from supervisors and administrators to take leave from work was important to managing work-family conflict. Without a culture that normalizes taking time off, women athletic trainers may not ask for support or take time off. The culture at my first job was exemplary of the type of support that was needed in an athletic training workplace. I knew I had a team to support me, so I could take time off work without guilt. A teamwork or job-sharing strategy was recommended in previous literature (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018).

Unique to this study, strategies to support coverage in setting where there is only one or limited staff were discussed. Having a plan in place allowed for coverage and flexibility to take time off, if needed. Organizations should consider developing strategies and systems which provide flexibility and allow their employees to feel like they can take time off for vacation or personal needs. Previous research demonstrated that employees who felt comfortable using time-related benefits were less likely to have work-family conflicts (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015). If more organizations supported women athletic trainers by developing cultures that encouraged taking time off when needed, allowed for flexibility, and encouraged protecting personal time, they may provide a sense of value to the women athletic trainers they employee and retain them as employees.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

This research has implications for research, policy, and practice. In the following section, I will talk about how this study contributes to the literature and implications on research and scholarship. Next, I discuss the implications for policy and practice for employers, professional organizations, and athletic training education programs. Before, I start this discussion, I must note that women in this study called attention to the need for support from leadership and others in positions of power to effect change. This support needed to include athletic directors, managers, leadership in professional organizations, men, and others who have seats at the table. While CoP members recognized that broader social changes and systemic changes in the industry will be slow, they felt support through leadership would help with this endeavor. As we discuss implications in the following sections, I will return to the idea that those who hold power need to be informed of the issues, willing to help make changes, call attention to issues, and model behavior for progress and improvements to be realized.

Implications for Research and Scholarship

My critical feminist framework and participatory approach helped me to better understand the experiences of women athletic trainers in the historically male-dominated athletic training industry. Through a critical feminist lens, I was able to bring in my unique perspective as a woman, a clinician, and a researcher. This standpoint allowed me to take a critical look at prior literature and identify gaps.

This study was the first to use a participatory approach to conduct athletic training research. Knight and Ingersoll (1998) suggested that scholarship is intrinsic to the growth of the profession.

This is done by discovering new knowledge and understanding; applying existing knowledge to the solution of practical problems; integrating existing knowledge in one discipline with that of another discipline; and developing new and better means for describing, understanding, and presenting existing knowledge. (p. 271)

This study applied a methodology that has been used in public health, other health care fields, and education (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Faridi et al., 2007; Flicker & Nixon, 2015; Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, & Mildenberger, 2008; Green, 2001; Jones & Wells, 2007; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Mathew et al., 2017; Minkler, 2005; The National Academies of Science, Engineering, Medicine, 2003; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). Participatory methodologies can be used to create culturally (Jull et al., 2018; Tremblay et al., 2018) and clinically (Cashman et al., 2008; English et al., 2008; Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, & Mildenberger, 2008; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012) relevant questions and solutions for health issues and health care professions. Athletic training scholars should consider using a participatory approach to research as it may allow them to engage more equitably with community members, especially those who have been oppressed or mistreated by systems of power (Alcoff, 1995; Fine, 1994), and address cultural and social issues, identifying solutions that can be implemented in communities of interest (The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World, 2006; Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Green, 2001; Trickett et al., 2011). In using such an approach, it may

provide thoughtful, nuanced insights into the concepts they study (Harding, 1989; Hartsock, 1998) and a more unified presentation of findings from researchers and community members which may be limited by a researcher who writes about the researched from a disconnected position as a community outsider (Fine, 1994; Freire, 2018; Lather, 1991).

Similarly, athletic trainers highlighted the need for collaboration among researchers and clinicians, and their desire for clinically relevant, meaningful findings (Eberman, Walker, et al., 2019). Researchers must select methods that support these goals. Athletic training researchers should keep in mind that providing health care services are social acts; therefore, research approaches that consider the social impacts and influences of research are critical (Francisco & Butterfoss, 2007; Pitney & Parker, 2001). Participatory methodologies allowed for examining questions that were relevant to community members and for community-based change (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Israel et al., 1998; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Salsberg et al., 2015). This study illustrates this advantage to using a participatory approach as we explored issues and concepts that were of utmost concern to women athletic trainers and their ability to remain working in the profession. Furthermore, participatory methodologies can provide relevant results which are more quickly implemented into practice and have been identified as the most promising answer to bridge the research-practice gap (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Faridi et al., 2007; Green, 2008; Salsberg et al., 2015). In this study, women athletic trainers were able to discuss and develop ideas they thought could be readily implemented and support other women in the profession. This study can serve as a model to develop more research

in areas of work-life balance; workplace support; retention; to help develop more relevant, clinically applicable solutions to clinical questions; and more.

Moreover, participatory methodologies can support athletic trainers to engage in research activities as a part of evidence-based practice (Institute of Medicine, 2003; Welch et al., 2014). The outcomes of this study indicate that a participatory approach is feasible as it allowed me to engage with clinically practicing women athletic trainers to develop a research idea, investigate a topic relevant to them, and develop an actionable outcome. Likewise, this study demonstrated the utility of participatory methodologies to conduct a research project with clinically practicing athletic trainers over multiple months.

Implications for Policy and Practice for Employers

The findings of this study have multiple policy implications for employers. Organizations must recognize the needs of their employees and create a culture that cultivates respect. This culture can be created through formal and informal policies and strategies. These policies and strategies center around three areas: (a) protecting and supporting employees from incidences of sexism and inappropriate behavior, (b) supporting work-life balance, and (c) salary.

Protecting Women Athletic Trainers From Inappropriate Behavior.

Employers must create systems that protect women against instances of sexism and harassment. Workplace culture has been reported as having a significant impact on allowing harassment to occur or preventing it (Dominick, 2018). An organization's culture should be one that combats these issues, not one that turns a blind eye or sweeps it

under the rug. A culture of respect should include a strategy which supports diversity and inclusion, makes it clear that all employees deserve respect, and that no employee should be harassed based upon gender, sex, pregnancy, or sexual orientation (Dominick, 2018). To assist in this effort, organizations' leadership must ensure employees understand that harassment is not acceptable as a matter of policy as well as practice (Dominick, 2018). Organizations can create a respectful workplace by creating a culture of respect, developing and reinforcing harassment and prevention policies, educating employees about expectations and resources, practicing accountability, and encouraging employees to use the systems that were designed to protect them (Dominick, 2018; Velasquez, 1998).

A culture of respect must be reinforced by explicitly addressing expectations and policies with employees, displaying these policies, demonstrating appropriate behaviors, and discouraging inappropriate behavior (Dominick, 2018; Velasquez, 1998). Women athletic trainers should be knowledgeable about the resources available to them, be encouraged to use the system designed to protect them (e.g., human resources department, Title IX office, etc.) and feel comfortable using them without fear of negative repercussions (Dominick, 2018). Prior research reported some women athletic trainers had success resolving issues after reporting bullying to their human resource department while others faced bullying after whistle blowing (Weuve et al., 2014b). Therefore, organizations must enforce policy by ensuring that the proper personnel respond to these incidents, reported incidents are appropriately investigated, and that people are held accountable for their actions (Dominick, 2018). These events should not

be brushed aside or excused. Additionally, organizations should examine their culture and policies to assess their efforts in prevention (Dominick, 2018; Velasquez, 1998). Leaders should consider having an office or team dedicated to preventing, educating, and investigating issues surrounding gender, equality, and inclusion (Dominick, 2018).

Supporting Work-Life Balance in the Workplace. Employers must understand the needs of women athletic trainers and create environments which support them in achieve those goals. The findings of this study demonstrate women athletic trainers desire for a culture that supported work-life balance. Therefore, creating a culture that is supportive of this goal can help attract and retain happy employees. To achieve this objective, organizations should examine their current culture and policies, and develop ones which create supportive environment. Employers should offer benefits such as paid time off, sick leave, paid maternity leave, and family medical leave (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019). Not only should these benefits be offered, but leadership should encourage their staff to utilize these benefits (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018; Pitney et al., 2011). Offering paid time off does not mean an athletic trainer will use it. In a recent study, researchers reported that 42% of athletic trainers believed it was unrealistic to use formal workplace benefits while 65% felt this way about informal benefits (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019). Leadership within organizations must support and encourage the use of time-related policies for them to be successful (Pitney et al., 2011). Literature showed that athletic trainers did not always feel supported to use workplace benefits but that those who were more comfortable using workplace benefits had lower work-family conflict scores compared to those who were less comfortable (Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney,

& Mueller, 2015). If women athletic trainers feel it is acceptable, encouraged, and normal to use these benefits, it may help with their comfort in using them and their ability to attain a work-life balance.

Some strategies that support a work-life balance included job sharing, creative and accommodating scheduling, and teamwork (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Smith, 2016). Moreover, a flexible work environment, teleworking, and allowing athletic trainers to have input into scheduling were shown to help retain women athletic trainers (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Eason, Pitney, & Mueller, 2015; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011, 2013; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Smith, 2016; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Additionally, allowing employees to integrate their work and personal life has been reported to be a strategy that supported women athletic trainers and mothers in the workplace (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). These policies are also considered family-friendly and may help with women athletic trainers' jobs satisfaction and their ability to remain in their jobs as they have children (Eberman, Singe, & Eason, 2019; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011; Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). However, it is not enough for an organization to develop policies which support women in the workplace. They must create a culture that normalizes and encourages employees to utilize these benefits. Leadership should model healthy work-life balance practices as

it can help demonstrate their commitment to creating a culture that normalizes finding and maintaining that equilibrium (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018) and encourages employees to employ the same approach (Pitney et al., 2011).

Employers, especially traditional athletic training settings, should consider adopting strategies which normalize taking time off work without guilt or concern of negative consequences. Athletic trainers have reported that work culture and informal strategies, such as teamwork, helped them achieve a work-life balance rather than utilizing formal benefits (Mazerolle & Eason, 2018; Mazerolle, Eason, & Eberman, 2017; Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011). Having systems in place which allow for coverage if athletic needs or wants to take time off can help support this effort. Employers should normalize athletic trainers covering for one another. For settings with multiple athletic trainers, it has been recommended to implement patient-care coverage (set hours of operation) and to use teamwork to cover events (Mazerolle, Eason, & Eberman, 2017; Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). Moreover, leadership in collegiate settings should examine their organizational infrastructures. Research demonstrated that the medical model resulted in better work-life balance compared to the academic and athletic models (Eason, Mazerolle, & Goodman, 2017). As many athletic training settings only have one athletic trainer or limited staff, organizations should develop plans to support these staff members. Some options when there is only one or limited staff include partnering with local hospitals or clinics which employ athletic trainers for as needed services, creating a list of athletic trainers to contact, and including

steps to take in the absence of an athletic trainer in emergency action plans. These options for athletic trainers with limited staff have not presented elsewhere in the literature.

Furthermore, employers should discourage working excessive hours. Leadership in athletic training departments should examine athletic trainers' schedules to assess workloads to determine if there are opportunities to set a schedule that allows for flexibility (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). Work schedules should also be flexible to accommodate when an athletic trainer works long hours or stays late. The athletic training culture that expects that one should not take time off from work does not appear to support long-term sustainability of a job. In traditional settings, many athletic trainers work year-round, long hours, without an off season while coaches typically worked with one sport and get relief in their schedules during the off season (Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Organizations must recognize the demands and stressors that these schedules create and implement changes to support and retain their employees.

Providing Appropriate Compensation. Employers should demonstrate that they value their employees through appropriate compensation. Salaries are used to pay bills, for food, and has been associated with personal self-esteem (Litchfield, 2010). Women athletic trainers chose to leave the profession due to insufficient salary (Kahanov et al., 2013; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). Therefore, it is important for employers to recognize the need for providing women athletic trainers with appropriate compensation for their years of work experience and the skillsets that they provide. To achieve this, it has been suggested that employers implement policies which offer employees a minimum of market value salaries for their experience, skillsets, and cost of living (Bjork, 2012;

Litchfield, 2010). The NATA position statement recommended that employers advocate for higher salaries that are commensurate with job responsibilities and time demands of their athletic training staff (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018). Employers should also offer annual merit or cost of living increases to demonstrate that they value their employees (Bjork, 2012). To address salaries of athletic trainers that were already employed by a company, conducting a salary assessment, and adjusting employees' salaries, if needed, can help. Policies and practices such as these can help promote fair salaries. These actions will contribute to cultivating happy employees as well as the reduction of the gender pay gap. Employers must recognize the whole human that they employ. Developing policies and strategies which cultivate a culture that respects employees and demonstrates that those employees are valued can help create a desirable work environment.

Implications for Policy and Practice for Professional Organizations

The findings of this study have several implications for national, regional, and state professional organizations. Professional organizations need to support women athletic trainers in paving the path to creating healthy, supportive work environments. Women athletic trainers need support from these organizations in the following areas: (a) advocacy, (b) mentorship, and (c) supporting and promoting work-life balance.

Women Athletic Trainers Want More Advocacy From Their Professional Organizations. Professional organizations provide advocacy, networking opportunities, and support for athletic trainers (NATA, 2021a). However, women of the CoP felt more support was needed in certain areas. Women of the CoP felt there was a dearth of

resources to support women athletic trainers specifically and that the way to effect change on a broader level was through support from leadership and opportunities for advocacy and mentorship. Without the professional organizations recognizing and combatting the challenges that many women in the profession encounter, it will be difficult to impart concerns and create widespread cultural changes. Likewise, without acknowledging and raising awareness of how this history of athletic training (being dominated and led by men) impacts women in the profession (Anderson, 1991, 1992), it will be difficult to guide change.

Professional Organizations Should Evaluate and Develop Mentorship and Networking Opportunities. The findings of the study indicate it was important for national and local professional athletic training organizations to provide opportunities for advocacy, networking, and mentorship, and to improve upon existing programs. While some mentorship programs have been offered through NATA and state professional organizations, women of the CoP who were a part of professional organizations and participated as mentors felt that overall, they were unsuccessful. Moreover, there does not appear to be any programs specifically focused on women athletic trainers. Women of the CoP recognized the value of mentorship and networking for women in the field which has been reported in previous literature (Dieringer, 2007; Eason et al., 2014; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Shingles, 2001; Singe & Walker, 2019). Mentorship can positively or negatively influence women athletic trainers (Dieringer, 2007; Eason et al., 2014; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Borland,

& Burton, 2012; Mazerolle & Eason, 2016a; Shingles, 2001; Singe & Walker, 2019), so it is important to provide opportunities that support women in the profession.

The use and success of current mentorship programs should be evaluated, and subsequent changes should be made to better support its women constituents. Prior research showed that women athletic trainers who work in a high school did not feel mentorship opportunities were available to them (Walker, et al., 2019). Networking opportunities and mentorship programs could be developed for women athletic trainers overall as well as women who work in specific settings, such as high schools which often have an athletic trainer working alone. Additionally, while there are networks for athletic trainers in professional sports settings (i.e., Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society), an internet search revealed there are none specific to women in these elite sports settings where women may face challenges that are not experienced by men. Lastly, CoP members identified the creation of a special interest group through NATA for women in the profession to be an opportunity to support women athletic trainers. This special interest group should provide opportunities for advocacy for women in the profession, platforms to discuss issues, and space to create change for women in the profession. It could also allow for networking among women athletic trainers and a possible springboard for mentorship programs.

Professional Organizations Must Increase Support for Work-Life Balance.

Another area that was noted that needed improvement in the profession was work-life balance. The negative impacts of conflicts with work-life balance and burnout have been extensively documented (Eason et al., 2014; Eberman & Kahanov, 2013; Mazerolle &

Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Eason, 2015; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017). While the NATA Position statement (Mazerolle, Pitney, Goodman, et al., 2018) was a great effort in addressing this issue, creating an evidence-based journal article does not ensure that it will be read and adopted by its target audience (Zomahoun et al., 2020). A one-pager summary of lessons learned or infographic about the findings of the position statement could be developed to make it more digestible for clinicians (Zomahoun et al., 2020). Furthermore, a culture of setting boundaries and taking time to attend to personal needs and responsibilities may need to be normalized for the profession. Leadership in professional organizations can assist with this effort by modeling behavior and speaking about the issues surrounding work-life and work-family balance. This study highlighted the need for development of educational information on rights during pregnancy and protections as a new mother specific to athletic trainers due to the uniqueness of the profession. Providing such information and resources would help women athletic trainers in their search for a balance among personal goals and a fulfilling career.

Implications for Policy and Practice for Athletic Training Programs

This study also has implications for athletic training programs. These programs educate and provide the foundation for future athletic trainers. Therefore, they are responsible for cultivating a culture of respect among students, supporting them, and

raising awareness about issues women athletic trainers may face in the workplace. In this section, I discuss opportunities to teach respect and cultivate awareness.

Athletic Training Programs' Responsibility to Impart a Culture of Respect.

Athletic training programs should take responsibility to instill a culture of respect among their students. Because they are developing future clinicians, it is important that they teach hard and soft skills. This effort includes setting the expectation that their faculty, student athletic trainers, and clinical preceptors treat others with respect and that these individuals are held accountable for their actions. Despite women athletic training students reporting experiencing sexual harassment (Siple et al., 2018), the majority of students had not received sexual harassment training (Mansell et al., 2017). Faculty must provide training and resources to students to educate and support them. Clinical preceptors must be a part of the effort to instill the concept of respect in the athletic training students they work with and to correct behavior, if needed. Similarly, medical education and residency programs recognized the need to teach respect to students (Burack et al., 1999).

Athletic Training Programs Should Raise Awareness of Women Athletic Trainers Challenges in the Workplace. CoP members believed that athletic training students who were women and young professionals needed to be aware of the societal and cultural issues they may encounter and that it was not often discussed in athletic training programs. Faculty in athletic training education programs should consider being transparent with the women in their programs about the challenges they may face in the workplace. Programs can achieve this by incorporating these topics into classes,

providing opportunities for discussion, and bringing in speakers to provide greater insight into these issues and concern. This effort may require training of athletic training educators on the needs and issues specific to women athletic trainers as well as understanding what kind of support is needed for these women.

As students and young professionals, women athletic trainers may not recognize the impacts of working for an organization that does not support a work-life balance or understand how to negotiate their salary. Creating space to understand how the culture of an organization can impact one's work experience and personal life is important. When women athletic trainers were able to find a workplace that embraced a culture of respect, they were grateful and content in their jobs. Moreover, athletic training education programs should provide resources for the women in their programs to discuss the pay gap, strategies to negotiate salary, and ask for a merit increase. One option to help address these issues is to invite guest speakers that can discuss these topics and barriers with students. For women to make informed decisions and be prepared as they enter the workforce, they should be educated on these issues and have the opportunity to hold conversations which allow them to better understand the environment and considerations specific to women in the field.

Recommendations for Future Research

In line with my critical feminist epistemology, I chose a data analysis approach that honored the community members' knowledge and allowed me to make plain the structures that impacted women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. I hope these findings will inform athletic trainers and athletic training researchers, bringing an

awareness that can serve as a foundation for change in the profession. Here I outline some recommendations for future research.

A Focus on Specific Populations of Women Athletic Trainers

Opportunities for future research include expanding this study to focus on women athletic trainers that work in specific work settings. This study engaged with women athletic trainers who worked in a variety of settings but did not target a specific setting. Focusing on specific settings would help understand the sociocultural factors that impact women in specific settings and provide more insights into opportunities for improvement and benefits of different settings. No prior studies have used a participatory approach or conducted a critical structural analysis to examine these topics in athletic training research.

While there has been significant research examining the experiences of women athletic trainers in high school and collegiate settings (Burton et al., 2012; Goodman et al., 2010; Gorant, 2012; Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012; Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Mazerolle, Eason, Ferraro, & Goodman, 2015; Mazerolle, Ferraro, et al., 2013; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017; Ohkubo, 2008; Pike et al., 2017), there is little research on women athletic trainers who work in professional sports or nontraditional and emerging settings such as physician and physical therapy clinics, hospitals, military, industrial, and performing arts. Little is known about the experiences of women athletic trainers in these settings. Recently, researchers have started to address this need by examining experiences of athletic trainers working with professional sports (Zweigle et al., 2020) and job

characteristics and preparation for athletic trainers working in the military setting (Radzak et al., 2020). However, methods used limited dialogue and in-depth examination of issues or did not focus on sociocultural structures, and were not focused on women's experiences. In fact, in Zweigle et al.'s (2020) study, only three of 18 participants were women.

Additionally, this study could be expanded by targeting women athletic trainers in different age groups and years of experience. This study worked with women aged 28 to 39 years with an average of 8.5 years of experience. It would be helpful to understand how women athletic trainers' experiences are impacted as they gain experience in the profession. There have been no studies that focused on women athletic trainers with extensive athletic training experience. Speaking with women who have worked in the field for 10 or more years may help to understand the factors that allow a woman to remain working in the profession.

Furthermore, because this study included athletic trainers from a variety of settings and backgrounds, not all topics were able to be discussed in depth. Family planning and raising children is a key topic for women in the field. However, this study only included two athletic trainers with children (including myself). Some work has been done to help understand the experiences of women athletic trainers who are mothers (Eason et al., 2014; Kahanov et al., 2010; Mazerolle & Eason, 2015, 2016b). However, this work has focused on the traditional setting. This study highlighted that women athletic trainers believe switching to a nontraditional setting was more conducive to

working as an athletic trainer and being a mother. However, there has been little research to support this.

Similarly, one story was shared in this study that deserves more attention which is pregnant women's experiences in the athletic training workplace. After a thorough search of the literature, no studies were found which investigated women athletic trainers' experiences while pregnant. Similarly, the women in this study expressed they felt there was a dearth of information out there for resources related to support for pregnant and new moms. There is a need to examine the benefits, resources, and education available to women athletic trainers related to family planning and pregnancy as it pertains to the workplace.

Gaining Other Perspectives

This study could also be expanded by gaining perspectives beyond women athletic trainers on this topic. Including other populations such as leadership and supervisors in organizations; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) athletic trainers; athletic trainers of different races and ethnicities; and men athletic trainers could provide insight into the topic. The perspective of department heads (e.g., athletic directors) and managers would allow for more insights and differing perspectives on the perspectives of supervisors and leadership, opportunities for improvement, and feasibility of changes in the workplace. These insights may help develop some actionable items that can be implemented in the workplace and help to create a partnership with leadership that was mentioned in this study's findings. Moreover, understanding the experiences of different groups (e.g.,

LGBTQIA, athletic trainings of specific races) can help inform researchers, clinicians, and policy makers to raise awareness and help create inclusive policies and strategies. Including men athletic trainers may help to see if men experience similar challenges and can be used to understand if men perceive women athletic trainers' experiences similarly to the way women perceive them. In a recent study in the professional setting, an athletic trainer who was a man recognized that being a woman in a professional sports setting was more challenging and that there were barriers for women in that setting (Zweigle et al., 2020). Expanding the project in these ways may provide a better understanding of these issues, allow for dialogue, and opportunities to help improve the experiences of women athletic trainers and athletic trainers as a whole.

Focus on Specific Topic Areas

There are other topic areas that should be explored which came out of this study. These areas included the improvement of salary, experiences of women athletic trainers and their need for a "side hustle," and the assessment of mentorship programs.

Examination and Improvement of Salary. Salary was concern that was shared among women in this study and in prior work (Mazerolle & Pitney, 2012). This study also revealed that salary seemed to be of concern when women athletic trainers considered having children. Future research could investigate how athletic trainers were able to successfully improve their salary or increase salary for entire departments. Providing athletic trainers with the resources and knowledge to improve their financial situation would be beneficial to women in the field.

Understanding the “Side Hustle.” The concept of athletic trainers’ need for a “side hustle” and how that contributed to conflicts with work-life balance and burnout has not been previously explored in the literature. This topic could be explored through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Researchers should assess the percentage of athletic trainers who feel the need to supplement their income, what sources are used for extra income, and how this extra work contributes to work-life balance and burnout. Participatory methodologies could be used to provide better understanding of the complex factors that are related to the decisions and need for extra income as well as its subsequent impacts.

Evaluating Mentorship Programs. Lastly, one topic area that CoP members felt needed attention was the assessment of current mentorship programs. Women of the CoP felt the current programs were unsuccessful and that there was a need to understand why in order to inform the development of future programs. I have not seen any literature which evaluated the implementation and impact of established mentorship programs, only recognizing the benefits of mentorship. A participatory approach may be an ideal way to explore this important topic and better understand why mentorship programs are used or not, what women athletic trainers are seeking from a mentor, and how they find one. This area may help better inform how to structure and improve mentorship programs.

Final Thoughts

By engaging in this dissertation project, I intended to utilize a critical feminist framework which allowed me to employ a novel methodology for athletic training

research. A participatory methodology allowed me to engage with clinically practicing women athletic trainers to better understand their experiences, needs, and concerns. This project allowed me to demonstrate the feasibility of conducting a participatory project with a group of this population. Gender issues have been reported in the profession since the early 1990s (Anderson, 1991, 1992), and this approach provided women athletic trainers an opportunity to voice their opinions and to take action-oriented outcomes to address the issue. While this topic is not new to the field, the methodological approach is. Researchers should consider employing methods informed by participatory methodologies to investigate issues in the field and help create action-oriented, clinically relevant outcomes.

Leadership in the athletic training profession and employers should take the knowledge generated from this project and develop strategies and policies to support change in the profession and the workplace. This dissertation presents a comprehensive overview of the cultural structures that impact women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace and offers suggestions to help address them. Policies and strategies that support women in the profession need to be created and updated. Organizational leadership should recognize that despite the majority of athletic trainers being women (NATA, 2018), there has been a drop off in women in the profession beginning at 28 years of age (Eason et al., 2018; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011; Mazerolle, Sterling, & Mench, 2017) and that there is a need to remedy the barriers created by the sociocultural structures and effects of the profession's historical roots.

The culture of an organization has a large impact on the experiences of its membership and employees, and a change in that culture requires support from the top (Dominick, 2018). Leaders within NATA, regional, and state professional organizations must recognize this need, take steps to help resist the ill-effects of structures of gender and the culture of overdedication, and provide platforms to address concerns specific to its women constituents. Employers must also recognize the need to update policies, educate employees about these resources, encourage their use, and reinforce policies. While the findings of this study do not offer any groundbreaking solutions, it provided more nuanced understandings of decisions women athletic trainers make, their experiences, and needs. For change to be implemented, understanding the concerns and needs of a community are essential. The findings of this study make plain the structures that impact women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace and allows women athletic trainers, professional organizations, and employers the opportunity to better understand the issues. From here, there must be resistance to oppressive patterns and action taken to improve the experiences of women athletic trainers.

Appendix A

George Mason University IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia
22030 Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE: September 2, 2020

TO: Meagan Call-Cummings

FROM: George Mason University IRB

Project Title: [1579712-2] Women Athletic Trainers' Experiences
in the Workplace SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: September 2, 2020

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

You are required to follow the George Mason University Covid-19 research continuity of operations guidance. You may not begin or resume any face-to-face interactions with human subjects until (i)

Mason has generally authorized the types of activities you will conduct, or (ii) you have received advance written authorization to do so from Mason's Research Review Committee. In all cases, all safeguards for face-to-face contact that are required by Mason's COVID policies and procedures must be followed.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless the IRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form or has waived the requirement for a consent process. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

ALL UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the IRB office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This study does not have an expiration date but you will receive an annual reminder regarding future requirements.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

Please note that department or other approvals may be required to conduct your research in addition to IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact Katie Brooks at (703) 993-4121 or kbrook14@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

GMU IRB Standard Operating Procedures can be found here:
<https://oria.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/human-subjects/>

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

Appendix B

Recruitment Script

I am Jessica Pope, and I a PhD candidate at George Mason University. This study is a part of my dissertation project.

You have been selected to participate in this study because I am aiming to recruitment women athletic trainers who are participating in a community-based participatory research project in order to better understand women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace. For this project, I (Jessica Pope) would observe the Women Athletic Trainers' Community Action Group meetings and would use data from some of the on-going projects of the group. Additionally, you may be invited to participate in up to two interviews and two focus groups to further discuss some of the issues surrounding women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace, career planning, and your experiences with a community-based participatory research project.

If you are interested in learning more, I will read you the informed consent which further explains the project and your involvement.

Would you like to hear more?

- If not interested, thank the individual for his/ her time.
- If interested, then move to the consent form.

Appendix C

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

Women Athletic Trainers' Experiences in the Workplace

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to better understand women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace, career choices, how systems can change to make the workplace supportive and inclusive of women in the field, and to understand how community-based participatory research can help answer these questions.

If you agree to participate, you may be asked to participate in up to two 45-minute focus group sessions, two 45-minute interviews, and for me to observe Community Action Group meetings. The focus groups and interviews will be conducted online and involve questions and discussion about women athletic trainers' experiences in the workplace, the sociocultural aspects of career-planning, decision-making for women in the profession, and your experiences with involvement in a community-based participatory research project; these will be video and audio recorded for future analysis. The interviews and participation in focus groups would be optional. For interviews, select participants may be asked; therefore, not all participants will be asked to do an interview. During Community Action Group meetings, I will collect observational data, audio record the meetings, and collect data collected by the group including notes taken by you, the participant. I will also collect other work products such as journal entries, brainstorming notes, and any presentations or posters that come out of the project. For those who decline to be a part of the research project, you can still participate in the Community Action Group; however, I will not use or collect any data from that individual, or take notes on that individual's contributions.

RISKS

Since we are not asking sensitive questions, we do not expect any significant risks. The primary risk would be a breach of confidentiality, and we will take precautions to minimize this risk.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in the area of contributing to research which may provide information on changes to improve the work environment for women athletic trainers and the potential for community-based participatory research as a methodology for future work in the field.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. You will select a pseudonym and all data collected will be associated with your chosen pseudonym; your name will not be associated with your data. The video and audio recordings will be digital files that will be named with a series of letters and numbers that have no personally identifiable information. In addition, these files are password protected and will be stored only on computers that also have password protection. Only the researchers for this study will have access to the video and audio recording files, passwords, and data. The electronic video and audio files will be destroyed five years after the conclusion of the data collection for this study. Those who participate via Zoom may review Zoom's website for information about their privacy statement. <https://zoom.us/privacy/>. Although focus group participants will be asked to keep the contents of the discussion confidential, due to the nature of a focus group, the researcher cannot control what participants might say outside of the research setting. The de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from the participants. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee that monitors research on human subjects may inspect study records during internal auditing procedures and are required to keep all information confidential.

PARTICIPATION

You must be 18 years of age or older in order to participate. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. In addition, you can decide not to answer any of the questions that are asked or request that parts be omitted. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Jessica Pope, MS, LAT, ATC as a part of her doctoral dissertation research at George Mason University. She may be reached at 703-861-4310 for questions or to report a research-related problem; you may also contact Meagan Call-Cummings, PhD at 703-993-1718. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 or IRB@gmu.edu and reference IRBNet number 1579712-1, if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to audio taping.

_____ I agree to video taping.

_____ I do not agree to audio taping.

_____ I do not agree to video taping.

Name (Typed)

Date

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Biography

Jessica Pope Mitro earned her Bachelor of Science degrees from Virginia Tech in Business Management and in Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise in 2006 and 2007, respectively. She received her Master of Science in Health and Human Performance: Athletic Training from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 2009. She is a nationally board certified athletic trainer and licensed to practice in Virginia and Pennsylvania. Jessica worked as a clinical athletic trainer in the NCAA III setting, and for hospital systems doing community outreach with adult recreation and semi-professional teams, collegiate sports, secondary school, and youth sports. She also worked as a per diem athletic trainer covering youth sports and Division I athletics. Jessica served as an adjunct professor in the athletic training program at George Mason University. She is currently employed as a Program Manager through Henry M. Jackson Foundation, supporting a health services research project in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.