A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY ATHLETIC TRAINERS

WITH ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENT AIDES IN A SPORTS MEDICINE CAREER

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION PATHWAY IN TEXAS

by

Amanda Marie Andrews

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

The intended purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experience of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise career technology education (CTE) health science students in the sports medicine pathway at high schools in Texas. Through the lens of the social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hacket, 2006) as a theoretical framework, this study will answered the central research question: What is the lived experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides? Sub-questions sought to further explore the participants' relationship to student self-efficacy in career exploration and career choice. Purposeful, criterion-based sampling with maximum variation was utilized to procure volunteer participants experiencing the phenomenon of being a secondary athletic trainer with athletic training student aides in the CTE health science sports medicine pathway at high schools in Texas. Data was collected through open-ended semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journaling then analyzed according to phenomenological procedures as outlined by Moustakas' (1994).

Keywords: athletic training, sports medicine, motivation, education, career, mentorship

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Dedication

The culmination of hours of study, research, preparation, writing, interviewing, data collection, analysis, and reflection upon a three-year journey has led to the completion of this dissertation. This dissertation is first dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has sustained me before, during, and by faith will continue throughout eternity. Second, this work is dedicated to my family, who were giving of their time, prayers, and resources for me to continue this journey. Specifically, my husband, Paul, for bringing laughs when all I had were stressed and worn-out tears; I love you. Thank you for encouraging me and never letting me quit.

To my children, David, Kayelin, and Jared, thank you for having endless kisses and hugs no matter how many board games I could not play or movie nights I could not recall the plot nor characters because I was quietly typing behind you. Thank you for taking care of each other and trying new adventures as "home" became our school, workplace, favorite restaurant, art gallery, science lab, garden, and rec center during the COVID pandemic. You three show me there is hope in the future and I pray that you can "live life to the full" as you continue to grow.

To my parents, thanks for the extra pick up's, sleepovers, car rides, meals, and so much grace that allowed for this journey to take place. To all of the other friends and family who prayed over me, edited several papers, and helped in so many ways, may you be abundantly blessed.

To my students that were just as excited for the acceptance letter that began this marathon, placing notes around with "future Dr. Andrews" and even now by sharing dreams for your future; this is for you too. Never stop learning no matter what detours arise.

Lastly, to the athletic trainers, coaches, teachers, and professors who taught me how to persevere through adversity, love people, and never give up, this one is for you! I love you all and pray you are exceedingly and abundantly blessed as you "live life to the full."

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I would also like to acknowledge the athletic trainers that bring meaning to this work. Thank you to all of the secondary athletic trainers, especially my participants, for all that you do to keep athletes on the field and for shining a light for the future generation of athletic trainers to follow in our steps.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Athletic Trainer (AT)

Athletic Training Professional Education Program (ATP)

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Career Technology Education (CTE)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Patient Care Technologist (PCT)

Physical Therapist (PT)

Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise student athletic training aides participating within a sports medicine career technology education (CTE) pathway in Texas. This opening chapter provides the background of the problem in historical, social, and theoretical context, which reveals the purpose of this study and formulates the questions it hopes to answer. Additionally, this chapter describes the researcher's situation to self and provides the problem statement, purpose statement, research question context and study significance before concluding with imperative definitions to this study and a summary of the chapter.

Background

Athletic training has long been a profession built around apprenticeship teaching styles as students participate in immersive hands-on learning experiences. The National Athletic Trainers' Association was founded in 1950 with about 200 founding members and has grown to over 45,000 members serving worldwide in various didactic and clinical settings (NATA, 2019). The first major emphasis directly related to the education and employability of athletic trainers in 1959 was "the attainment of secondary-level teaching credential" (Delforge & Behnke, 1999, p. 54). Currently, only about 16 percent of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting are assigned teaching duties but many continue to provide career experiences and mentorship through sports medicine CTE pathways (Attanasio, et al., 2017).

Historical

Reflecting upon the history of early American schools whose primary purpose was teaching discipline, manners, and religion, easily accomplished through conditioning theory

principles of positive and negative rewards (Gutek, 2011). These principles then became learned habits and possibly turned into a driving force to move ahead. The model of one teacher and several students allowed for older students to teach the younger students, and outside of the basics, children would likely follow the path his or her parents laid out or be adopted into an apprenticeship in some regard. Thomas Jefferson as a founding father of The United States of America is also profoundly known as a historical education figure and for his desire for "a more general diffusion of knowledge" across socioeconomical lines (Gutek, 2011, p. 195). His policies and philosophies of state run "hundreds", that are similar to the school districts today, helped to establish the University of Virginia as a place to build academic community "for free pursuit of knowledge" without religious dogma (Gutek, 2011, p. 193). Jefferson and those that followed him saw a need for changes from traditional education to further involve human interaction within his or her environment as intellect went far beyond one's economical birthright.

Moving into the age of industrialization when families left the farmlands for the booming cities and factories. The need for steady and consistent workforce production is what we continue to base the American public-school curriculum upon with only minor alterations that lead toward a motivated learner. John Dewey, having left the family farm for the grocery store business provides an excellent example of societal leaders that challenged the norms of education to investigate why schools teach what they teach and the ways that teaching took place in hopes of creating a better system for learning rather than for teaching. Looking back the late 1800's shared the sentiment of many 21st century educators. Sharing that schools had reduced effectiveness with overly formal instruction and too much teacher directed instruction that "gave the appearance but not the substance of genuine learning" (Gutek, 2011, p. 350). As education

continues to transform, the historical precedence need not be forgotten toward the needs for student-centered learning and "learning by doing" (Gutek, 2011, p. 350).

"Education in its broadest sense is about transformation of the self into new ways of thinking and relating" (Kalen, et al., 2015, p. 641). Secondary schools with CTE sports medicine pathways are uniquely able to provide real-world opportunities to students that may lead to early career exploration and choice either toward or away from athletic training. These opportunities combine aspects of teaching and mentoring from the secondary school athletic trainer but also allow for peer-mentoring among students throughout the high school experiences. Peer assisted learning has been utilized and researched in higher education athletic training education programs and found to be advantageous to growth in skills, confidence, and relationship (Bates, 2017). Furthermore, Walsh, et al. (2015) demonstrated that high school students' career exploration increased following time spent with college students in current programs. Additionally, they were able to link career outcomes to appropriate career goal setting that would lead to future success. While there is a "significant difference between mentors and tutors" (Woods & Preciado, 2016, p. 99) both lead to increased motivation, meaningfulness, and decreased anxiety toward career exploration and choice.

Social

Motivation is not a static item that is easily measured. But is fueled by an ever-changing list of variables occurring in one's life while seeking to find balance in desires and action. Akhtar, et al. (2017) regarded motivation as a "basic part of the human experience" directing one's personal and professional behaviors (p. 20). Potential solutions to increase motivation in learning is to make such learning meaningful to the students. General statistics are able to measure specific traceable data points of learners such as an age, race, or socioeconomic status is

utilized to qualify any one particular student's perceptions on experiencing excitement or defeat, engaging with peers, an expectation of a career, and the hope of becoming something someday. From which, educators make a delicate attempt to create a perfectly balanced curriculum or lesson that can be applied to the masses of students within modern day education cycles. Educational curriculum that finds focus in career mentorship and real-world experiences through career technology pathways such as the health sciences, sports medicine and athletic training which can empower students and educators to carry out the vision and mission that draws them together. Moreover, student motivation, learning, and confidence can be enhanced through direct experiences of challenges and collaboration among peers that career technology education naturally provides (Leow, et al, 2016).

Understanding what motivates students and how to motivate students can help educators to mentor students toward desired outcomes, college preparation, career choices, and life goals. Upon initial investigative surveys, Gaylor and Nicol (2016) found that a majority of students were intimidated by the opportunity to explore a career through the use of mentor experiences. Conversely, research indicates that having a career experience before entering formal education increases the chance for success once established within that career. Furthermore, Sandoval-Lucero (2014) describes college programs that utilize internships and experiential learning have more transformational outcomes that in turn lead to career achievements and success along with improved career decision making skills leading to a positive career identity.

Theoretical

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) has been framed by Erikson's (1963) career identity wherein adolescents develop an awareness of vocational interest and realities then begin career related tasks such as career planning and exploration toward a future career as described

by Super (1990) then forging through to the crux of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory into self-efficacy. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) defined SCCT as a variety of personal, contextual, and behavioral variables influencing the process of career choice. Bandura (1977) was able to give voice and understanding to the importance of self-efficacy toward behavior outcomes to complete a task or meet a goal. With these guiding theories in mind, SCCT has been utilized to demonstrate the importance of career decision confidence and increasing goal-setting behaviors in late adolescents (Rogers & Creed, 2011). Gaylor and Nicol (2016) concluded that the earlier students were exposed to career education and given the opportunity to work alongside a career professional or be mentored while learning, success is often the result. Social cognitive career theory postulates that for interests to develop, one's environment must provide the exposure then cultivate that exposure with positive outcome beliefs that lead to strong self-efficacy; moreover, opening the door for realized success (Lent, Brown, & Hacket, 2006).

Situation to Self

My motivation for this study comes out of being a secondary school head athletic trainer and health science educator. My desire is to further understand the role of secondary athletic trainers' influences toward the profession of athletic training amidst higher education accreditation standards that are transitioning from bachelor's degree to a master's degree requirements for those choosing to become athletic trainers going forward (Peer, 2017). I have been an athletic trainer for 15 years serving in college and outreach settings and have been serving in the secondary school setting for the past 13 years. Having gone through high school with many mentors, none had any direct effect on my career choice but more of a support role though life's ups and downs or within a team and leadership context. In line with Erikson's (1963) career identity, as an adolescent having fallen in love with the athletic arena and knowing

that I desired to help others recover from injury. I set out to pursue a physical therapy degree to fulfill a dream that began by watching others help my own brother recover from multiple elbow injuries and get back to the sports he so much enjoyed. However, while in college after sustaining my own injury, I learned what an athletic trainer was and the career opportunities that were available.

Through mentoring relationships with a few of the athletic trainers, my college major and career path ultimately changed to athletic training. Those mentors and I continue to share our relationships and a love of the athletic training profession future growth and success. Out of my own experience, the social cognitive career theory fits seamlessly as it models the "interrelationship of career interest, development, choice making, and performance" (Brown & Lent, 2019, p. 1). Throughout my educational journey in athletic training many of my peers often reminisced of high school programs and mentors that had led them to this career well before it crossed my path. Their opportunities allowed for exposure to "real world workplace experiences" which has been found to increase career planning, choices, and self-efficacy (Rogers & Creed, 2011, p. 171). Having now built a secondary sports medicine pathway within the CTE health science program at my high school, along with insight from casual interactions among leaders and students of similar programs in the surrounding area, the role of mentorship in choosing any health science career seems to hold a strong common thread further solidifying the foundational truths of SCCT (Brown & Lent, 2019; Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent, Brown & Hacket, 2006; Lent, Morris, et al., 2018; 2019).

Since the Word of God is living, Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (NASB), provides a spiritual paradigm for myself as a Christian educator to continue the display of mentorship in aspects of life beyond personal spirituality in order to

influence better education and better professionals. In this study, I will seek to examine the lived experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary setting for the purpose of gaining ontological insight toward mindfully educating and mentoring the next generation of professional athletic trainers. I will seek to present the lived experiences of the participants as it exists absent of prejudgment or presupposition. I will aim to interpret the perspectives of the participants' experiences through a social constructivist lens, as knowledge gained by interactions, gathering data that represents well their "perspective rather than absolute truth" (Patton, 2015, p. 1020). I will bracket myself in epoché and follow Moustakas' (1994) methods of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis to present fully the lived experiences of my participants.

Problem Statement

Impartation of a passionate pursuit of lifelong learning is the goal of many educators. Mazerolle and Dodge (2014) concluded that students entering professional healthcare with an understanding of the field are in the best position to succeed. Ninety eight percent of American students entering high school as determined by Gaylor and Nicol (2016), have already begun making a career choice decision, of those, 60% had spoken with someone, 40% had job shadowed, and 30% had volunteered in a related field despite reporting fear of seeking help. Research continues to indicate increased student success with exposure to career education early, when given the opportunity to work alongside a career professional (Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Walsh, et al., 2015). Furthermore, the quality and diversity of the experiences within the programs alongside credentialed professionals was found to be more critical than the number of hours they participated (Mazerolle & Dodge, 2014).

Woods and Preciado (2016) emphasized, "Relationships with mentors who are similar to students in some way, known as *near-peer mentors* may be particularly effective" (p. 92). Moreover, Walsh, et al. (2015) illustrated that near peer mentoring not only gave specific focus to the student but had additional positive impact on the mentor's professional development and career aspirations. Looking beyond the student in the classroom and into the professional educator, Onjoro, et al. (2015) further explicated that teachers engaged in mentor relationships present students with a stronger foundational education. Minimal research has been directed toward the experiences of secondary athletic trainers beyond role delineation and statistical analysis of athletic training service providers in the secondary setting. The problem is that there is minimal understanding of the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary setting supervising student athletic trainer aides participating within a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas.

Purpose Statements

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise student athletic training aides participating within a sports medicine career technology education (CTE) pathway in Texas. At this stage in the research, branching from the general meaning of CTE, the sports medicine CTE pathway will be generally defined as a program that provides students with a strong academic foundation in health science as it relates to sports medicine (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The theory guiding this study is social cognitive career theory, postulated by Lent, Brown, and Hacket (1994, 2000) based in Bandura's social cognitive theory as its "core social cognitive elements operate together with a variety of other person (e.g., personality, ability, gender, race/ethnicity), contextual (e.g., supports, barriers, socioeconomic resources), and behavioral

(e.g., choice action) variables, producing a framework that is designed to aid in understanding of the academic and career development" (Lent & Brown, 2019, p. 2).

Significance of the Study

This phenomenological study may have empirical, theoretical, and practical significance for secondary school athletic trainers, CTE students, educators, athletic training education programs (ATP), secondary CTE curriculum developers, and other sports medicine professionals.

Empirical

Empirically, this transcendental phenomenological study may provide a voice for secondary school athletic trainers within a career technical education pathway (Gaylor, & Nicol, 2016; Onjoro, et al., 2015; Woods, et al., 2016). While there are many studies that focus on the collegiate level of teaching and learning in the field of athletic training, there are very few that focus on secondary athletic trainers that teach and mentor CTE sports medicine pathway students.

Theoretical

Theoretically, this transcendental phenomenological study may add to the understanding of social cognitive career theory (Brown & Lent, 2019; Lent & Brown, 2013) by gaining the perspective of secondary athletic trainers' lived experiences through the personal, contextual, and behavioral lenses toward student academic and career development that leads to career choice outcomes. Through the lens of SCCT the experiences as professional, educators, and mentors may provide a great backdrop from which to understand more fully the career planning and choices provided to secondary students through CTE sports medicine pathways.

Practical

Practically, the significance of this transcendental phenomenological study may help to improve the understanding of the lived reality of secondary athletic trainers that teach in sports medicine CTE pathways; their roles in educating athletic training student aides toward the profession of athletic training and help accredited ATP programs recruit future athletic training students. As the professional education program structure evolves the need for exposure to the profession of athletic training may need to evolve as well (Peer, 2017). The participants will shed current perspective and possible rationale for further research or curricular implementation as the field of athletic training continues to grow and diversify (Bowman, et al., 2016).

Research Questions

This study seeks to focus on the lived experiences of secondary athletic trainers by investigating the essence of life involved with supervising student athletic training aides within a sports medicine CTE pathway. It will be guided by the theoretical framework of social cognitive career theory in order to better understand the personal, contextual, and behavioral phenomena toward student academic and career development (Brown & Lent, 2019; Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000). Data will be collected directly from the secondary school athletic trainers who experience the phenomena to address the following central research question and associated guiding questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative methods as described by Creswell & Poth (2018) are appropriate for this research due to a focus on understanding the lived experiences of secondary athletic trainers. Utilizing transcendental phenomenological methods for epoché and bracketing according to Moustakas (1994) the primary focus of this study is to explore and give a voice to the experiences of secondary athletic trainers supervising athletic training student aides participating in a CTE pathway in Texas.

Central Research Question

What is the lived experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE

pathway athletic training student aides?

Central to the study, this question frames all inquiry and analysis. This question

encompasses the essence of SCCT in that I hope to give voice to the secondary athletic trainers

through personal, contextual, and behavioral understanding of the life truly lived (Brown & Lent,

2019; Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000). This central question is

expected to gain an understanding of personal perspectives in the secondary athletic training

setting, contextually as athletic trainer educators, and behaviorally as career mentors, from which

to give a voice to the field of athletic training as it relates to career choice outcomes of secondary

CTE health sciences pathway students.

Guiding Question One

How do participants describe their perspective of themselves as mentors? Athletic

training professional education program directors commonly refer to "connections students are

able to foster" as a key component of persistence through a career program (Bowman, et al.,

2016, p.48). This question seeks to understand the connectedness between secondary athletic

trainers and the high school students under their guidance as well as any focus toward

mentorship that may be found within the program, student peers, and other sports medicine

professionals.

Guiding Question Two

What role do participants describe that they play in their students' career choice? Providing

an exposure to the sports medicine careers surrounding athletic training is implied; however, this

question seeks to understand the built-in curriculum expected role or unexpected happenstances

that have emerged. Through SCCT there is an assumption that self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations can be generated from vicarious learning and social persuasion as well as mastery experiences and physiological states (Brown & Lent, 2019). Additionally, SCCT features that people who surround themselves with like-minded people, that are also successful, tend to develop higher self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations such as career choice (Brown & Lent, 2019).

Guiding Question Three

How do participants perceive modeling professional duties as influence on the motivation of student aides toward procuring future athletic training professionals? "Early clinical experience with the mentor was an incentive; it helped them to imagine their future life" (Kalen et al., 2015, p. 104). Skatova and Ferguson (2014) found motivations affect real life outcomes as "pro-social motivation predicts volunteering, while motivation of achievement predicts career success" (p. 1). This question seeks to understand the outlying role of secondary athletic trainers as motivating factors toward or away from the profession of athletic training in interest development, abilities, values, and contextual factors moving from exploration to goals to career choice (Brown & Lent, 2019).

Definitions

1. *Athletic trainer* – "Health care professionals who collaborate with physicians. The services provided by athletic trainers comprise prevention, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. Athletic trainers work under the direction of physicians, as prescribed by state licensure statutes" (National Athletic Trainers' Association, 2014).

2. *Athletic training student aides* – High school students under supervision of an athletic trainer (National Athletic Trainers' Association, 2019b).

3. *Career* – "The progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially those related to that person's occupations. A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned, and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position" (WebFinance Inc, 2019).

4. *Career Choice* – The process whereby individuals choose one occupation over another in the presence of alternative options and individual preference in preparation for an eventual career in a particular field (Wu, et al., 2015).

5. *Career technology education (CTE)* – "Programs offering a sequence of courses that provides students with coherent and rigorous content. CTE content is aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and careers in current or emerging professions" (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

6. *Graduate Assistant (GA) Athletic Trainer* – "New professionals transitioning from being supervised students to autonomous clinicians" (Thrasher, et al., 2015, p. 322).

7. *Health science* – "Careers dedicated to planning, managing, and providing therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development" (Advance CTE, 2019).

8. *Secondary school setting* – Job setting for athletic trainers in middle and high school (National Athletic Trainers' Association, 2019a).

9. *Self-efficacy* – "Peoples beliefs about their capabilities to organize and execute behaviors to reach particular goals" (Brown & Lent, 2019, p. 2).

10. *Sports medicine* – "The branch of medicine concerned with physical fitness, the underlying science of function and performance in sport and exercise, and the prevention,

diagnosis and treatment of injuries or illnesses affecting the athlete" (U.S. National

Library of Medicine, 2003).

11. *Transcendental phenomenology* – Transcendental phenomenology is a qualitative

research methodology in which the researcher sets aside prejudgments and prior

knowledge about participants or the lived experiences being studied (the phenomenon)

through epoché or bracketing in order to describe a picture of participants experiences

and develop an unbiased analysis of the phenomenon that is then synthesized to form a

description of the phenomenon's essence (Moustakas, 1994, Creswell & Poth, 2018).

12. *Qualitative research* – A set of interpretive, material practices that make the world

visible. Practices that transform the world by turning it into representations including

field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. It

involves studying things in their natural setting attempting to make sense of, or interpret,

phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln,

2011).

13. *Social cognitive career theory (SCCT)* – "Derived from Bandura's (1986, 1997) general

social cognitive theory, a set of core constructs: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome

expectations, and goals. Along with additional person and contextual variables, these core

constructs were adapted to help explain and predict the types of interest that people

develop, the types of work and educational pursuits in which they engage, the

performance and satisfaction they achieve at school and work, and how they negotiate

planned and unplanned challenges to their academic work lives" (Brown & Lent, 2019, p.

1).

Summary

This chapter has presented a historical, social, and theoretical background to which this proposed study will seek to describe the essence of the secondary athletic trainers' lived experiences supervising students participating in a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas. This chapter explored my philosophical assumptions and worldview as it relates to this study from which I believe the experiences of these athletic trainers should be given a voice. Lastly, the central research question and sub questions were linked to literature and the theoretical framework then key terminology was presented to aid the reader in understanding the context of the participants, researcher, and proposed study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework of social cognitive career theory and literature pertaining to CTE, athletic training, and career choice as it relates to the experience of secondary athletic trainers supervising CTE sports medicine student aides. The literature synthesized in this chapter examines the nature of secondary athletic trainers and typical CTE health science sports medicine pathway models. Discussion is provided on the use of mentors among students seeking careers in the health sciences, mentorship opportunities within professional preparation health science career programs, in addition to the impact of mentorship on self-efficacy, and mentorship toward career choice related to health science, specifically sports medicine. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the content and establish the gap in the literature that this transcendental phenomenological study will attempt to fill.

Theoretical Framework

From the early 1900's to present day much continues to be debated concerning the merits of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies to encourage learning as well as the behaviors necessary for learning. The social cognitive theory demonstrates social systems as fluid entities as people make choices to influence their environment and manage lives (Bandura, 2002). Furthermore, Bandura (2002) explains that when people lack direct control, they try to get those with access to resources and expertise to influences others on their behalf or secure the desired outcome. Adding the career aspect to the theory provides a framework from which to see the development of one's interest, the process of making career choices, and the role of

performance capabilities or self-efficacy that collectively influence outcome expectations "such as the intention to select a college major or to pursue a career path" (Lent, et al., 2010, p.245).

Development of one's career path is complex as is mentoring students toward or away from a particular career goal. Super (1975) attempted to distinguish career psychology and occupational sociology from one another as how a career develops across the lifespan compared to the influencing environment of the home, educational system, community, and occupations as one walks through life. Attitudes toward a career may change as knowledge is gained or experiences are presented; therefore, expanding options seem more attainable to those whose personality or career supports may not have previously aligned (Rogers & Creed, 2011). Bandura (1977) explained the importance of self-efficacy toward facing and mastering challenges in SCT development.

Social cognitive career theory continues to be adaptable between self-efficacy and the choice behaviors that lead to career success through exploration (Lent, Brown, & Hacket, 1994; Lent, Morris, et al., 2019). Rogers and Creed (2011) further expanded SCCT from career exploration and attitudes to career goals and planning that begins in late adolescents as a result of implemented interventions from counselors, parents, and teachers. While the primary focus of the SCCT in current literature is based in career exploration and the career decision making process, Brown and Lent (2019) exude elation over the research applications of the SCCT across a variety of career process domains. Emerging trends relate SCCT further than exploration providing stronger indication and linking career choice to social supports and counselling (Brown & Lent, 2019). The SCCT is most often utilized in seeking early career choices but has included emerging options for its use in looking at career choices "at the other end of the work-life continuum, retirement" (Brown & Lent, 2019, p. 8).

Career decision awareness and understanding of late adolescent development and identity can be traced to Erikson's (1963, 1968) theory of psychosocial development that integrated social and cultural environments across the life span. The developmental identity cross-referenced to Super's (1953) theory of vocational development and Super's (1975) career guidance for the lifespan has provided the building blocks that necessitate the SCT and further addition to SCCT models. Interestingly, Penn (2019) demonstrated that SCCT models tested to study the decisions of those entering retirement paralleled the models tested with college students with self-efficacy a determinant for retirement planning.

Mentor relationships increasing the rate of success, and even that of motivation is undoubtedly an intriguing concept for the modern-day technology heightened life experiences. Behaviors may be innate but can be altered based on some version of reward along with cognitive understanding and balancing of thought (Schunk, 2016). According to Lent, Paixao, et al. (2010) "the setting and pursuit of career-relevant goals are also responsive to the sorts of supports and barriers that people receive from their environments" (p. 245). Students who are supported in their explorations are more likely to be confident decision-makers who set goals and plan to achieve them (Rogers & Creed, 2011). As SCCT continues to evolve, the model of career self-management is at the forefront. This model is essential as its primary focus is on the learning experiences that guide beliefs in self-efficacy and outcome expectations leading to goals and actions (Lent, Ireland, et al., 2017).

Lent, Ireland, et al. (2017) relate the previous SCCT models and Lent, Ezeofor, et al. (2016) findings to further understand the role of supports and barriers beyond mere exposure to careers into the learning experiences and person inputs from learning experiences that promote or hinder self-efficacy development (Lent, Brown, & Hacket, 2006). Absent career guidance and

mentors, college students have been found to exhibit increased career anxiety specifically when a "lack of career guidance before college" was discussed (Pisarik, et al., 2017p. 345).

Mentorship has long played a role in developing career pathways and self-efficacy. Super (1953) respected the finality of experience as it changes the person and could not be undone. Furthermore, Super appreciated the expanse of role models asserting that while "much has been made of the importance of identifications with parents and other adults in individual development" (p. 187), "role models facilitate the development and implementation of self-concept" (p. 188). Various educational institutions now provide a plethora of learning experiences that may be deemed necessary at the time or mandated by law. Still, the influence of personal, contextual, and behavioral variables may play substantial roles in career choice. Thus, solidifying the social cognitive career theory as most appropriate for this transcendental phenomenological study of secondary school athletic trainers supervising CTE sports medicine pathway student aides.

Related Literature

Many problems relating to modern education surface daily across local, state, national, and world-renowned media outlets. Some have simple solutions, while others continue to weigh on the minds of educators and policymakers. At present, it seems that no matter the scale of population or specific region of the world, motivating students to learn a specific curriculum or in a specific manner continues to perplex and challenge educational systems across the globe as "governments of many countries are coming up with policies to encourage students to participate" in various academic and career fields (Iyer, 2017, p. 16). Leow, et al. (2016) took on the constructivism viewpoint that "knowledge cannot be transmitted but can be constructed through the meaning-making process that related to the real-world situations" (p. 245). Proverbs

19:20 encourages that we "listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days" (NASB). Creating an environment that motivates students, provides opportunities for career exploration, and fosters mentorship opportunities is vital for career self-management and self-efficacy demonstrated through an SCCT lens (Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Lent, Ireland, et al., 2017; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014). The implications that mentorship increases both mentor and mentee motivation, intellect, and drive to make the future better for all involved demonstrates the need to continue seeking answers through additional literature review and new research.

Goel, et al. (2018) defines motivation as "the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. It involves the biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that activate behavior" (p. 18). Motivating a student to learn encompasses a combination of factors that gains knowledge of the individual's vision, creates a plan that complements the science of past theorists and builds authentic relationships that will lead to making a difference in the world. However, there is a student motivation struggle that must be handled methodically and with care. Student's perceived competence in math and English declined from 1st to 12th grade, and this was validated with "8 of 10 reported being 'learning with a positive emotional tone and persevering in the face of challenges,' but the number drops to 6 of 10 in middle school and 4 of 10 in high school" (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016, p. 604).

Educators, parents, community, and systems in place must find a way to maximize student outcomes. While it would be helpful for CTE to manage and optimize those outcomes, additional aspects are likely at play. Getting back to the basics of goal setting, having students write out what goals they have in the short-term, long-term, and for careers may be an instrument that helps them to excel in traditional academics, CTE, and the future workplace but students need a model as well (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016). Students may go through the activity of

writing goals and thinking of lofty ideas but lacking the self-management of motivational recognition begs of a mentorship opportunity to be found.

Both the extrinsic motivation of what career might advance quickly and have to offer financially as well as intrinsic motivation from one's morals or beliefs help to encourage choices (Skatova & Ferguson, 2014). The initial career choices often change dependent of the environment and supports available to the student. Through the work of Super (1975), Skatova and Ferguson (2014), and Asgari and Carter (2016) the pattern of career choices influenced only by motivation either extrinsic or intrinsic may lead to significant interest and garner some occupational success; however, devoid of a mentor, career success lingers in the balance. Career choice and pathway developments are increasingly pressurized at the middle school and high school levels as the academic load shifts back toward vocational and occupational training around the world (Draaisma, et al., 2018; Hemelt, et al., 2019; Nafilyan & Speckesser, 2019; Saniter, et al., 2018).

Considering the careers that require college degrees, Skatova and Ferguson (2014) further distinguished the ideals of motivation to highlight the individual differences while contextualize them into four categories of helping (a desire to help others), loafing (concise degree path), career (profitable and respected), and interest (rewarding). None of the categories were decidedly good nor bad but could guide counselors and college admissions teams to help students navigate toward the path most likely to result in successful completion and career longevity. Whether choosing a path that is rewarding, one mapped for quick completion, prestige focused, or the passionate pursuit of held beliefs, motivation without guidance often leads to occupational changes and career confusion (Kuijpers, 2019; Mazerolle, Dawson, et al., 2012). Collaborative approaches between high schools, community, and corporate businesses link student motivation

to real experiences. These are needed to not only entice new generations of employees but lay foundational roots for careers not yet imagined in a climate where career predictability is far removed from that of the past three decades (Hemelt, et al., 2018; Kuijpers, 2019).

Mentoring, experiential learning, and service-learning are varying positions that share the same focus. All of the aforementioned shared learning techniques are centralized toward helping students to envision themselves in a particular position within a particular career choice and with a specific group of people or things modeled by current professionals. Moreover, multidisciplinary medical mentoring for health care career decisions are demonstrating positive impacts specific to high school students (Danner et al., 2017). With career choices being presented in middle school and pathways confirmed during early high school mentors in some form may fill the gaps between the motivation constructs of scientific factors such as interest in health sciences, social factors such as respect or prestige, and humanitarian factors such as the desire to help others (Goel, et al., 2018). All the while, "longer-term, experiential, hands-on exposure is particularly valuable in the retention of youth" within health science programing (Ching, 2019, p. 20).

Looking beyond the student in the classroom and into the professional educator, the quality of the education reaches past policy and gains strength based upon the motivation of the teacher, specifically when teachers are engaged in mentor relationships with either administrators or students (Onjoro, et al., 2015). Teachers are called upon to "reframe learning in a way that enhances value of the content to students' everyday experience through various strategies" and relationship building (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016, p. 610). Cultivating a mentor relationship increases the quality of education from professional educators who then provide increased career awareness and engaging opportunities more often than educators not participating in mentor

relationships (Onjor, et al., 2015). Furthermore, van de Wiel and Van den Bossche (2013) demonstrated that experience facilitates knowledge and resident physicians that develop feedback-seeking behaviors were often driven to engage in additional education opportunities. Based on the perspectives of both the Onjor, et al. (2015) and van de Wiel and Van den Bossche (2013), motivation to become better professionals once the career has been decided also involves a mentorship aspect.

Classroom climates are being shifted by ever evolving changes in the global advancement of technology. While a traditional lecture or lab continue to be a starting point, increased interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and CTE related courses have not negated the intentional search for possible role models and mentors is important to students just one year out of high school (Griffith & Main, 2018). More technology is available for learning now more than any time in history as well as for delivery of educational curriculum, yet human interaction with someone that will guide the student into a career path is highly desired. Saniter, et al. (2018) and Hemelt, et al. (2018) describe the exponential growth of career academies across global markets in hopes of training a future workforce to fill gaps in current or aging labor markets. Secondary students attending courses have often chosen paths with a limited understanding of his or her abilities related to the demands of the expected future occupation. Parents are the primary advocates for the types of career courses and pathways chosen as their perspective shifts toward CTE programs in a positive light versus viewing such options as only targeting underperforming traditional academic students (Hemelt, et al., 2018).

Career Education

The transformation of thinking and doing through shadowing, internships, apprenticeships beg the proper presentation of occupational needs and insight toward the real-life

experiences of current professionals in each setting. In order to meet such needs in the United States, the federal government passed the Smith Hughes Act of 1917 as an investment in secondary vocational education (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017). Requirements of this Act required that 50 percent of a student's time was spent in the shop environment learning by doing, 25 percent of the time spent studying closely related subjects and 25 percent of the time on academic courses as a means to separate the vocational student from all others (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017). Vocational education terminology became career technical education as we know it today based out of the need to train students for jobs not yet imagined in the 1960s and 1970s as technology was in its infancy. Students during this time period are ironically called upon as experts in their field for the students of today faced with the same challenges as innovations rapidly expand across a variety of fields, particularly within the health sciences.

Career academies in the United States are growing in popularity and demand from communities, stakeholders, and labor markets with the greatest enrolments found to be within STEM and Health Sciences (Griffith & Main, 2019). These separate programs or even buildings are intended to improve engagement in high schools by providing positive influence and linking classwork to local employment, or the types of jobs students may pursue into to college. The role of CTE in the American high school is essential to the educational experience with 90 percent of high school students now earning at least one CTE credit before graduation and has been linked to improving math skills, college attendance rates, and earnings especially for students in low socio-economic brackets (Griffith & Main, 2019; Rabren, et al., 2014). Furthermore, students who complete a CTE pathway toward an industry certificate or further college degree are more likely to migrate for a better job on the career path compared to those who only complete general high school education or drop out altogether (Kazakis & Faggian, 2017).

Formal career education in the United States dates to 1862 with the Morrill Act that provided federal lands for vocational training purposes at the college level (Gordon, 2014). It was in 1917 with the passage of the Smith Hughes Act for vocational education that secondary students were provided education in the areas of agriculture, trade, industry, and homemaking (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017). Moreover, with the end of World Wars, declining child labor, and immigrants arriving in America, the population of school-age youth was on the rise, and vocational education was a determined method to keep students in school while creating a skilled workforce (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017). During the 1960s and 1970s, vocational education policy continued to be amended to allow secondary students, dropouts, students with disabilities, and those with economic challenges access to support and training (Gordon, 2014). Moving into the 1990's work-based learning through business partnerships, changes in funding disbursement along with increased accountability of curricular and career connections made way for the career education options in educational reform (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017).

Currently, CTE programs in the United States are mandated and funded federally according to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, which was reauthorized in July 2018. Along with increased accountability and coordination between the academic community and post-secondary institutions, this act saw "vocational education" was replaced with "career and technical education" (ACTE, 2006). States have the ability to design programs under federal career clusters and involve the local community as well. Texas CTE programs access funding through the State of Texas education fund allotment from the college, career, and military preparation division, and locally through entities supporting the hopes of future professionals in the community (Texas Education Agency, 2019b). Education

will always shape the community and students involved, but CTE provides a unique opportunity to organically develop future community leaders and professionals of the next generation.

Similar to the national collaboration of agencies to improve CTE access and funding, Texas began collaboration between the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to streamline resources and better prepare students for an evolving workforces demands ("Pathways Initiatives | Texas Education Agency," 2019). Approximately 295, 000 students participate in some form of CTE in Texas as of 2013 according to the National Center for Educational Statistics that records 3.8 million students participated nationwide ("Percentage of fall 2009 public school ninth-graders in 2012 who have ever participated in various career preparation activities, by a student, family, and school characteristics: 2012," 2019). The predominant field of study for students that seek certificates for sub-baccalaureate is healthcare, which comprised 42 percent of all enrollments ("Career and Technical Education (CTE) StatisticsFindings: Postsecondary/College," 2019). Data from 2015 indicated that 38 percent of all undergraduates credentialed in the United States were through sub-baccalaureate certificates or associate degrees. These students were more likely to be employed in a job related to their field of study but less likely to attain a baccalaureate level degree or higher ("Career and Technical Education (CTE) StatisticsFindings: Postsecondary/College," 2019). Through national and state initiatives, it appears the CTE pathways are providing access to job related education and experiences that are leading to industry-based certifications and curbing the dropout rates; however, programs have been unable to significantly encourage further education or higher degrees (Hemelt, et al. 2018).

Career paths today are somewhat unpredictable in an everchanging labor market that continues rapid growth through technological advances and changes in global demands Kuijpers, 2018). As a result, secondary schools are positioned either directly or indirectly to the be front runner resource for vocational skill development as young people are tasked with acquiring skills their predecessors may not have embraced fully (Draaisma, et al., 2018). Guiding students into a career paths through the opportunities that CTE programs and schools may provide is just the tip of the iceberg. Students must become able to reflect upon experiences and develop self-efficacy toward a career path that may continue to change and evolve throughout a lifetime. Participation in CTE may influence graduation rates and college enrollment across the achievement spectrum (Hemelt, et al., 2018) but as ninth-graders are tasked with choosing occupations and career paths, CTE educators and administrators have a unique duty to obtain further occupational knowledge at the same rate of which occupations along the life span careers evolve (Saniter, et al. 2018; Kuijpers, 2018).

Recruitment and retention are challenges faced in many careers that seem to lean heavily upon a "calling" or a "passion" to serve with other more lucrative opportunities that seem to do some good for the benefit of a cause (Henstra & McGowan, 2016, p. 490). However brilliant and giving students entering these types of occupations and careers, the desire to "make a difference" (p. 491) must be met with motivation and grit to see such positions through toward a fulfilling career. Health science professions have seen increasing interest toward developing mentor programs as the scope of many occupations that lead into specific career paths often cross one another and become overwhelming to clearly navigate alone (Burgess, et al., 2018). Observing a professional in action is not the equivalent of working alongside them through an apprenticeship or internship, allowing students to develop a self-image in work that will move them into self-

efficacy for a career (Kuijpers, 2018). Current generational assumptions, as well as career evolution, no longer foster life span employment but rather encourage life-long learning habits as a primary element of career development that cannot be overlooked (Hemelt, et al., 2018; Lent & Brown, 2013).

Life-long learning can be exemplified throughout the continued education of those in a position to set up as well as administer CTE programs. Draaisma, et al. (2018) demonstrated how what was started by the European Union's lifelong career guidance policy mandates have transformed school cultures to encourage non-traditional learning environments and invite open dialogue of the labor market changes among educators, students, and the community. Educators have a renewed desire to seek out more accurate information in hopes that it can be taught in an impactful and meaningful way to further encourage students, arouse students all the while energizing the educators tasked with leading in new dialogue beyond traditional environments perpetuating student readiness for current workplace demands (Kuijpers, 2018; Mobley, et al., 2017; Saniter, et al., 2018;). Furthermore, when mentors are available, they have been found helpful in facilitating career goal development through the fulfillment of roles as "teacher, counsellor, guide, and role model" as the mentee's abilities are enhanced to build desired career outcomes (Burgess, et al., 2018, p. 198).

Athletic Training Education

Athletic training as a profession has been recognized since the 1950s and is recognized by the American Medical Association, Health Resources Services Administration, and the Department of Health and Human Services as an allied health care profession (National Athletic Trainers' Association, 2019). The founding purpose of the NATA was to "build and strengthen the profession of athletic training through the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and methods of

athletic training" (Delforge & Behnke, 1999 p. 53). Shortly after the founding of the NATA leaders began developing athletic training education programs that would lead to a national credential. The first curriculum model for athletic training was approved in 1959 and included physical therapy school prerequisites along with Anatomy, Kinesiology, Coaching techniques, Nutrition, Organization and Administration of health and physical education, Physics, Pharmacology, and Techniques of athletic training to name a few (Perrin, 2007). Educating athletic trainers fell within the physical education depart branches with "an emphasis on attainment of a secondary-level teaching credential and preparation of students for positions as physical education/health teacher-athletic trainers" (Perrin, 2007, p. 114). From the outset, there was recognition for athletic trainers' services needed in the secondary school setting and that he or she be capable of teaching high school students.

It was 1969 when the first undergraduate athletic training education program (ATEP) was recognized, and in 1970, the NATA began certifying athletic trainers through examination (Delforge & Behnke, 1999; Perrin, 2007). The 1970s brought refining professionally and on the educational program model through which the groundwork had been laid, and the NATA would require completion of a baccalaureate degree with an athletic training major or equivalent in 1986 (Perrin, 2007). The next decade was filled with determining competencies required of athletic trainers seeking certification, implementing athletic training majors within Kinesiology departments, and seeking accreditation of ATEPs by the American Medical Association's (AMA) Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation (CAHEA); which did come in 1990 (Perrin, 2007). In the early 2000s, the clinical model had grown from a two-course requirement in 1959 to a fully developed degree path with a minimum two years of clinical

education that utilized an outcomes-based approach, as students were instructed and evaluated by certified athletic trainers and physicians (Perrin, 2007).

Clinical education of athletic trainers continues to occur in colleges/universities, industrial settings, secondary schools, hospitals, professional sports, Olympic sports, clinics, the military, and other settings that may employ an athletic trainer (Perrin, 2007). Contrasting traditional American medical schools with a didactic focus followed by clinical education, the athletic training professional education has been immersed in clinical experiences as a means to build proficiency since its birth (Weidner & Henning, 2002). Moreover, this experience driven platform continues to draw interest because of the immediate experience opportunities. Athletic training education follows the SCCT models wherein:

> people who are exposed to similar others performing successfully in a performance domain and who themselves experience success in that performance domain will develop more robust self-efficacy beliefs (and outcome expectations) than those who are bereft of successful models or who lack opportunities to engage and succeed in that performance domain. Self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are also fostered by social encouragement and, conversely, impeded by performance anxiety and other negative affective states (Brown & Lent, 2019, p. 2).

Little time is spent observing wherein the "theoretic and practical educational components [of athletic training] are integrated into real-life situations with actual athletes or patients" which has been derived from apprenticeship models of learning from a "master teacher" (Weidner & Henning, 2002, p. 223). Significant changes came in the 2010s as newly designed and commissioned entry-level Master's degree programs became another avenue

students who had decided a career in athletic training was desired yet the time constraints of starting from scratch in a bachelor's program was not feasible in time nor finances.

Since the early 2000s, much has changed in the pathway to becoming an athletic trainer. Most recently, the AT Strategic Alliance determined that a master's degree will be required level of education beginning in the fall of 2022 (CAATE, 2019) unless students wish to study and practice only in the state of Texas because it carries a unique option. As programs and secondary students adjust to new expectations as well as the degree to workforce timelines, the value of mentorship has become increasingly notable through transitions to both athletic training student and professional athletic trainer roles (Barrett, 2017). Mazerolle, Gavin, Pitney, and Casa (2012) implore athletic trainers to reflect on the personal and educational influences for college students post-graduation career decisions; additional recommendations were to those "specifically in the secondary school setting, to continually articulate the importance of an athletic trainer's role" (p. 691).

In general, the World Health Organization estimates the shortage of healthcare workers to reach near 13 million by 2035 (Wu et al., 2015). Mazerolle, Dawson, and Lazar (2012) similarly point out attrition as having been a longtime issue for the profession of athletic training attributing long hours, insufficient pay, work-life balance, and autonomy as influences on profession exit. Career opportunities and settings, however, continue to increase for the field of athletic training (NATA COPA, 2019) and the professional athletic trainers' teaching, mentoring, and recruiting secondary and college students. Due to the nature of athletic training education pathways, nothing is known about desired career goals of those interested in athletic training as secondary students and little is known about intentions of undergraduate students until they are getting ready to enter the professional realm (Mazerolle, Dawson, et al., 2012).

"Professional socialization is a process whereby an individual learns about roles, responsibilities, values, and attitudes that characterize the profession" (Mazerolle, Dawson, et al., 2012, p. 19). Moreover, Mazerolle, Dawson, et al. (2012) found this process to have a profound impact on the professional development and professional understanding in general, influencing students' perceptions either positively or negatively. Mentorship opportunities play a significant role during the process of professional socialization. As the athletic training life span career options continue to expand, early interventions from mentoring and professional socialization are reported of utmost importance. With instructor support and professional growth available, senior athletic training students on the brink of meeting the professional world seem to persist and decrease the likely hood of leaving the profession early (Mazerolle, et al., 2012).

Mentorship and Motivation Increase Self-efficacy

Career development is important to self-efficacy in both the current generation entering high school and college, as well as those nearing retirement (Brown & Lent, 2019). Meijers, Lengelle, et al. (2017) argued that the learning environment needed to foster intrinsic motivation must be targeted to develop career competencies and career identity. Regardless of position at the beginning or the end of a career, "If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you" (Jobs, 2017). Bedford (2016) demonstrated that students in high school most often lack motivational factors of "task value, self-efficacy, and self-regulation" (p. 424). SCCT models suggest that learning experiences focused on outcome expectations and self-efficacy promote career decision making and suggest further research combining the interest choice models with those of satisfaction or performance to explain the persistence and career longevity (Brown & Lent, 2019). Over half of students that choose to pursue careers in athletic training credit taking a course in high school or relationships

with high school athletic trainers as influences in their career choice (Mensch & Mitchell, 2008). Mazerolle et al. (2012) further perpetuate this sentiment, describing that "students who understand the roles and responsibilities of athletic training earlier in their educations might be inclined to become athletic trainers" (p. 691).

Motivation has been defined in several settings, yet the principle of causing movement from its Latin roots to psychologically cause arousal, direction, and persistence toward a particular behavior or goal that creates voluntary participation (Akhtar, et al., 2017). The digital age brought about in the 21st century brought with it extensive short cuts to some types of movement that once required persistence and inherent motivation to obtain. Educating and mentoring the current generation and those to come must look different than the traditional methods and environments that once brought about the psychological arousal and goal-oriented passionate pursuit of knowledge and, to some degree, career achievement. Onjoro, et al. (2015) define motivation "as a process of arousing enthusiasm in an employee so that he can perform his duties with pleasure and high interest in pursuance of the organization and his personal goals" (p. 5). As a student, mentor, or employee, motivation is extremely important, but it cannot stand alone. Ching (2019) presented the process of mentoring as a means to help procure the motivation to see the career choice through. Capturing the attention of digitally fast pace minded generations is increasingly social as students share ideas that are more readily available and co-construct new meanings in the community together, increasing self-efficacy through a pool of talents to solve problems (Leow, et al., 2016).

The landscape between self-efficacy and motivation is space waiting to be filled with rich experiences to draw upon the talents and interests of current students and future professionals. Ching's (2019) mentoring process begins with exposure leading to retention and then mentoring.

A process that begins in middle school through high school and follows students into college as they study within health science professions (p. 18). This type of mentoring that continues to follow the student is similar to the needs of graduating seniors going into their first job as a graduate assistant (GA) or otherwise (Thrasher, et al., 2015). In an attempt to follow up on professional education program opportunities with guidance into professional autonomy, Thrasher, et al. (2015) found that GA's fail when there is a lack of professional socialization by way of mentorship and supports that provide role orientation and clear expectations.

Research continues to show that such exposure and mentoring builds excitement toward future possibilities and unlike others Ching (2019) moved beyond the exposure into sharing a vision of the career path, further exposing students to a typical day for the profession and mentors with whom students would play audience as he or she shared their own passion for the profession in order to further establish a relationship (p. 19). CTE teachers and healthcare professionals alike are able to maintain motivation among students leading toward a greater capacity for actual career guidance and student choice when they themselves are motivated to perform job-related responsibilities and have beliefs of strong influence over student learning (Akhtar, et al., 2017).

Parents and peers are often the first set of mentors any person will have by natural design over choice or pursuit. Despite good intentions to guide students toward a marketable and successful career path, perceived knowledge compared to accurate information can create a gap that leaves students without clear choices leading to unintended career choice or setbacks. Providing students with accurate information for labor markets, college education needed, or available and vocational training options decreases uncertainty, especially within low socio-economic households (Saniter, et al., 2018). Accurate information stems from an abundance of

preparation, more so than peer to peer casual conversations. However, peers have an increasing influence across secondary settings, be it traditional, career schools, early college settings, or vocational training (Hemelt, et al., 2018; Griffith & Main, 2018).

Future academic preparation is essential to all high school curriculum, but educators and policymakers must not negate the social and emotional preparation need for college and career decision making (Woods & Preciado, 2016). A student no longer performs at his or her best simply due to an expectation to do so; instead, his or her performance is best when the relationship is valued. Focusing on two associated factors of motivation and self-efficacy Gaylor and Nicol (2016) evaluated career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration motivation, providing implications that together these encourage further exploration by students during and after the whole group class. Motivated students often come from motivated teachers' classrooms (Akhtar, et al., 2017). A powerful driving force, motivation, can be encouraged extrinsically or must be discovered intrinsically for academic success or career exploration and decision.

Additional data continues to confirm that if students are exposed to career education early and given the opportunity to work alongside a career professional or be mentored as they learn then success is often the result (Walsh, et al., 2015; Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Meijers, Lengelle, et al., 2017). Furthermore, mentoring transcends many levels of athletic training and has been of benefit to students, preceptors, clinicians, and terminal degree students (Barret, 2017). Real-world experiences are just as crucial to learning as they are to instruction. Shared experiences across various stages of life seem to add value to the mentorship as the mentor shares the significance of the process with a mentee, something that cannot usually be accomplished through traditional learning models.

Motivation and Mentor Relationships

The unmotivated student is not merely a young and immature high school student seeking out attention or perhaps obtaining an education in an underserved high school. Having learned from the writings of Schunk (2016), motivation has many facets and can be intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. Schunk (2016) also described Bandura's social cognitive theory, which describes perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs concerning one's capabilities to organize and implement actions necessary to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels" (p. 119). Lack of motivation has not been redirected in all cases and has thus reached well into the college ranks. Steven Howey, Coordinator of Advising, Counseling, and Career Development at Hutchinson Community College in Kansas wrote, in 2008, about the same problems among college freshmen. Howey (2008) "identified three motivational constructs as identified in the social-cognitive model to be expectancy, value, and affect." Howey (2008) suggests that individualization, goal orientation, and self-efficacy or control of beliefs have the greatest motivational promise.

Additionally, Howey (2008) and Habley (2003) believe that "advising is the only opportunity on campus in which students have the opportunity for ongoing, one on one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution" (as cited in Howey, 2008). Does this mean the secret to student motivation lies in the relationships built with a mentor or other institutional official that cares? Solomon writes in the book of Proverbs, "a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire counsel" (Prov. 1:5, NASB). Gaylor and Nicol (2016) pointed out from the start that a big discrepancy in the population they studied was that the students were scared to "seek counsel" (p. 5). Educators must model the value of seeking counsel as mentor relationships are built, whether with

administrators, colleagues, or students. Specifically addressing health sciences, Ching (2019) found that repeated exposures to health science professions and encouragement from adults "reinforced the intent to pursue health science professions as a career choice" (p. 19).

Mentorship ideology has been at the forefront of gaining knowledge and understanding for many centuries. Luke 6:40 states, "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (NASB). When students are able to trust an educator that authentically cares about his or her individual vision, he or she will rise to and often far exceed the expectations set forth. Mentorship is not the sole reason that a student may choose a career or a path of study. However, research has been able to demonstrate a positive connection toward career choice as well as professional growth. John C. Maxwell (2012) wrote, "One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination." Further illumination by Woods and Preciado (2016) suggests that "relationships with mentors who are similar to students in some way, known as near-peer mentors may be particularly effective" in helping navigate a career throughout the life span (p. 92).

In illustrating near-peer mentoring, Walsh, et al. (2015) not only gave specific focus to the student but also illuminated the impact on the mentor's professional development and career aspirations. Educational modifications that include the motivating factors of service-learning, authentic engagement, and goal-oriented preparation for the future have been shown to equip and motivate students to face the ever-changing workforce needs as they increase self-efficacy and confidence in the outcome expectations of career choice. Peer mentoring by way of peer-assisted learning has been utilized in the field of athletic training, demonstrating increases in self-efficacy through collaboration and relationships as well as the development of leadership and teaching

skills (Bates, 2017). Across other health science fields of dentistry, nursing, medicine, and pharmacy, "compared with those without a mentor, mentees reported receiving more help with issues of promotion, increased job satisfaction, and higher academic self-efficacy" (Burgess, van Diggele, & Mellis, 2018, p. 198).

Lazowski & Hulleman (2016) described that motivated students learn more and persist longer in school and beyond. Furthermore, Onjoro, et al. (2015) suggest that student motivation and achievement are directly influenced by teacher motivation in the education cycle whereby Burgess, et al. (2018) bring confirmation to these assumptions by demonstrating the coaching and educational roles mentoring implicates. The importance of interprofessional teamwork between health science professions begins at the exposure stages and is continued through the ideals of mentorship when professionals are generous with their time, empathetic to peers or young learners, willing to share knowledge and skills, and carry an enthusiasm to teach and help others succeed (Burgess, et al., 2018; Mishoe, 2018). Just as a "narrow minded boss limits the creative process and self-expression, in effect, killing innovation and productivity" so an educator has the ability to stifle or empower his or her mentee (Onjoro, et al., 2015, p. 2). Moreover, Cochran, et al. (2017) found that "multiple mentors are needed across time and professional roles" also noting that effective mentoring facilitates career development of productive and engaged workers while "ineffective or absent mentoring has multiple negative downstream effects" (p.2).

Education policy has long focused on how to test students to determine learning, what standards students should be learning, and how to evaluate the teachers dictating the learning. Since the mid to late 1990's, both the Department of Education and private foundations have contributed to change and reform within the American high school (Medicine, 2004, p. 187-188).

The same report stated that there have been examples of positive reform and changes; however, these changes have not been uniform, and the success stories rely heavily upon motivated administration, teachers, parents, and the community to continue providing sources of engagement in order to maintain the culture of the reform within the school. Mentoring programs and opportunities are necessary, no matter what level of education. Mazerolle, Nottingham, et al. (2018) piloted a mentorship program among athletic training faculty finding that mentors participated as a way to give back to the athletic training profession while mentees desired most often to increase networking abilities. Creating an environment that will encourage the use of the tools and behaviors that have been proven effective, creates a cycle of internal and external motivation that drives students and educators toward greater successes together now and into the future.

Gap in Mentor Opportunities

While not all professionals in any regard set out to become mentors, the nature of relationships and sharing with others the art of an occupation or steps taken toward a career path seemingly spills out through simple conversations. However, the skill of simple conversation may prove more difficult for some students as well as professionals. Apprenticeship ideals have returned to the United Kingdom educational structure and increased the possibilities for mentoring students with a more fully immersed career outlook (Nafilyan & Speckesser, 2019). As other means of providing better guidance, the Netherlands and much of Europe have begun training teachers to provide better career advice throughout the non-traditional learning environments connected with growth in vocational schools (Draaisma, et al., 2018). Moreover, the United States has tried to further decrease the dropout rates through the use of career

academies whose intent is to improve engagement through CTE courses, project-based learning, and internships that link school to employment (Hemelt, et al., 2019).

The same students that are required to choose likely career options in late middle school to early high school are not always met with the same opportunities to engage with well-informed nor actual health science career professionals. Among underserved high school student populations, Ching (2019) displayed that "repeated exposures to health science professions and positive adult encouragement reinforced the intent to pursue health science professions as a career choice" (p. 17). If student motivation is the single biggest determiner of academic success as postulated by (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016), policymakers and educators have to do better for this generation and those yet to come. For, "even the best teachers, curricula, standards, and tests cannot be effective if the students to whom they are addressed are not engaged in learning" (Medicine, 2004, p. ix). Mentoring and exposure to realistic career experiences have been found integral to secondary student career choice overall, but increasingly important to those choosing to pursue health science pathways (Ching, 2019).

Johnson & Gandhi (2015) recognize funding cuts for health sciences and public health infrastructure as a threat to new investigators seeking careers in the innovation and discovery within academic medicine. Mentoring young talent effectively can improve interest as well as "productivity, job satisfaction, and quality of life" (p. 684). Diversity in opportunity across the health science careers presented to high school students in an effort to accurately prepare them for the educational journey ahead demands an appropriate understanding of several occupational steppingstones toward a rewarding life-span career as well. Ching (2018) postulated a plan that begins with exposure leads to retention and is cultivated through mentorship. The student journey may involve an orientation of the career path, the excitement of walking through a

typical day in the life of a health science expert whereby dialogue surrounding professional passions may be imparted or revealed. Connecting the mentorship opportunities to personal motivation may be a key component to successful life-long career satisfaction.

Interprofessional education co-curricular experiences have been found most important for pre-licensure health sciences students to understand the roles and responsibilities of other health professions (Mishoe, et al., 2018). Despite many barriers to licensed professional schedules, beliefs, and professional culture mixing with students and young professionals, interprofessional experiences have been found to increase desired patient outcomes, increase communication skills and teamwork (Mishoe, et al., 2018). Danner, et al. (2017) placed high school students in a multidisciplinary youth mentoring and medical exposure program, of those 87 percent began attending college and were enrolled in a health science program, 67 percent of which enrolled in a pre-med curriculum. As in these cases and others presented previously when the opportunity to participate in healthcare mentorship programs was presented, students interested in the health sciences often enter the career field of the mentors.

The impartation of a passionate pursuit of lifelong learning is the goal of many educators, yet such a passion is not as easily attained by students outside the proverbial trenches. According to Cochran et al. (2017), despite widespread acknowledgment of the significance of effective mentorship in career development in the health sciences, some areas of focus simply lack any developed models to utilize. The educational system, as it was developed, is meant to produce several workers in a short amount of time with a similar type of skill no matter what part of the country the student's education is based. Most students would have enough skill to secure a job, while just a few would be college worthy or valuable to a high-level business. The thought-provoking truth is in many areas of the United States of America, not much has changed. The

types of work that schools are increasingly placing value on are educating career development and not solely focusing on academic growth. Markedly, it is not disguised that Western society's employers expect new employees to have more knowledge, skills and that they will be more intrinsically motivated than just three decades prior. The highly sought after 21st-century skills in current labor markets are not found in classrooms or job placements, these skills are developed through dialogue with others who help students to build career identities beyond the work itself (Meijers et al., 2017).

Emphasizing the importance of early mentoring along with the need to provided formal mentor training is important to meeting the needs of the mentee and improving the competency and relatability of the mentor (Johnson & Gandhi, 2017). Utilizing an innovative mentoring program "situated within Social Cognitive Career Theory" Johnson and Ghandhi (2017) were able to analyze growth in self-efficacy as mentors found a new understanding of the issues of the students and young professionals (p. 684). Likewise, transitioning newly credential athletic trainers into the secondary school setting is met with new challenges as clinicians, educators, and mentors themselves. Kirby, et al. (2018) encourage students to interact with members of the healthcare team and begin interacting with parents and coaches during internships, and further suggest that employers "implement initiatives to orient young professionals to their roles help to identify mentors" (p. 523). The NATA reports that approximately 18 percent of its members are employed in the secondary school setting (Nussbaum, et al. (2019, p. 161). Of those secondary school athletic trainers, the percentage remains close to 25 percent that have teaching or supervisory responsibility in some regard (McLeod, et al., 2013; "Secondary Schools", NATA, 2019).

Evaluation of Student Career Choice Through Mentorship is Limited

Choosing a college as much as a career has almost become a rite of passage in the American society. Such decisions are seen as a signal of autonomy, maturity, and a reflection upon self-efficacy. Career choice has become less bogged down with what a particular student's parents chose to pursue or that of simply joining the family business. The whole of education is in a unique place, where many educators are instructing for careers that have not yet been created within a world of dreamers that are no longer motivated by the ideal of education alone. Moreover, Gaylor and Nicol (2016) and Meijers et al. (2013) provide significant data to support the idea of bringing education outside of the four classroom walls across the globe in order to motivate students, reform educational pathways, and create a more well-rounded future generation of workers and explorers who are unafraid to interact with global peers and take on challenges in an unknown world.

Social cognitive career theory satisfaction and well-being model postulates that work and academic satisfaction are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal mechanisms (Brown & Lent, 2019). This model measure to what extent students may be happy with the educational and work experiences. To date, there is no literature that begs the question of satisfaction among secondary students within a sports medicine CTE program. Furthermore, there is no literature available that examines the effects of mentorship in light of the SCCT models from which to inquire of mentor's perspective of the experiences provided and had by students that may lead to career choice toward or away from sports medicine, especially the field of athletic training.

There are numerous experiences possible through CTE programs as career pathways are "designed to provide education with a purpose" (Mobley et al., 2017, p. 58). Work-based

experiences, real-world scenarios, career mapping, and job shadowing are a few reasons students are encouraged to pursue CTE programs. However, as vital as quality interaction with adults through work-based learning is to student success (Kenny, et al., 2014), career counseling and mentor guidance continues to be challenges faced with implementing high-quality programs (Mobley et al., 2017). Absent of quality experiences between possible mentors as professionals or the length of time to come to fully understand the scope of an occupation based upon one's interest, let alone a fully mapped career path, student choices may be ill-advised or not even considered viable possibilities for future success.

Career and life benefits exist in the presence of mentoring opportunities. Likewise, the bidirectional process of mentoring has been validly recognized as a means to increase engagement and performance in the workplace (Burgess, et al., 2018; Mickeleson, 2017; Mazerolle, Bowman, et al., 2014; Mazerolle, Nottingham, et al., 2018). Limitations among current literature remain in understanding the link between students' career choice and mentorship toward or away from any particular career, especially concerning the diversity of choices within the health sciences.

Summary

This chapter presented the current literature for the theoretical framework of SCCT from Bandura's (2002) roots to current Lent et al. (2018; 2019) longitudinal test of the current SCCT self-management model through the lenses of the SCCT over the past 25 years. The SCCT models are diverse and the most recent adaptations continue to add value in the primary research of career exploration, decisions, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations from adolescence to retirement (Brown & Lent, 2019). Additionally, the transitional magnitude of career education leading to the current CTE model influenced by global labor markets and economical need was

outlined. Career mapping with occupational training for the life span has proven to have its own challenges beyond previous versions of vocational education.

A brief history of the role of athletic training in the health sciences along with an outline of the educational practice evolution through the decades was also presented in this chapter as it will be the foundational starting point of all participants taking part in this study. Furthermore, this chapter draws specific attention to the details that shaped the roles of mentorship and understanding student motivation to pursue these relationships before during and after their chosen career. Student's ability to develop their own self-efficacy in and for the career of athletic training, as the dynamic facets of this health science career continue to emerge, were outlined for clarity in common professional education practices.

Turning to the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail," creates a basis for the mandate that policymakers, educators, and mentors, must collectively determine strategic methods that will better prepare young men and women for the challenges of career choice through motivation, education, and relationship. Further building rapport with healthcare professionals built around encouragement is vital to maintaining the relationship between the experience and entering the health professions (Ching, 2019, p. 18). Additional career supports have been identified as influential factors in career development, including parents that help to develop children's aspirations and supporting the career exploration process as well as teachers and friends (Lent et al., 2002; Farmer 1985; Furman & Buhrmeister, 1992, Rogers et al., 2008; Wall, et al., 1999). Ongoing research of the role of mentorship across various health sciences careers (Kalen, et al., 2015; Hochberg et al., 2014; Lent, et al., 2018; Mazzerolle & Dodge, 2014; Mickelson, 2017; Onjoro, et al., 2015; Woods & Preciado, 2016; Ching, 2019) continues to draw positive conclusions and demonstrate that a

clear answer toward bridging high school students to successful college experiences and future careers may be found through the procurement of quality mentor relationships.

Mentoring relationships are important for any role in education. Moreover, Mazzerolle, Nottingham, et al. (2018) implicate mentoring as an important socialization process that allows for the exchange of ideas that ultimately leads to growth in both the mentor and the mentee. The paradigm of mentorship across levels of the professional hierarchy, as well as the quality of the product being produced from those at a variety of motivational levels, should be further investigated as it pertains to education and career choices. Students desire to have an impact on their future world; therefore, educators equipped to guide, and mentor are essential to their success. This study will utilize a transcendental phenomenological methodology to prudently and meticulously consider the experiences of secondary athletic trainers supervising athletic training student aides in a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas to fill the literature gaps by providing a specific voice for secondary athletic trainers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise student athletic training aides participating within a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas. Chapter Three of this study aims to provide a description of the research design, the participant selection process, the research site, and procedures of procurement. Additionally, the role of the researcher, intended data collection methods and data analysis will be explained in detail. This chapter will conclude with methods for establishing trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations for this study.

Design

Qualitative research seeks to place the observer in the world, visible in a transformational approach that interprets phenomena through the meanings that people bring to them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative design approaches the understanding of human experiences that cannot be realized through quantitative means (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is one of several research models for researching human science with underpinning philosophies tied to the writings of Husserl and Heidegger (Errasti-Ibarrondo, et al., 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Neaubauer, et al., 2019). The ability to learn from the lived experiences of others through their perspectives, environments, and positions that may bring about themes so that the researcher is able to describe the essence of the phenomenon through hermeneutical interpretation or transcendental description of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This qualitative study will utilize the transcendental phenomenological research method to describe secondary school athletic trainers' lived experiences in the role of supervising CTE sports medicine pathway student athletic training aides. Phenomenological method processes

begin with the Epoché by which I, as the researcher, must set aside all presuppositions "suspending everything that interferes with fresh vision" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 74). Through bracketing previous understandings and assumptions, the researcher is open to clear phenomenological reduction. During the second phase the researcher provides each statement with equal value through horizonalization "disclosing its nature and essence" forming thematic *horizons* as the researcher describes the textural distinctiveness represented by the individual experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 81; Neubauer, et al., 2019). After phenomenological reduction, the next step involves imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative Variation is the process by which the researcher must determine the underlying structural meaning to the textural meanings, recognize the themes that allowed for the phenomenon to emerge, consider the boundaries of time, space, relation to self and others while searching for examples that vividly illustrate the themes of the individual structural experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Following all reflections, reductions and re-reflections, synthesis of the essence of the experiences is formulated so that it will tell the reader *what* the participants experienced and *how* they experienced it. Moreover, obtaining the goal of phenomenology to describe the meaning of the experiences surrounding the phenomenon as "it appears to consciousness" further distinguishing the noema "*that* which is experienced" and the noesis "the way" it was experienced (Moustakas, 1994, p. 28, 60). Further adding new knowledge and understanding toward the topic of study, the experience of secondary athletic trainers supervising CTE sports medicine pathway student athletic training aides (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Specific to the study of secondary school athletic trainers' experiences supervising CTE sports medicine pathway student athletic training aides, transcendental phenomenology will

allow for essences to be "brought back into the world and enrich and clarify our knowledge and experience of everyday situations, events, and relationships" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). Outcomes of this research will seek to provide a complete description of the essence of the secondary athletic trainers' experiences by interpreting the phenomena in terms of the meanings participants bring to them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 201; Moustakas, 2011).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What is the lived experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides?

Guiding Question One

How do participants describe their perspective of themselves as mentors?

Guiding Question two

What role do participants describe that they play in career choice?

Guiding Question Three

How do participants perceive modeling professional duties as influence on the motivation of student aides toward procuring future athletic training professionals?

Site

The sites for this study will be agreed upon between myself and the participants as selected from secondary schools in Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex region of Texas. Only those athletic trainers from schools with CTE sports medicine pathway programs with duties of supervising athletic trainer aides will be considered when seeking participants. Multiple suburban and urban school may be utilized as a backdrop from which the experiences occur, demographics of the school and program will be reported accordingly following the selection

and approval. Secondary schools are the most traditional setting for athletic trainers and the first possible opportunities for students to be exposed to a CTE sports medicine pathway (McLeod, et al., 2013; Mensch & Mitchell, 2008; Nussbaum, et al., 2019; "Secondary Schools", NATA, 2019).

Participants

Purposeful, criterion-based, and snowball sampling (Patton, 2015) with maximum variation of those that meet the criteria of being a secondary school athletic trainer supervising athletic training student aides in a CTE sports medicine pathway will be utilized in finding qualifying participants. Prospective participants will be identified from a database of certified athletic trainers working in the secondary school setting in Texas with a maximum of two athletic trainers per school being selected. Subsequent criteria outlined by Moustakas (1994) will be required in that participants must have experienced the phenomenon, interested in understanding it, are willing to participate in interview(s), and give permission to be tape-recorded and have data published. There will be a minimum of 10 participants or until data saturation is attained (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data saturation will be determined when there are thick and rich descriptions of the participants' experiences from multiple angles, where no new information is being elicited (Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures

This study will be conducted only after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University. Upon commencement of the study, a list of secondary athletic trainers will be obtained from the Texas State Texas Athletic Trainers website and Texas Secondary Athletic Trainers' private Facebook group from which potential participants will be identified. Using purposeful criterion-based sampling, those secondary athletic trainers will be

narrowed by determining which secondary schools have CTE health science sports medicine pathways with athletic training student aides (Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling will be employed if needed in order to gain adequate numbers of participants for data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Once the participants are identified, an invitation to participate will be sent through email or social media that outlines the purpose and process of this study. Those that are selected will be asked to sign an informed consent notifying them of the risks and expected benefits of the study. Additionally, the consent will include their right to voluntarily withdraw their data at any time, the steps taken to protect their identity, the data collection and analysis participation expectations and my intentions to provide conclusions of the study after its completion (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data will be collected qualitatively in an attempt to extrapolate full descriptions with contextual details that communicate the participant's experience of the world using their own words so that readers will know what it was like to have been in their shoes (Patton, 2015). I will "methodically and thoroughly seek to capture then describe how the participants perceive, describe, feel, judge, remember, make sense of, and talk with others" about their lived experience (Patton, 2015, p. 190). Collection will include open-ended interviews, focus groups, and journaling. Interviews and focus groups will be recorded using audio recorders. Collected data will be stored in a password protected laptop and regularly backed up to a cloud service (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

According to the procedures of Moustakas (1994), I will be the human instrument, the primary source for data collection analysis. I am currently employed as a secondary school athletic trainer and CTE sports medicine pathway teacher; therefore, utilizing epoché, my

personal experiences and assumptions will be set aside in order to allow the essence of the

participant's experiences to be described with richness and depth. Furthermore, I will not have

any previous relationship with the site nor the participants. Throughout this study I will keep a

reflexive journal so that I may clearly distinguish the voice of my participants from that of my

own as Patton (2015) stated that "a qualitative analyst owns and is reflective about his or her

own voice and perspective" (p. 880).

Data Collection

This qualitative study following transcendental phenomenological research design will

seek to bring about a comprehensive description of the experiences of secondary athletic trainers

in Texas who supervise CTE sports medicine pathway athletic training student aides. Data

collection will begin for this study only after IRB approval has been received. I will conduct a

pilot interview with a trusted athletic training colleague prior to IRB approval but will not utilize

any data gathered from that interaction.

Interviews

Broad questions that enable deep and significant descriptions of the participants'

experience of the phenomenon are key to collecting relevant and timely data necessary to

understand the essence (Moustakas, 1994). Semi-structured questions for the open-ended

interview will be piloted and reviewed with colleagues for clarity and to ensure they are aligned

with the central question in order to achieve the purpose of this study. "Staying focused on the

data-gathering purpose of the interview is critical to gathering high-quality data" and to keep

from extraneous trailing (Patton, 2015, p. 723). Each interview will begin with background and

demographic questions as well as a time of build rapport and a relaxed environment (Moustakas,

1994). I will then move toward background questioning that will help with understanding each

participants motivation for becoming athletic trainers. Understanding the participants motivation for becoming an athletic trainer will aide in setting the focus on the experience of being a secondary athletic trainer supervising CTE sports medicine pathway students. Additional questions will seek to enhance the fullness of each participants' experience of being a secondary athletic trainer, then the role of supervising students within the CTE sports medicine pathway and end with questions attentive toward each participants perceptions of influence toward the next generation of athletic trainers.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself – where you grew up, your family, educational background, etc.

2. Tell me about your high school experience.

3. Describe your college search.

4. What were your expectations of college and the experiences?

5. What was your process of becoming an athletic trainer?

6. Describe your thoughts toward athletic training settings.

7. What led you to choose the secondary setting?

8. Describe what keeps you in this athletic training setting?

9. What motivated you to teach of be part of the CTE sports medicine pathway?

10. Paint a picture of your idea of "mentor".

11. Describe someone that you consider to be a mentor? Did you seek them out? Or, did the relationship begin organically?

12. Please describe any mentor's past or present influence on your career choice or setting choice?

13. How would you describe your relationship with the students you supervise?

14. Please elaborate on any mentor/mentee relationships you have noticed between upper level and lower level students in your CTE pathway?

15. How do you believe your influence affects your students toward the athletic training profession?

16. Please describe your greatest professional moment and your worst professional moment.

17. What were your immediate thoughts about participating in this study?

18. Please share anything else about your experiences that you believe should be added to this study?

19. How may I best contact you for follow up or clarification if necessary?

20. How do you feel about participation in this study through a focus group, if selected?

Interview questions will be semi-structured and open ended to allow for the depth and breadth from which the phenomenon has been experiences to emerge through consciousness as it is, allowing essences to be revealed (Moustakas, 1994). The first five questions seek to build rapport by gathering general data (Patton, 2015). Question five through seven seek to determine the learning experiences that are foundational to the participants' self-efficacy Lent, Brown, & Hacket (2006) through the lens of the SCCT models. Additionally, questions seven and eight will seek to understand the motivational underpinnings to the nature of one's career decision making process through personal, contextual, and behavioral desire to persist (Akhtar, et al., 2017; Lent & Brown, 2013).

Questions nine through 12 seek to fully grasp each participant's experience with mentorship. Exposure to mentorship during adolescence and working alongside career professionals has been determined valuable through SCCT models as well as influential

toward individuals seeking mentee's upon reaching what they perceived as career self-efficacy (Bates, 2017; Ching, 2019; Gaylor & Nicole, 2016; Izadinia, 2016; Kalen, et al., 2015; Lent, Brown, & Hacket, 2000; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014). The nature of SCCT and constructivism brings about questions 12-15 to discern deeply the magnitude of the participants' past experiences with mentors as a mentee, peer-mentor, or any other type of mentorship interaction that may insightfully display how and why their past influence has impacted past or present mentoring opportunities (Leow, et al., 2016; Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Rogers & Creed, 2011). Questions 16-20 are follow-up questions for the purpose of allowing the participants to truly elaborate on their perspective and present any data that was not fully attended to throughout the interview experience.

Focus Groups

Following the completion of interviews and member checks of the transcriptions, focus groups will be formed from initial individual interviews in order to allow participants to discuss shared experiences with others. Focus groups will be formed based upon data collected in the individual interviews. Examples of possible groupings may be determined by years of experience, mentorship involvement, or other unique features that are found to have a central bond. Focus groups will be conducted in-person or via Skype, Zoom, or WebEx as needed. Conversations will be audio recorded and transcribed. Questions for the focus group will be formed using the same criteria as the original interview questions and act as follow up and cross-checking questions.

Standardized focus group questions

1. How many years have you been an athletic trainer?

2. At what point in your athletic training path did you decide working in the secondary setting would be the best setting for you?

3. How many years have you been a part of a CTE sports medicine pathway program?

4. What initially attracted you to the field of athletic training?

5. Why do you want to supervise CTE sports medicine pathway students?

6. What are the most challenging aspects to mentoring high school students?

7. What advice would you give students wanting to pursue athletic training in the future?

8. What advice would you give students wanting to pursue other sports medicine career paths in the future?

9. What do you believe that you bring to the profession of athletic training?

10. How do you want to leave the field of athletic training?

Focus group questions will be open ended, and semi structured to explore and come to understand the vast experiences of the participants more fully. Questions one through four are demographic in nature as we will seek to reflect upon and expand through the initial interview process. These will allow for insight toward initial athletic training setting that the participant may have begun his or her career as well as determining how many years of experience in the field may have influenced the desire to be a part of a CTE sports medicine pathway program through the SCCT lenses as well as awareness of self-efficacy in the chosen setting (Attanasio et. al, 2017; Brown & Lent, 2019; Lent & Brown, 2016; Mazerolle, Kerby, et al., 2018).

Questions five through eight are designed to extract further details related to the mentorship experience of the participants as well as any perceptions of and toward mentorship in

his or her current role within the secondary school setting, CTE program, and supervision of CTE sports medicine students. Mentorship has been shown to have increasing impact during the adolescent years in a variety of relational connections as a pillar of social cognitive construct is knowledge gained through interaction (Bates, 2017; Coulter-Kern et. al, 2013; Delforge, 1999; Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Lent et. al, 2018, 2019; Meijers et. al, 2017; Pisarik et. al, 2017). Concluding questions of the focus group nine and ten, are shaped to appreciate more fully the career satisfaction and motivation that directs the participants experiences (Achtar, et al., 2017). Furthermore, extrapolating a knowledge toward one's desire to train others in the same or similar professions as well as the overarching fulfillment of the participants mentorship roles viewed through SCCT (Bates, 2017; Brown & Lent, 2019; Bowman et al., 2016; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2006; Kalen et al, 2015; Lent & Brown, 2013; Leow, et al., 2016; Lucero, 2014; Mazerolle & Dodge, 2014; Skatova & Ferguson, 2014).

Journaling

Having been accepted as a valid method of accessing and collecting rich qualitative data, journaling will be utilized in this transcendental phenomenological study (Hayman, et al., 2012). In order to gain the best access to the participants experiences, I will seek to promote maximum participation by setting clear expectations, limiting the journaling period, following up with each participant, and ensuring comfort and security with the participants written expression of their lived experiences (Hayman, et al., 2012).

Participants will be asked to complete a journal of experiences with a focus on "a day in the life of…" for a minimum two-week snapshot, additional memories specific to supervising student athletic training aides within a CTE sports medicine program in the secondary setting in Texas may also be added by the participant. From these journals' additional insight to the lived

experiences of secondary athletic trainers may be gathered that brings to light themes that may not have been addressed through any other platform. Within this journal, participants will be asked to "paint a picture" of the day-to-day interactions, feelings, doodles, questions, pictures, and the like so that we may more completely comprehend the essences of the participants experience.

Participants will be instructed to complete, at minimum, one journal entry on any days worked during the two-week period although multiple entries per day may be able to provide a clearer snapshot. The journal entry for day one will include the following prompt for all participants: Describe your current setting. Consider the building, the atmosphere, the athletes, the students, co-workers, the administration, coaches, parents, the community, and any other unique attributes from which to provide a backdrop for your experience as an athletic trainer in the secondary setting supervising athletic training aides within your sports medicine CTE pathway program. Please utilize any combination of words, pictures, illustrations, and other means to the extent possible in order to provide the most accurate background to draw upon your experience. Prior to the study and after the initial journal entry, guidance will be provided as needed and during check-ins at day three, seven, 11, and conclude on day 14 to ensure clarity of expectations as well as promote comfort and security (Hayman, et al., 2012).

Participants will be provided with a secure electronic journal option utilizing Evernote, Rocketbook, or Google docs that can be password protected through typed or screen shot upload. I will follow up with each participant on day one, three, seven, 11, and 14 to ensure that there are no hiccups with the technology as well as serve to remind participants of the value that each journaled day may bring to this study.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological analysis begins with the epoché and continues as each response to the interview transcription is reviewed; significant statements marked as they provide insight as to how each participant experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). "Husserl was adamant that 'transcendental phenomenology is not a theory' but instead the practice phenomenological reduction" (Hanna, et al., 2017, p. 150). The procedures given by Moustakas (1994) for analyzing phenomenological research begins by bracketing out my experiences and will move toward reducing data by clustering into themes as descriptions are analyzed for possible meanings. I hope to remain "completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening and hearing" as participants describe their experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). Analyzing the significant statements, the researcher construct's themes, or clusters of meaning through horizonalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Reporting the essence of the experiences through textural description that provides a new understanding of the experience is the culmination of transcendental phenomenological analysis.

Epoché

Setting aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about the phenomenon as much as possible, intentionally present, and revisiting the phenomena with newness (Moustakas, 1994). I will begin the epoché process by expanding upon the details provided in the *Role of the Researcher* section of this manuscript. I will also maintain a reflexive journal to maintain trustworthiness of the study and strive to keep my own experience and interpretations from hindering the collection and analysis process. Furthermore, I plan to utilize myself as the human instrument and/or other professional transcription services as well as the qualitative data analysis tool NVivo to support the data analysis process. Prior to concluding the study, I will elicit

member checks to ensure the full essence of each experience has been gathered and described as it is, true to the noema.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction begins in reflection. A process through which the entirety of the experience can be grasped and "analyzed in the light of its own evidence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 44). Moreover, each experience is considered individually and creates meaning from developing textural descriptions to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Through the process of phenomenological reduction, themes and meaning will be brought about through horizonalization. Repeatedly seeing only what is there so that the essence brings new knowledge and understanding to "everyday situations, events, and relationships" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). Through phenomenological reduction is listening with conscious, opening up to the phenomena as it is with its own textures and meanings (Moustakas, 1994).

Horizonalization

Viewing the data from every angle, statement by statement, each having equal value is horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994). The horizons are significant statements, sentences, or quotes that will develop into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The emerging themes are what will provide the voice or specific character for this experienced phenomenon from any others (Moustakas, 1994). In order to fully see each experience, I will listen to interviews, read journals, read transcriptions, and begin to formulate meaning clusters and themes until adequate evidence is realized from "looking and noticing and looking again" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78).

Invariant Constituents

Following horizonalization, the statements must be narrowed into unique and meaningful constituents for the next step of Moustakas' (1994) procedures. I will seek to find those repetitive

and irrelevant statements then remove them leaving only the horizons that may be organized into invariant constituents that provide the textural understanding of the phenomenon. And, is it possible to label it?

Imaginative Variation

By taking the data and moving it around utilizing imaginative moments of time, frames of reference, varying roles and the like will help me to arrive at unique textural and structural descriptions of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). In this thought, the world and existence are no longer central, and anything is possible. Through the imaginative variation process will allow me to elaborately illustrate the essence of the experience within a context that allow for the phenomenon to be known.

Validation of Data

Following the transcendental phenomenological processes provided through Moustakas (1994), the final step will be to construct textural-structural descriptions for each participant as a final member check (p. 91). I will ask participants to ensure that I have synthesized the data provided in that it is accurate to their individual experience and perspective. A final description of the shared essence will then be constructed and concluding application and understanding presented.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness will be maintained across data collection and analysis I will implement member checks, memoing and reflexivity. Through member checks, participants will be asked to verify information to ensure accuracy and understanding of intended language or phrasing. Accuracy of intended definitions that may lead toward a common theme is important to the accuracy of the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, memoing plays an

important role as the researcher becomes emerged in the themes and core phenomena through constant review, drawing conclusions, mapping ideas, formulating models, and reviewing notes as themes emerge and the essence of the experience is realized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Third, reflexivity will be demonstrated as my background will be disclosed and subjectivity provided to participants and audience. Reflexivity is important for the researcher to ensure accuracy of the emerging themes instead of researcher inserted themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, I will take steps to establish credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability through peer-review and keeping a reflexive journal of my experiences as researcher and instrument.

Credibility

Credibility may be established by two researchers, my-self, and participants as co-researcher, and through peer review. We will read and analyze the material, trade documents, reread the material, and rechecked the data. By doing this to all the methods of data collection, and reaching the same conclusion, the results of the research are more credible (Creswell, 2018).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability will be demonstrated by creating a triangulated audit trail of all transcriptions, journals, and member checks. In Addition, allowing only trained researchers access to any gathered materials (Denzin & Lincoln,1998). Themes will be confirmed or corroborated by participants. Additionally, professional transcribers and participants may read transcriptions for accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

Rich, thick descriptions allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Erlandson et al., 1993). Once data saturation has been reached, I will provide possible applications of the study conclusions for current secondary CTE pathways as well as collegiate

educational programs. Additional recommendations will be made for future research possibilities as well as limitations.

Ethical Considerations

In pursuit of the moral and just research and outcomes participants will be provided with the purpose of the study, informed consent, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The following authorizations will be obtained as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018): IRB approval, permissions will be gathered from the site as need, permission will be gathered from the participants, names will be given pseudonyms, data will be shared with all participants, and all data collected will protected through password protected secure files in a secure location.

Summary

Growing out of a need to explore human science beyond material things and reflect upon the complexities of the interaction with the world, transcendental phenomenology "illuminates the foundations of human experience by providing a research method for exploring how human consciousness engages the world" (Hanna, et al., 2017, p. 145). There are many biases and assumptions toward the secondary setting for athletic trainers as well as the demands and needs for secondary athletic trainers to supervise CTE pathway students in some way (Huggins, et al., 2019). The very design of phenomenology from epoché to the synthesis of textural and structural description will allow for understanding of the lived experiences of secondary athletic trainers who supervise CTE sports medicine pathway students as well as intentional self-reflection.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise student athletic training aides participating within a sports medicine (CTE) pathway in Texas. This chapter provided a thorough description of the research methodology, participant selection process, and research

site. Additionally, details of the data collection and analysis methods have been addressed along

with steps taken to insure a trustworthy and ethical study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter begins with reviewing the purpose of this study, the questions it sought to answer and introductions to the 10 participants who have all experienced the phenomenon and volunteered to participate in this study. I utilized pseudonyms for each participant in order to protect their anonymity throughout the narrative. The findings of this research are the result of data collection to data saturation and analysis as described in Chapter Three. Result analysis presented the theme, sub-themes, and direct response to the research questions which guided this study. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings, textural-structural descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants and a description of the essence of the phenomenon.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise student athletic training aides participating within a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas. Through the framework of the social cognitive career theory, this study attempted to answer the central research question: *What is the lived experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides?* The three guiding questions were:

1. *How do participants describe their perspective of themselves as mentors?*

2. *What role do participants describe that they play in career choice?*

3. *How do participants perceive modeling professional duties as influence on the motivation of student aides toward procuring future athletic training professionals?*

Participants

The following narrative represents an analysis of each of the 10 participants and their stories from interviews, journals, and focus group participation in order to create an overall portrait specific to each participant (Moustakas, 1994, p.22). All participants volunteered for the study after responding to an IRB approved social media post seeking participants then completing the informed consent approved by IRB (see Appendix A). Each participant was identified as eligible based on the criteria of being an athletic trainer in the secondary setting and supervising student athletic training aides participating in a sports medicine pathway in Texas. Participants contributed data through interviews, journals, and focus groups as described in Chapter Three. Each of the participants were provided pseudonyms to maintain anonymity throughout and generic demographic information for each is included in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Experience (in years)	Secondary Setting (in years)
Grace	Female	18	10
Kate	Female	17	5
Krista	Female	15	15
Leah	Female	2	2
Maggie	Female	8	5
Paula	Female	12	12
Rosemary	Female	15	10
Sam	Male	6	6
Serena	Female	17	17
Wren	Female	8	6

Grace

Grace provided the voice with the most years of experience as an athletic trainer. She has been an athletic trainer for 18 years and enjoyed experiences in each setting prior to settling in the secondary setting for the recent 10 years where she treasures the connections with students and co-workers. "Grace" became interested in athletic training during high school at the urging of a family member to join the sports medicine club while participating in athletics as well and it became "the favorite time in my life" she stated.

Student mentorship opportunities are one of the many reasons that Grace loves the secondary setting over others that she has been privileged to work within. Writing scholarship recommendations, becoming the safe zone from home life, encouraging students to further their education, and providing "tough love" is part of the daily life "that keeps me [Grace] where I'm at". She is passionate about the amazing things the athletic training has provided but acknowledges that today's students tend to join certified nursing assistant (CNA) or other nursing programs that offer increased pay for shorter education periods and that while in the program her students enjoy the experiences but the "enthusiasm [and commitment] is a lot different nowadays".

Kate

Growing up playing sports, "Kate" had the opportunity of having athletic trainers within her high school and observed them doing "everything" but enjoyed watching rehabilitation aspects the most. Kate began her college career geared toward physical therapy; however, a void grew from missing the interaction with athletics in general. Kate changed majors and graduated a few years later as an athletic trainer some 17 years ago. Kate has worked with the arts, emergency medical personnel, and greatly enjoys her current role in the secondary setting.

Kate never dreamed she would add teaching and mentoring high school students to her repertoire but has grown to love and cherish the relationships. Her high school athletic trainer that planted a love of rehabilitation influenced her career choice but the motivation to stay in the secondary setting and within a sports medicine pathway "just always come back to the relationships you get to build with the kids". Kate knows that not all of her athletic training student aides want to, nor will, become athletic trainers but believes it is important to "help them find their right career path, where they should go to school, degrees to seek and everything else as well". She values her role of mentor to each one knowing some will become nurses or doctors or may not be involved in healthcare careers at all. Kate thinks about how her mood or responses can influence students in work ethic or career decisions; "they [students] look up to you" so trying to encourage growth and learning while making the interactions meaningful is important to her own personal growth.

Krista

Krista has spent here entire career in the high school setting and eight of those years she has been influencing students from the classroom instead of exclusively on the sidelines. Krista is very passionate in her role of developing future medical professionals ensuring to the best of her ability that her students are prepared for their chosen industry, college, or jobs following graduation. "Krista's" passion began during her own pursuit of an athletic training career as she approached getting into an ATP she exclaimed "I had to get the job done and I got competitive, I had to learn it and that's what I did". Fifteen years later her excitement and desire to shape the healthcare professionals of tomorrow is displayed through daily student interactions "just wanting to see them do a good job; I think they can hear it in my voice" provides a glimpse of the fulfillment felt as an athletic trainer in the secondary setting.

"I love athletic training, but I also love who I am in my life" tells of a story beneath the surface. Krista adores her students and athletes and shared that secondary is the best setting, but it truly depends on the high school you serve. The level of knowledge and amount of respect toward the athletic trainer(s) by administrators and coaches can turn a flourishing career into burnout quickly. Krista admitted to having experienced burnout in a fast paced and unappreciated position but after changing schools work-life balance was achievable again.

Krista spoke fondly and even emotionally about the mentors along the way as well as a current mentor that have helped shape her career and led her gently and with tough love as it was needed. Because of these relationships, she understands the need for connections at various stages of life and the value of having others pour wisdom and guidance into your career and life choices. Krista said that her mentors "opened up a door that I never thought would be… and gave me confidence to be able to do it [supervise students]". Relationships with the kids, athletes, and non-athletes, along with work-life balance have become the most cherished opportunities provided in Krista's current position.

Leah

Leah is the youngest participant and a first-generation college graduate. Leah was a high school athlete but did not have much interaction with an athletic trainer, even after sustaining an injury the district AT looked at the injury and referred her, but she does not recall having every seen him again. Moreover, Leah's perceptions and knowledge of athletic training did not come until a club team injury required surgical repair and physical therapy having the experience of being an injured athlete Leah empathizes with her athletes through the heartache of sitting out of big games yet brings fresh ideas from emerging evidence to get them healthy as soon as possible.

"Leah's" college journey began in a nursing program but in her words, she "didn't like it". She did, however, enjoy learning about rehabilitation from her PT during her own recovery following her surgical injury repair. Leah thought she found a niche that she could grow into but did not want to stay in school that long, so her PT told her to look into athletic training and she found it to be "really cool". Leah appreciates the versatility of athletic trainers' knowledge and skill base so that "we [AT's] can adapt to any situation or environment that we're in… every job setting could really have an athletic trainer. I think we are vital to a lot of professions".

Secondary athletic trainers may not have directly led Leah to the profession or the setting during her high school injury process but when completing educational rotations during college Leah discussed how she was able to see the impact of a great athletic trainer and a not so good athletic trainer. Learning through these experiences Leah believed she "would help someone in some type of way" by "bringing that to a high school that may not have a great AT now".

Now in the secondary setting, Leah intends to stay [in secondary] for a while. She enjoys working with students, to provide some guidance and being a mentor and role model to the athletes and students is fulfilling. Leah talked a lot about her students and athletes but also spoke of the importance of having a mentor in the first few years of an AT career to encourage and teach you how to grow in the profession so you can be a good mentor to the high school students. Leah believes that "having pride in what we do gets the kids interested and the hands-on experiences through CTE is so relatable to real life" and the types of experiences that will be remembered when they decide what they want to do in their career.

Maggie

Maggie has lived in several states but has found a home in Texas and in a career setting that she grows to love more each year. She was first introduced to athletic training through a high

school sports medicine program while trying to become a football coach so athletic training was the closest to the field she could get at the time. "Maggie" has always love sports and being an athlete herself. But, when she attended a large high school, she was given the ultimatum to decide between athletics or athletic training. She loved it then and speaks fondly of her first memories with her athletic trainer and now mentor that "was just a huge reason why I continued on".

Recalling the influence of her own high school athletic trainer and mentor, Maggie is grateful for an immense number of experiences that she would have otherwise missed and looks for opportunities to make career connections for her students as often as possible. Making a difference in the life of an injured athlete or anxious student provides the spark that keeps her going through the tough days, long hours, and celebration worthy moments all the same. Mentoring students and young professionals through classes, events, organization service is another way that Maggie intentionally strives to make the athletic training profession shine.

The most difficult lessons that Maggie has learned and shares with others is that of finding a balance between work and the rest of her life. She is passionately hopeful that others find a love of and for athletic training like her own. However, "there's a delicate balance". Maggie has come to understand that finding balance is best "realizing that it's not my life".

> "… when I leave here, I leave some of the relationships and the kids, you know, they become family and so that doesn't stop. But, as far as my job goes, there comes a point where it needs to stop. So I think that kind of goes into burnout type things, but it affects the whole mentorship and moving forward if we keep losing people".

Paula

Paula's experiences draw from being a small-town athlete without a full-time athletic trainer at her high school until her senior year. She does recall a dual credentialed physical therapist/athletic trainer working on football game days, but the coaching staff provided basic first aid services and taped ankles. Through the final year of high school Paula learned a great deal from the full-time athletic trainer and fell in love with the profession. Her drive to pursue a career in athletic training was foundational to not having had the full-time services of an AT at her small-town high school but also the experiences she was able to gain through completion of her college degree.

Eleven years of Paula's experience has been working within some type of sports medicine program so that students are equipped with a variety of experiences and opportunities to learn about sport medicine healthcare options in a variety of settings. "Paula" provides students with a window into the diversity of athletic training settings because each "brings forth a nice plethora of experiences and autonomy for whichever for whoever is interested in whatever setting that's there." During her college program, Paula believed that she would pursue the collegiate setting but stated "after speaking with friends, colleagues, co-workers, and mentors, even I decided that I did not want to go that route, I did not want the hours, especially with wanting a family." Paula enjoys having most of her weekends and several weeks in the summer to spend time with family without the pressures that a collegiate setting would bring.

Paula found a love for athletic training her last year in high school and finds great joy in mentoring students toward a passionate pursuit of a career that brings joy. Her mentors have remained, and some were added through the various life stages stating that "all taught me

different things about athletic training, professionalism, hard work, how to progress in the profession, networking, just how to be an overall good person." Paula hopes that her influence of loving athletic training, working hard, and the rapport with students, student-athletes, coaches, and co-workers leads more students desire to learn about athletic training and work hard no matter which career path they choose.

Rosemary

Rosemary went through all of middle and high school knowing that she wanted to be an athletic trainer. She was an athlete in high school but did not participate in the high school athletic training program because she was sure of what she wanted to become but welcomed anything the athletic trainers were willing to teach her when time allowed. "Rosemary" has now been an athletic trainer for 15 years. While in college she thought about opening a PT clinic so added a business minor but was easily board only doing rehab all day. She took a year off with a back injury then jumped right into the high school setting despite saying she would "never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, do it" after talking with some secondary athletic trainers who changed her mind forever.

Rosemary was impressed to find high school athletic trainers who loved their job and seemed legitimately happy doing their job. At the point that she met those secondary AT's, Rosemary explains how she felt like she was in a rut with high demands, impossible expectations, and low pay for the best of efforts, so she prayed about it and a door opened. Rosemary does not sugar coat any of the difficult moments of the secondary setting, but she absolutely loves working with high school students. She sees that there is a "huge need at this age and chooses to develop minds and see kids go further" since being in the secondary setting she has found a passion for teaching that makes it "much more exciting."

Helping students grow educationally and as leaders is really important. Rosemary works to be a great role model demonstrating that "no job is beneath me." Her influence is seen when students are working together, or upperclassmen begin mentoring the younger ones there is not a mentality that you grow out of doing the hard things or helping others find their way. Having learned from a variety of settings Rosemary knows that athletic training can be "a really hard job so you got to really want to do this." She encourages students to research options and supports them no matter their choices to pursue in college knowing "you got to have the passion to be able to do it [athletic training]" and "only certain people are meant to be ATs, for others it's a fun experience in high school … or a steppingstone to what they want to do in college."

Sam

Sam has been an athletic trainer for six years and full of excitement for what the future of the athletic training profession holds for him and aspiring students. Sam was in the sixth grade playing small town six-man football when he interacted with an athletic trainer on their sideline. He grew up participating in scouts, junior firefighting, and enjoying studying biology or helping people. He went to college thinking he would end up in ag business of some kind because that was familiar but scanning the list of majors to pick from during student orientation, saw athletic training and never looked back.

He spoke highly of the professors in his beginning athletic training courses and the mentorship they provided sharing a variety of experiences for students before they could apply for the official ATP. Almost serendipitously the AT that had been on the sideline in sixth grade was the preceptor for his internship hours and now a lifelong mentor. "Sam" loves learning and loves helping others to be at their best. He said the most challenging aspect of mentoring high school students is "being the best AT at all times. They are watching everything you do so it is

important to be your best at all times." That may seem like a lot of pressure, but it allows him to be open with students and give them a true perspective of what a career in athletic training may be like on good days and bad.

Serena

"Serena" was a high school athlete and student trainer as well. From that point on she knew that she wanted to be an athletic trainer. Her college search was decided for her based on parent alumni status but she quickly found that her dream of NCAA DI athletic trainer was not all that she believed and realized within weeks that she most definitely "did not want to work in division one athletics!" Serena's 17-year athletic training journey has taken her through a couple of states, small schools, big schools, private schools, and public schools. Through it all she has found the secondary setting to be challenging yet rewarding and credits her mom with helping get involved with the high school program from which she gained two high school athletic trainers as mentors for her career and life.

The collegiate ATP experience is one of the things that drives Serena to teach and mentor her high school students and student aides on a variety of career and life expectations. She was unprepared for the "on the job training" versus the vast learning experience she had expected. "We were the grunts, there were three or four 23-hour work days" and "learning was on your own". At that time the ATP did not have clinicals and the program was developed such that most would become secondary athletic trainers so they rotated through various sports and the best understanding of what the future may hold was during student teaching as "we learned to transition between the training room and the classroom". "I wish we had more clinical hours, but it was just showing up to the training room".

Beyond showing up for a job, Serena wanted to make connections and be involved in the school community so she developed the curriculum and began the sports medicine pathway program out of motivation to interact with a variety of students and share experiences that could help students and community understand the field of athletic training and what a career in athletic training could offer. The relationships between high school students and mentors/teachers can get complicated in current environments but "being a good listener" and helping students "build connections" to the profession and to each other. Role modeling through co-worker, coach, and admin communications is important to Serena so that students see how the team and network can work together to provide care for the athlete.

Wren

Wren came to Texas following grad school but had experienced athletic training as a student in a large Midwest high school. She has family that are also in healthcare so that has been a part of her heritage and instilled a drive to help others heal. "Wren" stopped playing sports to be part of the sports medicine program when she discovered that athletic training was "a real thing …like I can go to school for this and here we are in the future". Although she was not a high school athlete for long she has sustained a major injury that helps her relate to the process that many of her athletes must endure to return to sport they love.

Eight years as an athletic trainer and six in the secondary setting have taught Wren to value the relationships that form with mentors and those she is mentoring direct and indirect. Moving from high school into the collegiate ATP was difficult in the beginning because it was a competition for students to work hard and hope to get in all while trying to figure out how to be an adult and build relationships. The secondary setting was not Wren's first place to practice, and while she does sometimes miss working with adult athletes and a more "normal schedule" she

loves the combination of athletic training and teaching together. One of the biggest things Wren wants to teach and mentor students toward is building relationships with co-workers. She is currently surrounded by a great team of people who both value athletic trainers and the decisions that must be made but has worked with others that often questioned the legitimacy of the athletic trainers' role, placing student-athletes lives and future careers in jeopardy. Wren "always leaves a positive light on athletic training and encourage her students to pursue it" through experiences, summer camps, and ATP introductions but at the end of the day she wants her students to be passionate about their career choices and know she is there for them when they need her.

Results

In-depth analysis of individual interviews, journaling, and focus groups revealed the results and themes of this study that emerged following transcendental phenomenological reduction to discover the essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of this study and its theoretical framework are solidified through the primary theme and sub-themes. Analysis of the data revealed an overarching theme of Mentorship intertwined between the three sub-themes of Career Guidance, Relationships, and Role Modeling. To arrive at the theme and sub-themes, each aspect of the data was treated individually until only horizons related to this study could be organized into categories and grouped into theme and sub-themes. NVIVO 12 software was utilized to generate a list of codes from each data source and identify the shared experiences among the participants. Sub-themes, codes, and the open code enumeration is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Sub-Themes, Enumerations, and Related Codes

Sub-Themes	Codes	Enumerations
Career Guidance (166)	Influences for Athletic Training	134
	Students in Healthcare	19
	Sharing Professional Moments	13
Relationships (161)	AT experiences with ATs	57
	AT Mentor	45
	Relationship with Students/Athletes	39
	Athlete-Patient Success	20
Role Modeling (115)	Professionalism Influence	79
	Mentored Students Mentoring	18
	Patient Care	18

Development of Themes

Themes were developed through horizonalization where every statement was afforded equal value until thematic horizons were formed. Participant words, phrases, and narratives were analyzed to bring forth the textural and structural descriptions so that the essence of the lived experience of secondary athletic trainers may be more fully known.

Mentorship

The primary theme of mentorship is intertwined throughout each of the sub-themes. Having been mentored is an unwavering piece of each participant's story and current secondary setting experience. Krista shared through emotion that her mentor "got me here. … she really opened up a door that I never thought I would be at and I thank her every day. It's because of her, I'm gonna cry, that I'm even here". All participants conveyed the importance of a mentor at

different phases of learning and across professional tenure from participating in high school athletic training programs themselves to current professional positions. Paula recalled the continuous involvement of several mentors across her career span stating, "they've all taught me something different because it was all different phases of life for me". Leah's mentorship with a current co-worker began even in the interview process as she was surprised by the willingness of others to help young professionals grow from the very beginning as her mentor "…gave me a lot of advice that not a lot of people give you like when they barely meet you".

Participants spoke of mostly positive mentor interactions recalling having witnessed the value of ATs to the teams as great examples of what athletic trainers should be with their own hopes of becoming exactly that in their future careers. However, Leah and Serena spoke of a person in authority either educationally or professionally that negatively represented athletic trainers as they saw the good and "then a not so good athletic trainer" examples. Moreover, in seeking a mentor "specifically because of expertise in an area" like Wren or valuing the evolving relationship of "student-teacher to mentor-friend to teacher-student" that happened organically, mentorship opportunities and desires lay at the crux of the complete secondary athletic trainers' experience.

Career Guidance

Out of many of their own desire to "help others while working in the field of athletics" Paula, Maggie, Krista, and Rosemary share similarities in having mentors that encouraged them to be good mentors. Kate exuberantly described how she loves to share with students the opportunities and plethora of settings that have grown and continue to be adaptable for athletic trainers. "We get to help build the future" was an awe-inspiring perspective shared from Kate. Each participant's position, teaching, and supervisory demands were incredibly diverse.

Recognizing that not all students would become athletic trainers, although many will land in the vast field of healthcare; the participants recognized their influence of the athletic training profession, students desire to help others within a medical career, and determined to help them get the best hands on and real-life experiences possible through sharing professional moments.

Sam, Rosemary, and Serena journaled about scheduling and sharing the mundane tasks of the job of athletic training with students as a means to share the importance of doing the little things right to help the health care team and athletic teams. All of the participants provided evidence toward finding ways to connect students directly to the *job* of athletic training. Sam creates "jobs for each student during the game, a shadow follows me, ambulance runner to assist the crew, a shark to clean up blood". While Leah shared about her first time on a high school athletic field evaluating and splinting a fracture with her student aide both watching and assisting "able to retrieve equipment and assist me" later stating with exhilaration "I actually taught someone something" they can use. Furthermore, participants discussed that many of the students being supervised are able to earn OSHA, Blood Born Pathogen, HIPAA, CPR, First Aid and other similar certifications through the sports medicine pathways. The industry certifications provide excellent opportunity for close career guidance along with relevant situations to practice the certified skills.

Influences for Athletic Training

Every participant attested to the difficulty of the profession of athletic training, especially in the secondary setting. With this in mind, they also have had individual moments or job sites that have brought incredible joy and fulfillment to their careers. Each one recognizing the potential to influence secondary student athletic training aides toward or away from the

profession through attitude, work ethic, relationships, and authenticity. Krista summed up the opportunity for influence best:

> I love athletic training… majority of them [students] do not want to be an athletic trainer. And I get that. As far as just being in the healthcare profession, I feel like the passion that I have, and me just wanting them to do a good job with everything. I think it kind of gives them that extra drive to get more interested and be interested in doing a job that is like this.

Furthermore, Leah added "I speak of it so highly, that it makes them want to be athletic trainers… but I think that has a lot to do with the way we talk about the profession and the way we hold ourselves". Krista also attributes student influence toward "loving our profession" and Rosemary added wisdom in that "I'd like a lot of them to be influenced that direction, but you have to have passion to be able to do it". Clearly the study participants desire to have a great influence toward building the future of athletic training but have the wisdom to understand that it is a career that not all people are readily able to embrace no matter how fun or enlightening the high school athletic training student aide involvement may have been for any particular student.

Students in Healthcare

Acknowledging the opportunities of health science CTE and sports medicine pathway, in general, the participants agreed that it lends itself most toward a natural population of students interested broadly in healthcare. Krista, Grace, Paula, and Rosemary recognized that the majority of their students join the classes with an idea of healthcare based on media and television with many thinking that they would enjoy a career as a nurse. Sam provided explanation of gaining trust and helping the athletic training aides to see the big picture and his heart:

I'm really big on the medical field in general, I tell them, I love athletic training, and if they love doing what we do, in treatments and during rehab. They should look into it. But we do so many things that we cover a whole lot of other professions. So, if you want to be EMT, then you know we have a lot of training with spine boarding and emergency response. If you want to be a PT, we do treatments and rehab every day. So, you have some experience under your belt. So, I try to give them many options of where athletic training can take them.

Many of the athletic training student aides described by the participants are simply excited about learning healthcare in general and happen to like sports. Rosemary's description of the excitement in supervising these students best represented a window into the phenomenon:

When you find kids that want to be something, so it's athletic training, PT, OT, physicians, physician's assistant, anything, right? You just see their passion early on for most of them. And it's maybe just a passion for medicine. They don't even know what it is yet. And then being able to teach that and have the excitement that they have and then being able to put it with sports…it's amazing.

Simply summarized by Krista as "a joy from teaching and imparting what I love so much then to be able to see what I love turning to something that somebody else loves". Athletic training is a less common healthcare career option until it is experienced. Many such experiences occur in the high school years, although hundreds of secondary schools in Texas and thousands across the nation remain without an athletic trainer employed at the campus (Huggins, et al., 2019). With this in mind, the participants discussed preparing students for the entirety of healthcare career choices through mock interviews, internships, industry standard certifications in OSHA, CPR/AED/First aid, Cybersafety, and summer college camp opportunities. Maggie

brings focus on the healthcare "team" aspect as it takes "lots of professions, lots of professionals to work together… and so getting to dip in each of those professions is great for any kid".

Sharing Professional Moments

The journey of any professional athletic trainer is comprised of many significant moments. Sharing some of these professional moments on the field through team championships, student-athlete successes, or through the injury process with the student athletic training aides provides real life experiences unmatched by other professions. Leah recalls her first practice by herself as a newly certified athletic trainer. Having been on a multi AT staff it was rare to be alone, but it was also a moment she was able to share with one of her student athletic trainer aides:

> there was a fracture, and I was able to wave down one of my students and give a signal when she was able to retrieve the equipment I needed and she was able to assist in splinting the athlete, I think that's probably my proudest moment… because, wow! Thinking to myself, you actually taught someone something.

Other shared moments revolve around recognition for the roles played toward a team's championship goals, the once high school athlete that comes back to visit the program as a professional athlete and even some of the struggles to maintain work-life balance. Krista recalls dealing with burnout at one secondary school and sharing genuineness with her students through the experience of moving on to a different position in order to be a better teacher, wife, mom, and athletic trainer. Out of that experience, past students still reach out for advice and to check in with past athletic trainers and new student aides that have joined the program. Career guidance is ultimately described through the participants experiences as an opportunity to carry the light down a path that students want to pursue. Furthermore, being the careful curator of their hopes

and dreams as they steer students to understand more about their capabilities, options, passions, and joy they hope to build upon throughout a successful career.

Relationships

Each participant continuously made connection to life and professional experiences coming out of relationships born, nurtured, sought, desired, and cultivated. The athletic training experience is surrounded by unique relationships from a blend of networks from high school student aide programs for some or the collegiate clinicals for others. Specific to this study, relationships with other athletic trainers, mentors, student aides, student athletes, and the athlete-patient were most identified during interviews, focus groups, and journaling. Each participant has several relationships from which the essences of the phenomenon is revealed. As Kate stated "it's the relationships. Just always comes back to the relationships you get to build".

AT Experiences with Athletic Trainers

Most of the participants shared similar experiences with memories of meeting an athletic trainer for the first time and recognizing that the AT cared about more than student or athlete status and wanted to truly understand how they were feeling or what their educational goals were. The initial interactions were what inspired the drive to become athletic trainers themselves. Maggie recalled being an athlete and moving quite a few times and had met a couple of athletic trainers as an athlete. She decided to forgo athletics in the middle of high school and join the student aide program offered at her school. It was because of her first experiences with an athletic trainer that she "chose athletic training". Further explaining "it's where I met mentor… and he's just a huge reason why I continue on".

Paula recalled the first time meeting an athletic trainer as a senior in high school and loved watching and learning then fell in love with the idea of making it her own profession.

Wren described watching her high school athletic trainer from a far as an athlete, then learning about the athletic training profession as she began her college search "progressively growing from there". Now aware of the influence a single athletic trainer had, she is trying to be a good example of an athletic trainer for those that may witness her attitude and actions as a foundation for their own career search or ideology of athletic trainers. Sam was reconnected with the first AT he had ever met after the athletic training major popped out during his college orientation week and he ended up shadowing her in the ATP. All of the experiences had with the first AT's had quite an influence on the participants eventual career themselves and how they see their athletes, students, student aides, or athlete-patients as well as how they perceive their interactions with the community as an "example AT" regardless of the years of experience.

AT Mentor

While not all of the participants learned about athletic training from an athletic trainer, each one of the participants shared multiple insights gained from his or her athletic training mentor. Wren, Serena, Rosemary, Maggie, and Kate discussed the role of their first athletic training mentor as one that helped them figure out "why" they wanted to be athletic trainers and the educational path to get there. Maggie stated her mentor noticed that she was being pulled in too many directions and told her "you need to choose! So, I chose athletic training… then it came to applying to college and he knew I needed the direct 'what are you gonna do'?" For Maggie, and many of her own students now, it was a mentor relationship that knew how to draw out the best yet push to be better than they may have thought independently. This type of mentor was the type of mentor all of the participants hope to be for their students to look back on one day as well. When speaking of their athletic training mentors, Kate and Rosemary uniquely added that it was "someone you didn't want to disappoint, so you showed up" yet echoing the

voice of several participants, "finding that type of dedication" from the athletic training student aides in recent years has been a challenge for all participants.

Relationship with Students/Athletes

Relationships with students in the classroom, student athletic training aides, and student-athletes are the heartbeat for secondary athletic trainers. The participants consistently repeated "the kids, the kids, the athletes… I love it", "the athletes and the students", "everything about the kids" as to why they persist within the secondary setting as most did not set out with the secondary setting as their ideal career choice. Rosemary summarized the sentiment that "maybe early on, everybody wants to do college or professional" but like Paula "when going out to clinical sites, you see the benefits in hours or pay talking with the secondary AT but the relationships you can see happening with students is so different."

Wren contrasted working as a clinical contract AT for the secondary setting as not the same as working *in* the secondary setting but stated of the non-clinic based experience "I like it now because of the relationships… seeing them in the classroom and on the athletic field can be completely different so I love where I'm at." Maggie, Grace, Rosemary, Kate, and Krista all supported that bonding over homework and snacks the student-aides and athletes have found the athletic training facility to be a safe place to build relationships. Whether in the early mornings or late afternoons, it has been eye opening at times, but the relationships give meaning and purpose to the harder days of the secondary athletic training life. Wren, Sam, and Paula spoke of the openness of the student aide relationships that develop in that they can "talk about anything" from plants to cats and gain understanding of how things in life are "really going" even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Some students or athletes just become part of your family"

said Kate. Moreover, all participants added a similar sentiment that when students and athletes come back around to stop in to check back with you "it's what makes this job special".

Athlete-Patient Success

All participants referred to the excitement surrounding the success of their athlete-patients multiple times. Some recalled being able to relate to patients through their own previous injury recovery process while others simply having known the athlete prior to an injury and being able to work with them each step of the way back to play. The thrills of victory for an athlete returning to the field or court from an injury was a recurring exuberant story shared among everyone. Maggie gave a great example of the full student-athlete-patient experience by many secondary athletic trainers:

> A senior who was about to give up because of chronic injury. He had not done rehab, both shoulders, lineman, and he's literally just going to give up. So, I grabbed him and I was like you're not giving up, you're gonna give me two weeks of your time and after two weeks of putting in days with me, if you don't feel stronger you can give up. But, I'm not going to let you quit tonight. And he agreed. And he felt good. And he kept going and going. And then above creating that relationship with him. He was failing. And so, the coaches made a comment about him failing so I look up his grades and it shows he's skipping class a lot. So, I call him out, get coaches involved and mom involved. And he ended up passing and he finished the season, but he is still literally a child of mine. And, so for me it's not just the athlete, it's the person and just connecting all of that.

Paula added "I love the process" speaking of developing relationships with athletes as freshman and walking through life with them. "Participating in the longest season as your athletes find

success in a state championship is surreal" and "getting to be a fan, knowing their hard work to play in college, that's amazing"!

Excitement with each success may have been set up by incredibly difficult times working with underdog teams or tragic injuries. Transitioning from collegiate or clinic settings can add additional concerns and intricacies in communication or building trust as Wren recalled "working with minors is different" but realizing "they are just kids, maybe just starting out, or trying to get used to sports" pushed a few participants entering the setting to help students find successes on the journey. Athlete-patient success is near to the core of each participant, visible through a few journal entries that encapsulate pure joy for their patients: "no injuries…so that's another WIN for us", "WE WON!!!", "hate when an athlete can't play" and simply stated "No injuries…". The secondary athletic trainer experience is one that loves professional success but is most enthusiastic when the athlete-patients succeed.

Role Modeling

Role modeling may be a large part of mentoring as one sets out to do things that should be observed and copied. The data gathered in this study brought forth a conscious awareness toward role modeling specific to the three aspects of professional influence, mentored students mentoring, and patient care. The participants all had a heightened awareness of the need to be a good role model even if perception was not fully realized in themselves as mentors. Sam believes he is a good model for the profession but in a conversation about a class project in another class where his students were asked to think of and describe a leader, his athletic training student aides told him they had chosen him. In this moment Sam described how he shifted to helping the students see upper classmen, other team members, or themselves as leaders. Out of this

experience he gained new perspective in his role that someone may "model their life or job after [me]".

Professionalism Influence

Co-workers were a subset of people that most of the participants saw as role models to be better professionals. Paula spoke of a past co-worker as "she's a great model and lets others know what the expectations are… punctuality, how to respond to coaches or interact with administrators" the things you may not fully appreciate coming into the secondary setting. Participants had a common voice discussing interactions with an upset parent or coach when the student-athlete could not return to the game, describing a co-worker or past mentor that they envisioned when walking through that type of situation for the first time. Grace shared that her co-worker worked at one of the other universities when she was in grad school so having known each other for quite some time admires how "she is really good at the teaching stuff and helped me learn and get better on that part… she's a really good person and models how to be a good professional in every aspect".

Just as there are good examples, Maggie, Wren, Kate, and Leah discussed negative examples of athletic training role models within the secondary setting from clinical learning sites to co-workers or ATs at rival schools that have caused them to ensure they are cautious in possibly negative situations where emotions could cause the profession to be viewed negatively by young students, athlete-patients, or within the communities they are trying to serve. Overall, a co-worker or supervisor from early in their career provided each participant with a relatively positive reinforcement in following laws, appropriate coach and administration interactions, as well as the importance of building rapport outside of the athletic training facility and a reputation of excellence early on in their careers.

Mentored Students Mentoring

The experience Sam added to this study in the aforementioned section 'role modeling' provides an example that could lead into seeing students who are mentored begin to then mentor others as they themselves continue to grow and share experiences with one another. Krista added that "the ability to guide students but to be transparent in weakness" avoids a facade of perfection but "enables students to thrive, learn, and grow together to reach a common goal". Paula and Leah shared moments of "being proud" when students were caught in action teaching others what they had been taught and the elation of being able to empower students to believe in themselves when the current culture is to judge everyone so fast on weaknesses.

From difficulty to authenticity, Rosemary drew upon the experience of moving into a school where the norm was for upper classmen to boss around younger student aides. She had to carefully maneuver through in a "caring yet tough love" manner so that within the sports medicine program there was perhaps a healthy competition to get better and make each other better instead of "mentality of freshman are gonna do what the seniors tell you to do". As the shift was made her role modeling of "no task is beneath me" has become the new norm of how current students teach and share responsibilities within the daily task responsibilities. Sam reiterates the delight of this type of culture in that "seeing students mentoring other students is amazing"!

Patient Care

Paula believes one of the greatest assets as a secondary athletic trainer needs is compassion within patient care as she described how:

Listening… and being the safe place, that they can always talk to me about whatever it is. What's really going on? Because it's not always just a broken arm or a torn ACL.

> There's always other things going on. So, I try to be the advocate for them, or just listen to whatever's going on with them.

The participants voices resonate that patient care should be the center of all healthcare professions, but the multifaceted career of athletic training can lend toward other central focus depending on the season or the setting. When coaches or athletic directors "respects my decisions", "always sides with my decision", "never questions my suggestions", and "cares about kids", this builds a foundation where patient care is truly valued over wins and losses and the athletic trainer is able to thrive professionally and feels "valued" and "taken care of really well". From another perspective, Grace and Wren vividly described coaches that "always go against you" or "try to embarrass the kids or you" and having to work with an athletic director "that did not care about the health of the athlete" places impossible expectations on everyone involved so they quickly moved out of those environments but still think about the kids that were impacted.

Research Questions Response

The theme and sub themes discussed above provided answers to the research questions guiding this study. The central research question asked: *What is the lived experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides?* By providing a rich narrative analysis to this phenomenon the following research questions provided a structure that informs the essence of the participants experiences that culminate in the phenomenological descriptions that follow in summation.

Guiding Question One Response

How do participants describe their perspective of themselves as mentors? This question sought to understand the connectedness between secondary athletic trainers and the high school

students under their guidance as well as any focus toward mentorship that may be found within the program, student peers, and other sports medicine professionals.

Throughout the analysis above the participants spoke of the ongoing relationships and connections between students and athletic trainers built and maintained beyond graduation. Serena recounts that "the things students are seeing and doing now, they see education has to be priority. We hammer home, this requires a master's degree… it's hard work and more work than what you see on TV so it's great to have them come back and talk to new students and share". According to the study participants, high school students are indeed able to gain authentic experiences with the guidance of athletic trainers who love to help them create connections and grow into future professionals.

Recalling from her own early experiences Leah focusses on being "relatable to students and build connections to the healthcare team". Maggie stated, "I love the impact that I have. I have the ability to just connect with these kids, I think just because of my past and relatability, I think now the reason I'm here is just because of the kids". Furthermore, Sam spoke of connection made with his athletic training student aides through and because of his authenticity with them in mentoring for life and the love of athletic training. He strives to focus on more than just athletic training as he helps students "study for driving license test", calls to check in with a student having had surgery, also recognizes the value in being involved in a variety of things to gain experiences and grow so he "schedules a student off on Wednesday's so she can participate in youth group at church."

Overwhelmingly, mentorship is interwoven throughout the experiences reflected upon for this study. Mentors that each of the participants have had and the relationship they continue to foster is vital to the experiences and guidance they are able to provide to students under their

supervision. Collectively, the participants did not intentionally "see themselves as mentors" but they have all provided evidence within this study that allowed them to reflect upon the reality of their mentoring through career guidance, relationships, and role modeling. Participants share similar sentiments of Paula that they "hope that their influence would make them [students] want to join the athletic training profession, but in the end, I hope that they see the different connections and relationships we are able to uniquely navigate toward success on the field and in the classroom".

Guiding Question Two Response

What role do participants describe that they play in career choice? Guiding question two sought to understand the built-in curriculum *expected* role or *unexpected* happenstances that have emerged surrounding student career choice following exposure to the sports medicine pathway.

Grace stated, "I really love my favorite time in my life was being a high school [student] trainer. That was like the best time I had, even in college [athletic training student] was good. So, I wish our kids would go into that setting. And very few do". Sam gives students a bit of advice "make sure this is what you want. Because schooling is hard and grueling, but then it gets harder when you get into it. And it gets better, but it's hard". Krista stated, "I know I get joy from imparting what I love so much, and then to be able to see what I love turning to something that someone else loves." Maggie echoed "sports medicine is a great career path. Find the path that you truly enjoy and you won't have to worry about the burn out." Participants clearly demonstrate understanding that there are innate expectations that students would find a love for sports medicine but as students gain real-life experience not all love the career choice as much as the participants do.

Wren added that role of helping students make a career choice does not implicate failure if all students do not become athletic trainers. She stated,

> I think that I always leave a positive light on athletic training, for medicine in general and try to encourage them to go into it. So, I'm not pushing them towards that. But I tell them, I give them the options and we talk about summer camps they can go to and these are the programs that have athletic training, and so I try to influence in that way.

Kate and Maggie share similar stories of students that did not seem to care about athletic training or even health science in general. Kate's student "actually started school as a nurse, got into it and said, this is not what I wanted. And left that school. We sat down, talked about it and I was like, Hey! What do you want to do? She was like, I missed the sports. I missed the rehab. So, you want to be an athletic trainer?" Maggie's example is one of "not to judge the book by it's cover." "He never seemed interested in anything. He's a senior and is like, I really want to be an athletic trainer! So, him reaching out and letting me know that it [our program] did make a difference." Participant responses reflect that there are both expected and unexpected career path choices when students have taken part in the high school opportunities as athletic training student aides.

Guiding Question Three Response

How do participants perceive modeling professional duties as influence on the motivation of student aides toward procuring future athletic training professionals? This question sought to understand the outlying role of secondary athletic trainers as motivating factors toward or away from the profession of athletic training in interest development, abilities, values, and contextual factors moving from exploration to goals to career choice.

Each participant had his or her own perception of professional duties, but all recognized that they serve as a model to their student aides as what an athletic trainer should look like. Leah, the least experienced participant, said that her professors and preceptors "inspired me to be professional and relatable… inspired me to really care". She further added "their persona and the way they carried themselves is what kinda formed me to the professional that I am today so I am conscientious about being that for those around me." Serena stated, "having a good relationship with coaches and current coworkers is helpful". And for Maggie, it's about being reflective especially when seeing ATs argue or complain she adds:

> Majority of the time people complain about coaches and I want to say 'it's you, do you not realize it's you?'. We've all had difficult coaches, but if you would learn how to talk to these coaches, they'll get on board and I've dealt with difficult coaches, and we work through it, and we move on which is a good example for those around as well.

Paula and Rosemary perceive modeling professionalism in willingly doing the small tasks well. Paula stated, "I think the biggest thing is, once they see us working, they see us and we're working with them, we're not afraid to make ice bags or water and we try to model what we want them to do, not just giving orders". Rosemary stated, "I think our students really grow, we really encourage them and try to like a big sister, little sister, big brother kind of situation with our kids." Rosemary further reiterated:

> I tell them all the time, like as me the head athletic trainer, if me filling water bottles, is beneath me, then I need to go find a new job. Maybe it needs to be a heart check on what I'm doing. Because even the miniscule part of the job is still your job. And so, I try and teach them to have that mentality. If this is the program you want to be a part of, and you

want to represent for the rest of your life? Why would you want that to be your legacy that you leave?

Wren hopes to help students believe that athletic training is a profession "heading in the right direction, a profession worth staying in". Krista hopes she motivates students to become athletic trainers "as a great influence, with the atmosphere of my classroom comfortable yet engaging with sports medicine posters, equipment, student work samples all over it's exciting and gives me purpose." Kate stated, "the more hands-on experience in the high school setting, students are eager to learn." Sam tells his students "I love athletic training but you may not love it as much as me and that's okay". Summing up the overall participant reinforcement toward the profession of athletic training Maggie said, "I wish more people loved the profession."

Summary

This chapter provided brief narrative descriptions of each of the study's participants followed by their lived experiences expressed through the primary theme, mentoring and the three related sub-themes, career guidance, relationships, and role modeling. The theme and its sub themes identified by the researcher as they emerged from data analysis were described and supported with rich detail from the participant interviews, focus groups and journal entries.

The three guiding questions were also answered within this chapter providing depth and breadth to the textural and structural phenomenological descriptions of the lived experiences of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides. Through imaginative variation seeking to make the essence known as described by Moustakas (1994) and drawing upon characteristics that comprise the phenomenon, the textural description of the secondary athletic trainer experience, the *what* can be summarized as a *multifaceted professional setting from which ATs influence future healthcare professionals as*

they guide student-athlete health and safety. Furthermore, from the perspective of the participant, the structural description of the phenomenon, or the *how* can be summarized as *professional growth and self-efficacy realized through mentorship opportunities as both mentee and mentor*.

Although the full essence of any experience may never be wholly understood, the synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions elicit reflection upon the full meaning and essence of the participants collective experiences learned through this study. The *essence* of the experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides was synthesized as *professional growth and influence through relationship*. The participants in this study are steadfast in growing professionally no matter the years behind nor in front of them. Moreover, they recognize the value and importance of building relationships that influence the future of athletic training and specifically the role of the secondary school athletic trainer supervising student aides.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of athletic trainers in the secondary school setting who supervise student athletic training aides participating within a sports medicine (CTE) pathway in Texas. This chapter further presents a review of the research findings from Chapter Four. Specifically focused on the relationship to the empirical literature and theoretical framework reviewed in Chapter Two. Finally, the methodological and practical implications will be discussed, followed by an explanation of the delimitations and limitations and concluding with the recommendations for future research and final summary.

Summary of Findings

The central theme that emerged from this transcendental phenomenological study of secondary school athletic trainers who supervise student athletic training aides was that of Mentorship. Through the in-depth examination of individual interviews, focus groups, and journal entries, the findings were triangulated through member checks with the participants in order to provide reliable and valid textural and structural understanding of each participants' experiences. This process led to the phenomenological description of the essence of the participant's lived experience following the process of phenomenological reduction provided by Moustakas (1994). There were three guiding questions for this study that elicited and enabled rich detail of the participants' experiences to be realized. Out of the primary mentorship theme, there were three sub-themes that appeared: Career Guidance, Relationships, and Role Modeling. The following narrative briefly reviews the responses to each of the guiding research questions.

Research Questions

Beyond the theme and sub-themes that emerged as discussed previously, the results of this study provided answers to the questions that served as the central focus of this study. The central research question asked: *What is the lived experience of secondary school athletic trainers in Texas supervising CTE pathway athletic training student aides?*

Guiding Question One Response

How do participants describe their perspective of themselves as mentors? This question placed focus on understanding connectedness between the student aides and mentorship opportunities surrounding the sports medicine pathway programs. The data analysis consistently revealed that the relationships being formed oftentimes develop into mentorship related to high school, college, career choice, and every stage of life in between. Interestingly, the participants never addressed themselves as mentors. However, they provided examples of their own previous and current mentor relationships. Adding that, they hoped they were emulating that for their own students, athletes, student aides, and even co-workers. Furthermore, several participants revealed their excitement when students begin to mentor each other. These behaviors are foundational to building mentorship connections that the participants hoped would remain throughout their students' lives.

Guiding Question Two Response

What role do participants describe that they play in career choice? This question was essential to understanding the connections to sports medicine curriculum experiences and mentorship opportunities that lead students to chosen careers. Each participant was enthusiastic about the field of athletic training and the variety of setting options it can provide for students wanting to make a difference as a healthcare professional. All of the participants believed that

the hands-on and authentic life experience that the sports medicine pathway provides is fun for most students while in high school. Yet, many students begin their college careers in a variety of healthcare fields outside of athletic training. As the participants describe teaching and advising toward the connections between the healthcare team overall, they frequently mentioned important advice given to their students is to: passionately pursue the field that they most enjoy, to avoid burnout, and create a long-lasting career.

Guiding Question Three Response

How do participants perceive modeling professional duties as influence on the motivation of student aides toward procuring future athletic training professionals? This question focused on the roles of the athletic trainer leading students toward or away from the field of athletic training through relationships, connections, and experiences that nurture students in either direction. The participants were well aware of being a model for the profession of athletic training among co-workers, administrators, athletes, students, and the community at large. Within the multifaceted work of a secondary athletic trainer, the professional duties can oftentimes be diminished into daily tasks. All participants provided data distinguishing tasks from connections or relationships when discussing influence on the potential next generation of athletic training professionals. Nevertheless, being a good role model as a communicator throughout the web of healthcare team members, demonstrating a good work ethic, and teamwork were represented in all forms of data collected as motivation to choose to pursue athletic training.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to describe the experiences of secondary school athletic trainers supervising sports medicine student aides. Empirical and

theoretical literature provided the foundation and framework from which the theme of Mentorship interlaced through the sub-themes of Career Guidance, Relationships, and Role Modeling were able to corroborate and extend the literature. Concerning the experiences of secondary school athletic trainers and through the lens of social cognitive career theory, this study adds to the body of empirical and theoretical literature focused on mentorship and career choice through mentorship opportunities.

Empirical Literature

Career choice development around the globe has shifted back toward vocational and occupational training, as seen through the work of Draaisma, et al. (2018), Hemelt, et al. (2019), Nafilyan and Speckesser (2019), and Saniter, et al. (2018). Moreover, as can be found in the work of Super (1975), Skatova and Ferguson (2014), and Asgari and Carter (2016), devoid of a mentor, motivation alone leads to heightened interest with some occupational success but not necessarily career success. Furthermore, mentoring, experiential learning, and service-learning were techniques utilized to help students envision themselves in a career modeled by current professionals, specifically in high school students (Danner et al., 2017). During a focus group, a participant corroborated this by stating, "we get to help build the future," and the others agreed with excitement toward mentoring and role modeling within the profession of athletic training.

The aforementioned research by Akhtar, et al. (2017) found that motivated students often come from motivated teachers' classrooms. Moreover, this study unambiguously indicated in all aspects, such as participants sharing that "seeing their [students] passion… then being able to teach that and have the same excitement they do…it's amazing!" This study provided additional examples adding to past research of students having been exposed to career education and allowed to work alongside a career professional or be mentored as they learn to increase success

in career choice (Walsh, et al., 2015; Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Meijers, Lengelle, et al., 2017). Specifically addressing health sciences, Ching (2019) found that repeated exposures to health science professions and encouragement from adults "reinforced the intent to pursue health science professions as a career choice" (p. 19). From the participants' experiences shared in this study, most of their students do find themselves in a health career profession, although many do not end up pursuing athletic training from which their experiences were gained, as mentors were themselves athletic trainers.

There is no doubt that the participants in this study "love" the field of athletic training and are passionate about doing their job well, all the while helping high school students to find their own healthcare career passion and pursue it well. Creating such an environment that motivates, provides opportunities for exploration, and fosters mentorship opportunities was found in the experiences and interactions of all study participants. Gaylor and Nicol (2016), Lent, et al. (2017), and Sandoval-Lucero (2014) demonstrated through the SCCT lens the need for such opportunities to develop career self-management and self-efficacy. A participant's example of her student that seemed non-interested in the field of athletic training but continued to come, learn, and participate then late in his senior year, he reached out for help finding his way into a degree for athletic training continues to support this line of theory exploration.

Draaisma, et al. (2018) revealed that secondary schools are positioned in some ways to be a great resource for vocational skill development for future careers not yet available as foundational steps toward self-efficacy in a career path that may evolve throughout their lifetime. Recruitment and retention are challenges faced in many careers that seem to lean heavily upon a "calling" or a "passion" to serve with other more lucrative opportunities that seem to do some good for the benefit of a cause (Henstra & McGowan, 2016, p. 490). The participants often

referred to being passionate as well as cautioning students that the athletic training career can be grueling at times, so "your heart has to be in it" and "it's hard work and more work than what you see on TV". Confirming that no matter how brilliant and giving the students who enter these types of occupations and careers are, the findings of this study validated that the desire to "make a difference" (p. 491) must be met with motivation and grit to see such positions through toward a fulfilling career.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) expanded through Brown and Lent (2019), Lent and Brown (2013), Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994; 2000) was the lens through which this study was developed and carried out in order to better understand the personal, contextual, and behavioral phenomena toward student academic and career development. Career decision awareness and understanding of late adolescent development and identity can be traced to Erikson's (1963, 1968) theory of psychosocial development that integrated social and cultural environments across the life span. The developmental identity cross-referenced to Super's (1953) theory of vocational development and Super's (1975) career guidance for the lifespan has provided the building blocks that necessitate the SCT and further addition to SCCT models. While the primary focus of the SCCT in current literature is based in career exploration and the career decision-making process, Brown and Lent (2019) were thrilled over the research applications of the SCCT across a variety of career process domains. Emerging trends relate SCCT further than exploration providing stronger indication and linking career choice to social supports and counseling (Brown & Lent, 2019).

Rogers and Creed (2011) revealed that students who are supported in their explorations are more likely to be confident decision-makers who set goals and plan to achieve them. The

SCCT continues to evolve with the model of career self-management is at the forefront. This model is essential as its primary focus is on the learning experiences that guide beliefs in self-efficacy and outcome expectations leading to goals and actions (Lent, Ireland, et al., 2016). Without career guidance and mentors, college students have been found to exhibit increased career anxiety when reflecting upon a "lack of career guidance before college" (Pisarik, et al., 2017p. 345). Interprofessional education co-curricular experiences have been found most important for pre-licensure health sciences students to understand the roles and responsibilities of other health professions (Mishoe, et al., 2018). This study further substantiated this belief, and participants role model the importance of learning from a variety of settings and building relationships across the healthcare team.

This study also added evidence where no previous literature was available through examining the effects of mentorship in light of the SCCT models from which to inquire of mentor's perspective of the experiences provided and had by students that may lead to career choice toward or away from sports medicine, especially the field of athletic training. Danner, et al. (2017) suggested that when students are presented the opportunity to participate in healthcare mentorship programs, students interested in the health sciences often enter the career field of the mentors. However, the results of this study indicated that was not the case with regard to the athletic training profession.

Implications

This transcendental phenomenological study produced findings that have empirical, theoretical, and practical implications for researchers, secondary school athletic trainers, higher education professional athletic training program staff, secondary educators, curriculum coordinators, students, parents, and career technology educational policy makers.

Empirical

There are empirical implications for parents, students, secondary school athletic trainers, and higher education professional athletic training program staff as programs and secondary students continue to adjust to new expectations as well as the degree to workforce timelines, the value of mentorship has become increasingly notable through transitions to both athletic training student and professional athletic trainer roles (Barrett, 2017). Mazerolle, et al. (2012) implore athletic trainers to reflect on the personal and educational influences for college student's post-graduation career decisions with additional recommendations to those "specifically in the secondary school setting, to continually articulate the importance of an athletic trainer's role" (p. 691). This study illuminated the multifaceted role of the secondary school athletic trainer as a teacher, mentor, healthcare professional, career guide, and role model.

This study also corroborated the findings of Cochran, et al. (2017) in that "multiple mentors are needed across time and professional roles" also noting that effective mentoring facilitates career development of productive and engaged workers while "ineffective or absent mentoring has multiple negative downstream effects" (p.2). Mentoring programs and opportunities are necessary, no matter what level of education. Mazerolle, et al. (2018) piloted a mentorship program among athletic training faculty, finding that mentors participated as a way to give back to the athletic training profession while mentees desired most often to increase networking abilities. This study demonstrated that the secondary school athletic trainers landed in the setting out of a "desire to help others" but did not fully realize the wide array of help they could offer nor that has come to be expected but all participants have mentors and continue to add mentors through new connections and pursuit of life-long learning.

Theoretical

Theoretically, this study has implications for parents, students, secondary teachers, secondary athletic trainers, CTE policymakers, and higher education athletic training program staff. This study adds to the understanding of the SCCT (Brown & Lent, 2019; Lent & Brown, 2013) through the perspective of the lived experiences of the participants gained from the personal, contextual, and behavioral lenses concerning student academic and career development that leads to career choice outcomes. The NATA reports that approximately 18 percent of its members are employed in the secondary school setting (Nussbaum, et al. (2019, p. 161). Of those secondary school athletic trainers, the percentage remains close to 25 percent that have teaching or supervisory responsibility in some regard (McLeod, et al., 2013; "Secondary Schools", NATA, 2019). This study supported this data as all of them had teaching duties currently or in the past, even though all of them continue to supervise student aides in some capacity.

This study continues to inform that clinical education of athletic trainers occurs across settings in colleges/universities, industrial settings, secondary schools, hospitals, professional sports, Olympic sports, clinics, the military, and other settings that may employ an athletic trainer (Perrin, 2007). Contrasting traditional American medical schools with a didactic focus followed by clinical education, the athletic training professional education has been immersed in clinical experiences as a means to build proficiency since its birth (Weidner & Henning, 2002). Athletic training education follows the SCCT models wherein:

people who are exposed to similar others performing successfully in a performance domain and who themselves experience success in that performance domain will develop more robust self-efficacy beliefs (and outcome expectations) than those who are bereft of successful models or who lack opportunities to engage and succeed in that performance domain. Self-efficacy beliefs

and outcome expectations are also fostered by social encouragement and, conversely, impeded by performance anxiety and other negative affective states (Brown & Lent, 2019, p. 2). Moreover, this experience-driven ideology continues to draw interest because of the immediate experience opportunities. It has theoretical implications for secondary educators and athletic trainers as well as higher education program staff to make connections and continue growing learning opportunities as the educational standards evolve.

Practical

Practically, this study details the diverse and multidimensional lived experiences of secondary athletic trainers. The implications of this study support the need for additional secondary staffing so that all of the secondary athletic trainers 'roles' may be attended at highest quality for students, parents, athletes, and the community at large. Educating athletic trainers once fell within the physical education department branches with "an emphasis on attainment of a secondary-level teaching credential and preparation of students for positions as physical education/health teacher-athletic trainers" (Perrin, 2007, p. 114). As the educational model for future athletic trainers continues to evolve with a significant pivot to a full medical model in the fall of 2022 (CAATE, 2016), this educational design may completely disappear in coming years outside of Texas. From the outset, there was recognition for athletic trainers' services needed in the secondary school setting and that he or she be capable of teaching high school students. This study confirms the need for secondary athletic trainers to be able to relate and teach high school students; however, classroom experiences are rare in the development of athletic training professionals in general. This study provides that learning to teach was most often supported by mentors and co-workers and further implicates that higher education professional program staff,

secondary school administrators, as well as professional athletic trainers, seek to provide professional development opportunities to improve teaching strategies.

The World Health Organization estimates the shortage of healthcare workers to reach near 13 million by 2035 (Wu et al., 2015). Mazerolle, Dawson, and Lazar (2012) similarly point out attrition as having been a longtime issue for the profession of athletic training attributing long hours, insufficient pay, work-life balance, and autonomy as influences on profession exit. Career opportunities and settings, however, continue to increase for the field of athletic training (NATA COPA, 2019) and the professional athletic trainers' teaching, mentoring, and recruiting secondary and college students. This study revealed enthusiasm for the profession of athletic training and the diversity of settings from which to work to aid in the shortage of healthcare workers. However, this study also supported that many students choose other healthcare fields to pursue as they are not willing to put up with the long hours, closet offices, or professional disrespect that can be witnessed through some of the real-life experiences encountered through the student aide opportunities. The implication for parents, students, secondary school counselors, and higher education recruiters to ensure potential candidates fully understand the commitment needed in each professional athletic training setting may decrease attrition rates of new professionals. Furthermore, this study supports that policymakers, governing bodies, higher education programs, and athletic training professionals implement early degree or intermediate certificate opportunities as building blocks toward the professional athletic training certification like that of nursing, patient care, or physical therapy.

Over half of the students that choose to pursue careers in athletic training, credit taking a course in high school, or relationships with high school athletic trainers as influences in their career choice (Mensch & Mitchell, 2008). Mazerolle et al. (2012) further perpetuate this

sentiment, describing that "students who understand the roles and responsibilities of athletic training earlier in their educations might be inclined to become athletic trainers" (p. 691). Ching (2019) presented the process of mentoring as a means to help procure the motivation to see the career choice through. This study further implicates growth in curriculum options, relationships, and connectedness between policymakers, secondary schools' curriculum coordinators, and higher education athletic training program staff to link the high school experiences to higher education professional athletic training programs.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are the boundaries for this study that limited its scope and focused on the full-time secondary school athletic trainers' personal experiences over those that are part-time or clinical-based athletic trainers that may often change locations or work with multiple teams and student groups within the secondary setting. The participants further had to be credentialed professional athletic trainers in the state of Texas over the age of 18 so that there were no grad assistants or near-professional students volunteering as participants. Although criteria were set that ATs work in Texas high school positions and no more than two athletic trainers from anyone secondary school were allowed as participants, no more than one AT from any high school participated in this study.

Limitations to the study included the participant pool that only included one male. Although women outnumber men in the profession of athletic training with 55% of NATA membership ("Quick Facts", NATA, 2021), the study participants did not follow the statistical representations. Additionally, the participant's roles varied greatly in athletic versus educational duties even though all provided supervision of the student aide experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on the experience of secondary athletic trainers who supervised sports medicine pathway students in the state of Texas. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are proposed in the following narrative.

The social cognitive career theory satisfaction and well-being model postulates that work and academic satisfaction are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal setting (Brown & Lent, 2019). This model measures to what extent students may be happy with the educational and work experiences. To date, there is no literature that begs the question of satisfaction among secondary students within a sports medicine CTE program. Although this study provided evidence from the professional's point of view, future research with a student forward perspective is needed.

Second, this study presented findings that mentorship plays a large role in current professional's previous and continuous choices toward practice setting, relationships, and the importance as a role model for the profession. However, limited literature in the evaluation of student career choice through mentorship drives the need for additional research from the perspective of the student in a secondary sports medicine pathway program that leads to or away from the *actual* pursuit of professional degrees and certifications or licensure. This study provided little evidence of the encompassing theme of mentorship lead to growing the athletic training profession.

Lastly, as CTE continues to expand throughout the United States of America, research is needed to gauge the desire for an intermediate degree or certificate opportunities to support the growth of the athletic training profession. Moreover, drawing further connections between the broad health sciences and procurement of future athletic trainers compared to the quicker

educational pathways to job attainment in health care assistant categories such as CNA, PTA, and PCT.

Summary

This study utilized transcendental phenomenological methodology to examine the lived experiences of secondary athletic trainers supervising athletic training student aides in a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas to fill in the literature gaps and provide a specific voice for secondary athletic trainers. Through the lens of the SCCT, this study demonstrated that the athletic training student aides learn about the profession of athletic training and the multifaceted opportunities it may provide. Additionally, participant experiences revealed the inherent responsibility to further the profession of athletic training through building relationships as a mentor, guide, and role model.

Each participant provided evidence through their conversations and writing that brought forth the textural and structural descriptions. Through imaginative variation and reflection, the descriptions were synthesized to reveal the essence of the experience. Texturally, *what* was experienced is summarized *as a multifaceted professional setting from which ATs influence future healthcare professionals as they guide student-athlete health and safety*. While structurally, *how* the experience occurred is summarized in that *professional growth and self-efficacy is realized through mentorship opportunities in both mentee and mentor*. Further synthesis between the textural and structural descriptions allowed for the *essence* of the experience to emerge as *professional growth and influence through relationship.*

Mentorship was the central theme found in this study and greatly interwoven throughout all of the participants experiences. Sub themes: Career Guidance, Relationships, and Role Modeling emerged illuminating the multifaceted role and experience of the participants. This

study substantiated the current literature, added the lived experiences of secondary athletic

trainers to the body of research, and implicated future education models as well as the secondary

athletic trainers as mentors in career choice.

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    Nursing Review, *62*(4), 547–562. https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.12220

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 14, 2020

Amanda Andrews
Jerry Pickard

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-358 A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY
ATHLETIC TRAINERS WITH ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENT AIDES IN A SPORTS MEDICINE CAREER
TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION PATHWAY IN TEXAS

Dear Amanda Andrews, Jerry Pickard:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office
for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study
to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods
mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human
participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:
101(b):
Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude,
achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or
auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects
can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB
review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your
study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you
plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be
made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your
protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may
report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to
your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT

Research Participants Needed

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY ATHLETIC TRAINERS WITH ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENT AIDES IN A SPORTS MEDICINE CAREER TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION PATHWAY IN TEXAS

- Are you serving in the secondary school setting?
- Do you supervise students in a career technology education sports medicine pathway?

If you answered **yes** to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a research study on athletic training.

The purpose of this research study is to learn about the lived experiences of secondary education athletic trainers supervising student athletic training aides within a CTE pathway. If selected, you will participate in an interview, a focus group, keep a short, guided journal, and review your interview and/or focus group transcripts for accuracy. All participants will be entered into a raffle for a $50 digital Amazon gift card delivered through email.

The study is being conducted online and at an agreed upon location for the interview and/or focus group.

Amanda Andrews, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

For additional information please contact Amanda at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ **or** ▮▮▮▮▮▮ **for more information.**

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

APPENDIX C: STAMPED CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenology of the Experiences of Secondary Athletic Trainers with Athletic Training Student Aides in a Sports Medicine Career Technology Education Pathway in Texas
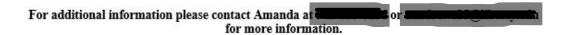
Principal Investigator: Amanda Andrews, Graduate Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, a licensed or certified athletic trainer in a secondary school setting in Texas that supervises students within a sports medicine career technology education (CTE) pathway in Texas. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to learn about secondary athletic trainers' experiences with athletic training student aides involved in the career technology education (CTE) sports medicine pathway.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an audio-recorded interview. This should take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete.
2. Keep a journal for any working days over a 14 day period. The instructions for keeping the journal have been emailed as an attachment to the email containing this consent form. The journal will need to be emailed back to the researcher at the end of the 14 days.
3. Potentially participate in an audio- and video-recorded focus group. This should take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. Participants will be chosen based on the answers they provide during the interview.
4. Review the interview and potential focus group transcripts for accuracy. The transcripts will be emailed together to participants after the focus group is completed, and participants will have 2 weeks to email any corrections back to the researcher.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased knowledge and understanding of the professional setting and roles of secondary athletic trainers for educators, professionals, and administrators within the secondary school setting.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. The interview and the focus group will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored in password protected files on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After ten years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- The interview and focus group will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for ten years and then erased. Only the researcher and professional transcriber will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants may be compensated for participating in this study. Upon completion of all procedures, participants will be entered into a raffle for a $50 digital Amazon gift card that will be delivered through email.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Amanda Andrews. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ or ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Vance Pickard, at ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date

APPENDIX D: STANDARDIZED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me a little about yourself – where you grew up, your family, educational background, etc.

2. Tell me about your high school experience.

3. Describe your college search.

4. What were your expectations of college and the experiences?

5. What was your process of becoming an athletic trainer?

6. Describe your thoughts toward athletic training settings.

7. What led you to choose the secondary setting?

8. Describe what keeps you in this athletic training setting?

9. What motivated you to teach of be part of the CTE sports medicine pathway?

10. Paint a picture of your idea of "mentor".

11. Describe someone that you consider to be a mentor? Did you seek them out? Or, did the relationship begin organically?

12. Please describe any mentor's past or present influence on your career choice or setting choice?

13. How would you describe your relationship with the students you supervise?

14. Please elaborate on any mentor/mentee relationships you have noticed between upper level and lower level students in your CTE pathway?

15. How do you believe your influence affects your students toward the athletic training profession?

16. Please describe your greatest professional moment and your worst professional moment.

17. What were your immediate thoughts about participating in this study?

18. Please share anything else about your experiences that you believe should be added to this study?

19. How may I best contact you for follow up or clarification if necessary?

20. How do you feel about participation in this study through a focus group, if selected?

APPENDIX E: STANDARDIZED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you been an athletic trainer?

2. At what point in your athletic training path did you decide working in the secondary setting would be the best setting for you?

3. How many years have you been a part of a CTE sports medicine pathway program?

4. What initially attracted you to the field of athletic training?

5. Why do you want to supervise CTE sports medicine pathway students?

6. What are the most challenging aspects to mentoring high school students?

7. What advice would you give students wanting to pursue athletic training in the future?

8. What advice would you give students wanting to pursue other sports medicine career paths in the future?

9. What do you believe that you bring to the profession of athletic training?

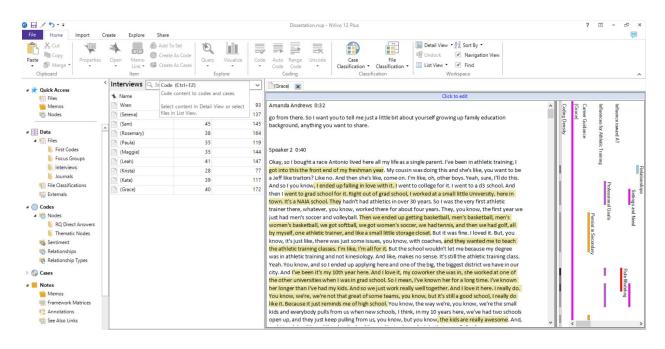10. How do you want to leave the field of athletic training?
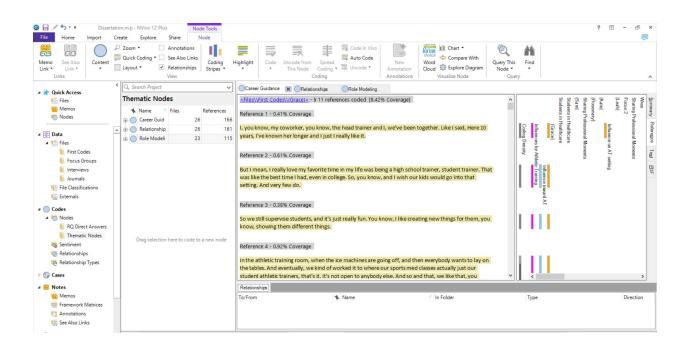
APPENDIX F: JOURNAL GUIDELINES

As described in the "Consent Form", your journaling over the next 14 days is valuable and important to this qualitative study. Each of your entries will provide additional background, insight, and contribution toward understanding more wholly the *lived* experience as an athletic trainer in the secondary setting supervising students within a sports medicine CTE pathway in Texas. Within this journal I want you to paint a picture of the day-to-day interactions, feelings, doodles, questions, pictures, and the like so that I may more fully understand the emotional, physical, sensory, etc. aspects of your lived experience.

Please complete, at minimum, one journal entry on any days that are worked during the 14-day journal period. Entries may contain short memos, ideas, questions, lists, photos, general paragraph form writing or any combination as you see fit. You may have several entries in any particular day as the details of your lived experiences flow. I will check in on day three, seven, 11, and 14 to ensure there are no technology hiccups and provide any further guidance you may need. Your journal may be recorded electronically or scanned using Evernote, Rocketbook, or Google docs and the password I have provided you through email.

For your first entry please begin with the following prompt: Describe your current setting. Consider the building, the atmosphere, the athletes, the students, co-workers, the administration, coaches, parents, the community, and any other unique attributes from which to provide a backdrop for your experience as an athletic trainer in the secondary setting supervising athletic training aides within your sports medicine CTE pathway program. Please utilize any combination of words, pictures, illustrations, or other means to the extent possible in order to provide the most accurate background to draw upon your experience. Thank you once again for your voluntary participation in this research study.

APPENDIX G: CODING EXAMPLES

APPENDIX H: MEMOING

APPENDIX I: REFLEXIVE JOURNAL EXCERPT

8/10/2020

Today, I did a pilot interview. It wasn't as bad as I thought, and he opened up the conversation well. I think the hardest part will be having so many single sided conversations yet feeling genuine.

8/16/2020

IRB approval letter in my email. YAY! Ready to go.

9/5/2020

Social media posts were made for participant requests.

9/22/2020

Several responses to determine qualification. Torn thoughts between "was I too exclusive"? Or, "will I be glad that the study parameters were specific"?

Several phone calls, zoom calls, emails, messages to sift through already. Research in a pandemic in Texas at the beginning of football season and the first look at "normalcy". It's going to be a long ride.

9/26

1st Interview scheduled, yay! I have at least one on the books… praying for at least 9 more.

9/30

1st Interview wasn't too bad, went fast! I had to keep myself from engaging and sharing my own experiences as well. Bracketing is tough, but not impossible.

APPENDIX J: MEMBER CHECKS

[External] Re: Secondary AT study   📎 4 ⌄ ⊞

Andrews, Amanda M
Good morning! Awesome on the journal news and let's try ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ ... so sorry. ▓   Mon 11/9/2020 8:27 AM

EW ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Mon 11/9/2020 7:49 AM
To: Andrews, Amanda M

Good morning!
The journal is going well! I have 9 days written so far.
I didn't see anything attached. How do I get to the transcript?

Thanks, ▓▓▓

...

▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

MS, LAT, ATC
▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Andrews, Amanda M
Here is your transcript! You will need ▓▓▓▓▓ to open then just add comments to anything you want to add/change. Ga...   Sun 11/8/2020 9:02 PM

⌄   See 9 more messages

[External] RE: **External EmailSecondary AT study**   📎 5 ⌄ ⊞

Andrews, Amanda M
Thu 11/19/2020 2:20 PM

Perfect! Yeah sometimes as I'm listen and rereading ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ I "hear" it make sense 😁

Thank you!

Get Outlook for Android

...

Reply | Forward

SL ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Thu 11/19/2020 11:34 AM
To: Andrews, Amanda M

Don't know if these make a difference but I noticed the following:
Collig▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Have▓▓▓▓
Your = year
▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
▓▓▓▓▓▓ engage a little bit
▓▓▓ = my life

The rest looks good. I guess I say ok and yeah way too much.

▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓