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FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY GIVING  
VOICE TO BLACK WOMEN IN ATHLETIC TRAINING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Submitted to

The School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctorate of Education

By

Bonnie J. Siple

May, 2008

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Bonnie J. Siple

2008

**Duquesne University**  
**School of Education**  
**Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders**

***Dissertation***

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

***Presented by:***

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FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY GIVING VOICE TO  
BLACK WOMEN IN ATHLETIC TRAINING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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## ABSTRACT

### FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY GIVING VOICE TO BLACK WOMEN IN ATHLETIC TRAINING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

By

Bonnie J. Siple

May, 2008

Dissertation supervised by Professor Rodney Hopson, Ph.D.

Black women are dramatically underrepresented in the profession of athletic training. Failure to introduce Black women and their perspective to the profession and the literature may result in their continued exclusion. It may be theorized that one of the reasons more Black female students are not entering into the study of athletic training and matriculating through to the point of graduation and credentialing is that they do not have adequate mentors to successfully guide them. The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and other factors on the retention and credentialing of Black women athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of those factors on the academic success of Black women athletic training students (ATSs) enrolled in athletic training education programs.

The theoretical framework utilized in this dissertation was a Black Feminist Theory, which recognizes and honors the unique perspective of Black women who are simultaneously situated in U.S. society at the intersection of race, gender and class. This dissertation was a qualitative study that utilized semi-structured, open-ended questions during interviews conducted with ten participants who were Black, female, certified athletic trainers. Follow-up case studies were conducted with three of the participants. Qualitative data was triangulated with a personal data survey. Data analysis was achieved through cyclical and constant comparative analysis. Thick description, member checks, and triangulation were used to ensure verification of the results.

The findings revealed that (1) racism, sexism and classism persist as barriers to success, (2) mentoring promotes matriculation and successful college completion and credentialing of Black women ATs, (3) mentoring also protects Black women ATs against racism, sexism and classism, (4) although shared race and gender are favorable mentor characteristics, accessible and approachable mentors are more essential traits, and (5) several characteristics inherent to athletic training education contribute to successful college completion and credentialing of Black women ATs. These findings have many implications that potentially offer athletic training educators ideas that may improve the athletic training educational experiences of Black women ATs and lead to their increased participation in the athletic training profession.

## DEDICATION

It is with great love, honor, admiration and respect that I dedicate this dissertation to my first and most influential role models and mentors; my parents, Glenn and Bonnie M. Siple. My father taught me the meaning of work ethic. He sacrificed a lot of time at home and demonstrated dedication to excellence in a job I'm not sure he really enjoyed. He worked his way from the very bottom to the very top in order to provide for my Mother, Brother and me so that we would have a better life and opportunities that he didn't have.

My Mother is the strongest woman I know. She also sacrificed, worked full time and was always there for us, raising my Brother and me for months at a time alone while my Dad worked. She has such an amazing spirit of independence and strength. She was also one of the most beloved teachers at Brockway Area High School because she was a great teacher. If I can be half the teacher she was I will be great. Thank you both for your support, love and example. I love you both.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my hero; my Grandmother, Rotha I. Brocious. I wish you were here to share in this accomplishment with me in person. However, I know you are with me, my Guardian Angel, because I feel you with me every day.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Introduction and Background

The face of allied health care is predominantly White, a reflection of the existing American society. By the year 2050, 52% of the total American population is projected to be ethnically diverse (no longer the “minority”) (Hollmann & Mulder, 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Conversely, this shift in ethnicity in American culture is not well reflected by the demographics of practitioners providing health care in the allied health professions (Griffiths & Tagliareni, 1999; Gupta, 1991; Hill-Hogan, 1990; Lee, 1992; PEW, 1993; U.S. Public Health Service, 1990). As a result, most allied health professions and their professional organizations have recognized the need to culturally and ethnically diversify their memberships by recruiting more ethnically diverse persons into their respective fields of study. Ethnically diverse is a racial/cultural term used to refer collectively to people who identify as non-White or non-Caucasian (Hirschman, Richard, & Reynolds, 2000).

Several allied health professions already have successfully launched recruitment efforts and begun to attract non-White members. Two professions that have been successful are dietetics and nursing; both professions have extensively published the findings from their research on recruitment and retention efforts. The professional ranks



of nursing and dietetics have historically been filled by women; predominantly White women. Although implementing very different recruitment and retention programs, both professions have begun to see a gradual increase in the number of ethnically diverse students drawn to their respective educational programs to graduation and credentialing (Carmichael, Labat, Hunter, Privett, & Sevenair, 1993; Griffiths & Tagliareni, 1999; Gupta, 1991; Hill-Hogan, 1990; Lee, 1992; Simmons-Rami & Holland-Hansberry, 1994; Thomson, Denk, Miller, Ochoa-Shargey, & Jibaja-Rusth, 1992).

The athletic training profession is one of the predominantly White allied health professions that will be examined in this paper. Like the medical profession, athletic training is also a traditionally White male dominated profession, further contributing to the lack of diversity. In 1991, the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) created the Ethnic Minority Advisory Council (later renamed the Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council) (EDAC) to assist the leadership and membership in addressing issues facing the ethnically diverse membership and related to the lack of diversity in the profession ([www.nata.org/committees/edac/edac.htm](http://www.nata.org/committees/edac/edac.htm)). Upon the recommendation of the NATA Education Council, the NATA Board of Directors made grant monies available to the EDAC to disperse to those educational institutions seeking to enhance ethnic diversity within the profession. These grants may be awarded to educational institutions to assist in recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students into athletic training education programs (ATEPs), conduct research into the topic of ethnically diverse student retention, or develop ATEPs at historically Black colleges or universities (HBCU) (S. Ward, personal communication, January 20, 2003). An ATEP is defined as an athletic training education program that is accredited with the authority to prepare students to become

certified athletic trainers ([www.nata.org/publicinformation/ educationfactsheet05.pdf](http://www.nata.org/publicinformation/educationfactsheet05.pdf)).

However, increasing the ethnic diversity of the profession of athletic training is not the responsibility of just one committee, but the responsibility of the leadership and the membership as a whole. An increase in the presence of ethnically diverse students in ATEPs is an important start to increasing the presence of ethnically diverse persons in the profession of athletic training since accredited ATEPs are the only door into the profession.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Ethnically diverse women are dramatically underrepresented in the profession of athletic training. Since 2003, 10% of the total membership of the NATA has consisted of ethnically diverse persons, just over 2% of whom were African American. Women have hovered close to half of the total members of the NATA for the last decade, however, Black women have only accounted for just over 2% of the women's membership. Failure to introduce Black women to the profession of athletic training, and failure to introduce their perspective into the literature, may result in their continued exclusion from the profession.

One of the reasons more ethnically diverse students, specifically women, are not entering into the study of athletic training and matriculating through to the point of graduation and credentialing is that they do not have adequate mentoring to guide them successfully through this area of study (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Grant-Ford, 1997; Abney, 1988). Through a discussion of literature around mentoring and retention, this paper will explore that idea.

In order to inform the researcher and reader about the challenges of retaining Black women in ATEP and the potential factors that influence retention, the following issues may illuminate the historical complexity of the problem related to the athletic training profession:

1. Ethnic diversity in the health care professions
2. Ethnic diversity in athletics and sports
3. Ethnic diversity in athletic training
4. Ethnic diversity of athletic training students

First, it is important to recognize the lack of ethnic diversity, especially Black women, in the health care professions in order to understand the impact it has on the quality of health care delivered to non-White patients. Thus, the first topic that will be explored relates to ethnic diversity in the health care professions. Since athletic training is an allied health profession and certified athletic trainers are part of the physician extender network of health care providers, it is important to assess the ethnic diversity issues facing other health care fields, what is being done to increase diversity in those fields, and how their challenges and successes can educate us about diversity issues in the athletic training profession.

The second topic elaborates on related ethnic diversity issues in the athletic and sports professions where the athletic training field has its deepest historical roots. Many of the challenges in athletic training regarding the recruitment and retention of Black women are shared challenges with the coaching, sports management and athletic administration fields. By simultaneously considering the experiences of Black women in athletics and sports as well as the health professions, we may be able to increase the

understanding by educators of the experiences specific to Black women in the athletic training profession that contributes to their lack of representation.

A third topic expands on the ethnic diversity of the profession of athletic training. Specifically, the literature explores the challenges and issues faced by Black women in athletic training. Very little research has been conducted on ethnic diversity issues in athletic training, thus increasing the importance of this study in helping to understand how to recruit more diverse women into athletic training education programs and retain them in the athletic training profession.

Finally, the status of ethnically diverse athletic training students needs to be addressed as a contributing factor to the under-representation of ethnically diverse women in athletic training. Accredited ATEPs are the only route to athletic training certification. With only one HBCU having very recently secured program accreditation for athletic training education, ethnically diverse students, specifically Black female students, have little choice but to enroll in PWIs to pursue athletic training as a major.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and other factors on the retention and credentialing of Black women athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of those factors on the academic success of Black women athletic training students (ATs) in ATEPs. Although recruitment of Black women is an important factor in increasing the participation of ethnically diverse women in the athletic training profession, for the purposes of this study, retention will be the focus of attention. As a point of clarification, a Black woman is a woman who self-identifies on the NATA membership application and renewal form as having racial origins in any of the Black

racial groups of Africa. This includes people who indicate their race as Black, African American or Negro for those born in the United States, and those who have immigrated from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and the West Indian islands (Hirschman, Richard, & Reynolds, 2000). Mentoring is a relationship between a knowledgeable and experienced senior person in a particular culture and a junior person who desired to successfully participate in that same culture (Jacobi, 1991). I also hope to examine the impact of cross-race and cross-gender mentoring of Black women ATs as a contributing force on the successful attainment of the professional credentials. The information procured from this assessment will contribute to, and possibly initiate, the limited literature available to the individuals responsible for the recruitment, retention and successful education of ethnically diverse ATs. Furthermore, this information will assist athletic training educators to understand better how to guide Black female ATs (and perhaps other ethnically diverse students, male and female) to professional success in curriculums still heavily directed and influenced by White male athletic trainers.

Research in higher education has lead to a plethora of reasons for poor recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students in higher education including a focus on the allied health professional studies (with the marked exception of athletic training). Some of these include underpreparation for college, racism, and stereotyping (Aiken, et al., 2001; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Lee, 1992; Hill-Hogan, 1990). A common factor appearing in many of those studies is the lack of strong mentoring of ethnically diverse students in post-secondary educational settings (Amaury & Cabrera, 1996; Chavous, 2000; Douglas, 1998; Freeman, 1997; Rowser, 1997).

Compounding the lack of mentoring is the hesitancy and/or inability of White health care professionals to serve successfully as mentors for ethnically diverse students pursuing education in the health care professions (Evans, 1999; Mann, 1992). The profound absence of ethnically diverse certified athletic trainers (CATs) in the profession of athletic training and in ATEPs results in an equally profound lack of same-race mentors for ethnically diverse athletic training students (ATs). A certified athletic trainer is a person certified by the Board of Certification (BOC) who is able to practice in the following domains of athletic training: prevention of injuries; recognition, evaluation and immediate care of injuries; rehabilitation and reconditioning; health care administration; and professional development ([www.nata.org/about/ATCdefinition.htm](http://www.nata.org/about/ATCdefinition.htm)). With men (52%) still outnumbering women (48%) in the NATA membership, this research is especially important to ethnically diverse women who have very few same-race and same-gender CAT mentors available to them (NATA, 2003). Grant-Ford (1997) found that attrition of more than 25% of the most experienced ethnically diverse women CATs resulted in the direct lack of role models and mentors visible and available to ethnically diverse female ATs.

Mentoring can be traced to ancient Greece in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus entrusted his son Telemachus' growth and development to his friend Mentor during his travels. Mentor (the chosen disguise of the Greek goddess Athena) guided Telemachus during his growth and development into a young man in the absence of Odysseus, becoming a devout friend and counselor to the boy (Stalker, 1994).

By definition, Webster's New Word Dictionary of American English (Neufeldt, 1988) defines the term mentor as "a wise adviser; a trusted teacher and counselor." A

more in-depth perspective is provided by Franke and Dahlgren (1996) who define mentoring as a “situation in which a more experienced member of an organization maintains a relationship with a less experienced member of the organization and provides information and support, in order to enhance the less experienced member’s chances of success.” When the mentor is a faculty or staff employee of the university, and the protégé is a student, the goal of the mentoring relationship is to enhance the student’s academic success and to facilitate the progression to post-graduate plans (Franke & Dahlgren, 1996). Haring (1999) identifies mentoring as a reciprocal relationship between an advanced career incumbent and a protégé, with the goal of promoting the careers of both individuals. Yet another perspective is provided by Jacobi (1991) who defines the mentoring process as a relationship between a knowledgeable and experienced senior person in a particular culture and a junior person who desires to successfully participate in that same culture.

Characteristics of traditional, successful mentoring relationships is that they are longitudinal, not unidirectional, intentional, structured, voluntary, evolving and developmental, usually one-on-one, and frequently bound by an emotional attachment (Murrell, Crosby & Ely, 1999; Levinson, 1979; Lee, 1999; Kram, 1983; Blackwell, 1989). The more successful mentoring relationships are informal ones, created and developed naturally, based upon multiple, shared characteristics (Lee, 1999; Harris, 1999). Haring (1999) indicates that the usual variables used to match mentors and protégés are gender, ethnicity, and academic major and/or career goal. The foundation of traditional mentoring relationships is similarities between the mentor and the mentee (Leon, Dougherty & Maitland, 1997). Specific to the profession of athletic training, a

mentor is a CAT who cares about the ATS's professional and personal growth and who the ATS trusts and respects (Hannam, 2000).

It is important to note that role modeling is not synonymous or an interchangeable term with mentoring. Role modeling is defined as “a person whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others” (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2003). Vander Putten (1998) characterizes role modeling as a general activity that is pervasive, frequently occurring and less formal than mentoring to the point where an individual may not even be aware that they are a role model to someone.

The process of mentoring, with its benefits to the successful education and career development of young professionals, has long been utilized in many professions from education to business (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Kogler & Grant, 2000; Sobehart & Giron, 2002; Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991). In efforts to recruit and retain ethnically diverse students at the university level of both PWI and HBCU, the persons responsible for recruitment and retention recognized the valuable potential of mentoring in achieving successful outcomes for their efforts. The implementation of formal mentoring programs has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on the retention and graduation of ethnically diverse students (Astin, Tsui & Avalos, 1996; Lee, 1999; Leon, Dougherty, and Maitland, 1997, and Sloan, 1996). In her assessment of a formal mentoring program at North Carolina State University, Lee (1999) found that ethnically diverse students participating in the mentoring program adjusted more successfully to college and were more likely to persist.

Young ethnically diverse women in athletic training education share very similar challenges from the lack of same-race, same-gender role models and mentors with young



diverse women aspiring to careers in athletic administration and coaching (Abney, 1988; Abney and Richey, 1991; Lopiano, 2002). Abney and Richey (1991) cited barriers such as racism, “womanism” (the act of women hindering the success of other women), class oppression, inadequate or biased counseling at the educational level, and the lack of ethnically diverse women to serve as role models and mentors. The authors found that there is a profound negative effect that the lack of ethnically diverse role models and mentors have on the inclusion of ethnically diverse women in the sports professions. By not having ethnically diverse role models and mentors visible in the sport professions, young ethnically diverse women who would otherwise pursue a career in the sport professions, are sent a negative message that such positions are not attainable, appropriate or valued careers, nor would they be welcomed or supported by the White individuals in those professions (Grant-Ford, 1997; Abney, 1988; Abney & Richey, 1991; Acosta, 1986; Alexander, 1978; Houzer, 1974; Lopiano, 2002; Smith, 1995).

Regarding the lack of visible, ethnically diverse women mentors and role models in athletics, Abney refers to C. Vivian Stringer, currently the head women’s basketball coach at Rutgers University, one of the three most winning coaches at the NCAA Division I level and a Black woman. Abney says, “They can see a Vivian Stringer and that gives them the drive and the hope and the feeling that the dream can be a reality.” (Berg, 1992, p. 27).

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and other factors on the retention and credentialing of Black women athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of those factors on the academic success of Black women athletic

training students (ATs) in ATEPs. In order to achieve this purpose, several research questions have been formulated to guide this dissertation:

1. What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATs?
2. What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women ATs?
3. What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATs?
4. What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATs?

A Black feminist theoretical framework will serve as the lens for analysis of this research study.

The following topics presented throughout the remainder of chapter one progress from the broader topics of ethnic diversity in the health care and sports professions to the specific topics of ethnic diversity in the athletic training profession and its educational programs. These topics are presented to demonstrate the significance of the problem involved in the retention of Black women in athletic training education.

## **HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM**

### **THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS**

America is continuing to diversify both culturally and ethnically, moving in the direction of a more realistic “melting pot”. By the year 2050, the diversity of non-White persons in the United States is expected to increase to 52% of the total American

population. Only English will be spoken more often than Spanish, with a greater percentage of Whites and non-Whites being bilingual in the two languages (Hollmann & Mulder, 2000). In response to the increasing ethnically diverse population growth, several health organizations have called for an increase in the number of ethnically diverse persons being recruited into the allied health professions. In 1993, the Pew Health Professions Commission stated that nurses and allied health professionals would be critical caregivers in the future of primary and preventative health care (PEW, 1993). However, in 2003, the ranks of these professions remain desperately absent of ethnically diverse persons. This sentiment echoed a report published in 1985 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services citing a need for “culturally sensitive health care providers” to better serve the culturally and ethnically diverse population it provides care for. The document *Healthy People 2000*, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1990, also indicated a need to increase the number of ethnically diverse health care professionals in the U.S. health care system.

The lack of ethnically diverse health practitioners contributes to the already significant public health issues faced by minorities in the American health care system. Fewer ethnically diverse health care professionals often results in unequal treatment of minorities contributing to higher mortality and morbidity rates from chronic diseases. One example of racial disparity in health care involves infant mortality. From 1980 to 2000, infant mortality, although showing a decline during that 20-year span, was significantly greater for Blacks (22.2% to 14.0%) than Whites (10.9% to 5.7%) (Umar, 2003). Culturally and ethnically diverse health care practitioners are needed to effectively communicate linguistically and culturally with patients (Scott & Umar, 2003).

The nursing and dietetics professions have studied and published their professions' challenges with recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse people in their respective fields and educational preparation programs. Identification of those barriers to recruitment and retention are echoed between each profession's findings and have allowed them to make recommendations toward improving diversity (Aiken et al., 2001; Fitz & Mitchell, 2002; Greer, 1995; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Griffiths & Tagliareni, 1999; Hill-Hogan, 1990; Thomson, Denk, Miller, Ochoa-Shargey, & Jibaja-Rusth, 1992). Aiken, et al. (2001) conducted a qualitative study examining the converging affects of race, class and gender on African American women's participation in nursing programs. They framed their research around Black feminist theory. They identified the factors that both encouraged and discouraged program completion. Discouraging factors that served as challenges to program completion revolved around the subjects' awareness of being on the outside of the classroom culture and feeling alienated as well as being subjected to overt and covert racism. Aiken et.al. (2001) hoped that future research on the perceived experiences of Black women students in predominantly White academic programs would be done through the lens of a Black feminist theoretical framework. This dissertation will build on this work by Aiken, et.al. (2001).

Greenwald and Davis (2000) conducted a survey of recently credentialed registered dietitians and dietetic technicians as well as program directors for dietitian education programs to determine their perceptions for the underrepresentation of ethnically diverse persons and males in their respective field. Subjects of the Greenwald and Davis study attributed underrepresentation to the lack of ethnically diverse persons

visible in dietetics and the underpreparedness of ethnically diverse students for the educational experience of dietetics programs, especially in the sciences. In response to similar studies in dietetics, the American Dietetics Association initiated the Diversity Mentoring Project in February of 2001 in order to develop a model for mentoring ethnically diverse people into dietetics programs (Fitz & Mitchell, 2002).

Other allied health professions are sorely lacking in ethnic diversity (Carmichael et al., 1993; Gupta, 1991; Lee, 1992; Levin & Rice, 1994; Simmons-Rami & Holland-Hansberry, 1994). The Association of American Medical Colleges has called upon medical schools to actively increase the diversity of their students and graduates in order to “bear a reasonable resemblance” to the patients they care for (Japsen, 1996). The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) has implemented the *Plan to Foster Ethnically Diverse Representation and Participation in Physical Therapy* in response to their dramatic lack of ethnicity in the profession of Physical Therapy. Despite enjoying a marked increase in students enrolling in physical therapy education programs in the 1980’s and 1990’s, the APTA’s membership demographics demonstrate a severe lack of non-White members with only 6,332 (10.8%) being members of ethnically diverse populations. Only 2% of the APTA membership consists of African Americans (APTA, 2002).

## **THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN ATHLETICS AND SPORTS**

Although the profession of athletic training is an allied health profession recognized by the American Medical Association, the traditional employment setting of athletic trainers is based historically in athletics. The lack of diversity in athletic training, especially where Black women CATs are concerned, closely mirrors the professional

plight of Black women coaches, athletic directors and sports managers. Any assessment of the lack of diversity in athletic training would be remiss if it did not include a discussion of these sister professionals in athletics.

The passing of Title IX in 1973 was the most prolific act impacting women's athletics by creating great opportunities for girls and women in sports (Abney, 1988; Abney & Richey, 1991; Acosta & Carpenter, 2002; Lopiano, 2002). Title IX states that, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance." (National Organization for Women, 2003). In the last 30 years, the number of girls and women participating as athletes in sport has grown tremendously resulting in an all time high of sporting opportunities and female sports participants. However, there has been a steady and consistent decrease in the number of professional opportunities for all women in the sports arena including coaching, athletic administration, and athletic training. For example, in 1972, prior to the passing of Title IX, 90% of women's athletic teams were coached by women (predominantly White women). However, in 2002, only 44% of women's teams were coached by women (again, predominantly White women) (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002). Additionally, all women have faced barriers preventing their matriculation into the areas of athlete representation, team ownership, merchandising and the media (Carney, 2002).

The literature explores several of the barriers preventing women and ethnically diverse women from enjoying the employment opportunities that Title IX should have brought. One of the barriers cited in the literature involves the loss of budgetary control

by women's athletics after Title IX was passed. Following the passing of Title IX, women's intercollegiate athletic programs and their respective operating budgets were brought under the control and direction of the White, male athletic directors and coaches involved in the men's intercollegiate athletic programs (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985; Lopiano, 2002).

Another barrier facing all women in athletics was, and still is, discrimination (sexism for White women, sexism and racism for ethnically diverse women) since White males tend to hire people they know, associate with, or are similar to, within their professional network. Another barrier is based on a similar trend found in the nursing and teaching professions, which are traditionally female dominated professions. Historically, nurses and teachers have been mistreated and underpaid for their services, resulting in significant shortages of nurses nationwide and of teachers in various regions of the country. Female coaches, athletic administrators and CATs have traditionally been underpaid and misused, resulting in marked "burnout", exit from their respective professions, and an underrepresentation in athletics and sport (Lopiano, 2002).

Abney and Richey (1991) specifically examined the barriers encountered by ethnically diverse women in sports administration and coaching. Similar to the barriers experienced by ethnically diverse women in nursing, dietetics, and athletic training (Aiken et al., 2001; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Grant-Ford, 1997), they cited barriers such as racism, "womanism" (the act of women hindering the success of other women), class oppression, inadequate or biased counseling at the educational level, and the lack of ethnically diverse women to serve as role models and mentors.

There is significant literature specifically examining the profound negative effect that the lack of ethnically diverse role models and mentors has on the inclusion of ethnically diverse women in the sports professions. By not having ethnically diverse role models and mentors visible in the sport professions, young ethnically diverse women who would otherwise pursue a career in the sport professions, are sent a negative message that such positions are not attainable, appropriate or valued careers, nor would they be welcomed or supported by the White individuals in those professions (Grant-Ford, 1997; Abney, 1988; Abney & Richey, 1991; Acosta, 1986; Alexander, 1978; Houzer, 1974; Lopiano, 2002; Smith, 1995).

The issue of the underrepresentation of ethnically diverse persons, male and female, in the sports professions has become a frequent topic of publication in many research and popular resources from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to *Jet* magazine. The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), a voluntary association of about 1200 colleges and universities, athletic conferences and sports organizations, and professional sports organizations have come under tremendous criticism for failing to hire ethnically diverse coaches and other sport professionals, especially for the more high profile, lucrative and revenue generating sports, such as football and basketball (Burdman, 2002; Hernandez, 1999; Blaudschun, 2000; Black Issues in Higher Education, 2002; Hill, Ritter, Murry, & Hufford, 2002; Greenlee, 2000; Suggs, 1999, 2000 & 2001; Jet, 2001). Much of this literature is focused on ethnically diverse males. The statistics on ethnically diverse women in coaching and sports administration is markedly worse. African American women represent less than 2% of all coaches and less than 1% of all college athletic administrators. She is still the victim of “sports



stacking” or being stereotyped into coaching positions for basketball and track and field (Abney, 1988; Lopiano, 2002).

According to the 2001-02 *Race Demographics of NCAA Member Institution Athletic Personnel*, the percentage of Black women serving as the head coach for women’s teams at NCAA member institutions is only 3.2% with the highest percentages in basketball and indoor and outdoor track and field, while the percentage of White women is 38.5% with the greatest predominance in field hockey, ice hockey and softball. The overall percentage of Black women head coaches for women’s teams drops to only 2% when the figures for HBCUs are excluded. The percentages are only slightly better for Black women who serve as assistant coaches for women’s teams at 5.9% overall and 4.9% with HBCUs excluded.

Similar data was assessed by the NCAA (2002) regarding the racial demographics of women in the various athletics administrative staff positions. White women accounted for 34.8% of administrative positions within all NCAA member institutions, while Black women represented only 3.6% of the same positions. When HBCUs were excluded from the data, White women held 35.9% of administrative positions and Black women reached only 2.5% of the same positions.

## **THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN ATHLETIC TRAINING**

The NATA, formally chartered in 1950, has historically been a White male dominated profession. Women broke into the profession 16 years after the inception of the NATA by becoming members of the NATA (Graham & Schlabach, 2001). Between 1970-1975, 39 women were certified by the BOC to account for 6% of the total membership. It wasn’t until 1975 that the first Asian American, African American, and

Native American women were certified by the BOC. The first Hispanic American woman became certified in 1980. By 1985, of the 9,193 NATA members, there were 19 ethnically diverse women in the NATA (Grant-Ford, 1997). Unfortunately, statistics regarding the number of women during that time are not available from the NATA in order to create an accurate perspective. However, the number of women members in the NATA grew over 20 years from approximately 60 (1.4%) in 1976 to 10,013 (44%) in 1996. Considering that type of growth, 19 ethnically diverse women in 1985 accounted for a very precious few CATs (NATA, 2001).

The NATA recognized the need to diversify its membership in order to enhance the character of the profession, to more accurately represent the diversity of the athletes treated by CATs, and to increase the cultural sensitivity of the membership. In November, 1991, the NATA created the Ethnic Minority Advisory Council, which was later renamed the Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council (EDAC) (V. Ampey, personal communication, March 14, 2002). The EDAC was charged with advising the NATA in “issues relevant to American Indian/Alaskan Natives, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Blacks (non-Hispanic), and Hispanics both in the health care arena and in the NATA” to include the recruitment of a more ethnically diverse membership (NATA, 2002).

In 1997, Martin and Buxton drew attention to the increasing ethnic diversity of the U.S. demographics and the potential impact on higher education in the future. They extrapolated from that information the possible matriculation of more ethnically diverse students into ATEP in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Just two years prior to the publication of their article, the authors, with colleague Menegoni (1995), reported the results of a survey done to assess the student demographics of accredited and approved ATEPs. They

reported that of the 94 accredited programs contacted, 64 responded to the study to produce results indicating that 18% of students enrolled in their programs were ethnically diverse, 3.6% of whom were African American. The authors recommended that athletic training educators, program directors and clinical instructors participate in multicultural training, acquire cross-cultural communication skills, become more aware of their attitudes toward ethnically diverse persons, learn more about the ethnically diverse populations whom they would be teaching, and "...become more aware of prejudices, stereotypes, misconceptions, or a combination of these, about members of cultural and ethnic groups that differ from their own." (Martin & Buxton, 1997, p. 53). The goal of such practices would better prepare CATs to facilitate the educational and health care needs of the current and future American society (Martin & Buxton, 1997).

By 1997, female CATs made up 43% of the total NATA membership. However, ethnically diverse CATs, male and female, still made up a very small percentage of the total membership. Of the 43% women CATs in the NATA, only 3% were women of color (Graham & Schlabach, 2001). The number of ethnically diverse women has made a significant increase in the last few years, but with the total membership of the profession continuing to grow as dramatically, the percentage of ethnically diverse women members has not been able to propagate within the membership. Table 1.1 (NATA, 1999; NATA, 2000; NATA, 2001; NATA, 2002; NATA, 2003; NATA, 2004; NATA, 2005; NATA, 2006) details the NATA membership ethnicity demographics from 1999 through 2006 (2007 year end statistics were not available at the time of writing). The total ethnically diverse membership of the NATA was only 7% of the total membership in 1999 and only rose to 9% from 2000 through 2002 and to 10% from 2003

through 2006. The number of ethnically diverse NATA members, who were certified athletic trainers, rose from 5.8% in 1999 to peak at 9.1% in 2005.

Table 1.1

*1999-2006 NATA Ethnic Diversity Percentages*

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
% Ethnically Diverse Members	7	9	9	9	10	10	10	10
% Ethnically Diverse Certified Athletic Trainers	5.8	7.1	7.5	7.5	8.4	8.8	9.1	9.1

Table 1.2 (NATA, 1999; NATA, 2000; NATA, 2001; NATA, 2002; NATA, 2003; NATA, 2004; NATA, 2005; NATA, 2006; NATA, 2007) details the percent ethnicity of the NATA female membership from 1999 through 2007. In 1999 and 2000, women represented 46% of the NATA membership, which rose in 2001 to 47% and 50% in 2005 and 2006. In 1999, ethnically diverse women made up only 6.2% of the female membership, with 1.4% of the women being African American. The number of ethnically diverse women gradually rose to 9.7% in 2006, with 2.6% of the women being African American (NATA, 2000; NATA, 2001; NATA, 2002; NATA, 2003; NATA, 2004; NATA, 2005; NATA, 2006; NATA, 2007).

The blank responses to ethnicity may be reflective of a trend currently observed in other data collection projects requiring self-identification of race. Due to the growing diversity of the U.S. population, the increasing number of mixed-race persons, and the ambiguity of racial/ethnic definitions, traditional race self-identification methods no

longer allow ethnically diverse people to accurately select categories they feel reflect their true ethnicity (Hirschman, Richard, & Reynolds, 2000; Rodriguez, 2000).

Table 1.2

*1999-2007 NATA Ethnicity of Female NATA Membership Percentages*


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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
African American	1.4	1.5	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.6
Asian American	1.9	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.8
Hispanic American	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.6
Native American	0.4	0.4	0.4	0	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Other	0.7	1.7	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.1
White	78.5	83.9	85.2	85.8	86.4	87.4	86.2	84.6	84
Blank Responses	15.3	8.8	7.0	6.3	4.8	3.5	4.5	5.7	6.1
Ethnically Diverse Total	6.2	7.3	7.8	7.9	8.7	9.1	9.3	9.7	9.5
Total of All Women	45.7	45.8	46.9	47.8	48.4	48.6	50	50	50
Total Membership #	26,096	24,481	28,199	29,697	30,795	30,471	30,608	30,257	29,370

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## **THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENTS**

The dramatically low number of ethnically diverse students in undergraduate ATEPs indicates that the diversity of the NATA is not likely to increase any time soon. Of the 103 historically Black colleges and universities, none sponsor an accredited ATEP, although North Carolina Central University was in candidacy status at the time this writing (V. Ampey, personal communication, February 12, 2008). Therefore, ethnically diverse students wishing to pursue athletic training as a profession must enroll at a predominantly White institution of higher education.

Table 1.3 (NATA, 1999; NATA, 2000; NATA, 2001; NATA, 2002; NATA, 2003, NATA, 2004; NATA, 2005; NATA, 2006; NATA 2007) details undergraduate athletic training student demographic trends. Of the 4,434 undergraduate students enrolled in ATEPs in 1999, only 9.7% were ethnically diverse students. This statistic gradually increased over the next four years to 15% in 2003. In 1999, Hispanic American undergraduate students had the most ethnically diverse student members at 2.8% of all undergraduate students enrolled in accredited programs, followed by African American students at 2.6%, Asian Americans at 2.2%, and Native American at only 0.5%. This statistic has changed in four years, with Asian American and Hispanic American undergraduate students representing 4.3% of ethnically diverse students in 2003 followed by African American students at 4.0%, and Native American students barely increasing their percentage of representation to 0.6% (NATA, 1999 and NATA, 2003). A greater diversity of the NATA membership will come from greater diversity in the ATEP that prepare students for the profession.

Table 1.3

*1999-2007 NATA Ethnicity of Male and Female Undergraduate Students Percentages*


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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
African American	2.55	2.91	3.30	3.44	3.99	4.42	4.10	3.96	3.78
Asian American	2.21	3.32	3.98	4.43	4.28	3.94	3.72	4.49	4.28
Hispanic American	2.75	3.08	3.35	4.04	4.26	4.07	4.30	4.28	4.31
Native American	0.54	.041	0.60	0.0	0.62	0.54	0.53	0.63	0.64
Other	1.62	2.44	1.56	1.63	1.87	1.47	1.50	1.24	0.77
White	54.10	72.95	78.13	79.28	80.15	82.45	78.36	72.93	71.33
Ethnically Diverse Total	9.68	12.17	12.80	13.44	15.02	14.66	14.41	13.95	14.12
Total Students	17.00	14.87	15.25	15.50	15.34	12.25	12.38	12.52	12.80
Total Membership #	26,096	24,481	28,199	29,697	30,739	30,471	30,608	30,257	29,370

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## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Research examining the recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students into ATEPs is an important topic deserving the attention of ATEP directors, especially those who direct an ATEP at a predominantly White institution (PWI). In January of 2004, the internship route to BOC credentialing was officially eliminated upon the agreement of the NATA, BOC and Joint Review Committee for Athletic Training (the organization recommending program accreditation at the time). The internship program was a primary route into the athletic training profession for students enrolled at HBCU. With the loss of the internship route to BOC certification, and only one HBCU currently sponsoring an accredited ATEP, Black students have no other option but to pursue their athletic training education and credentials at a PWI (Hunt, 2004 and V. Ampey, personal communication, February 12, 2008). With this in mind, program directors at PWI need to be cognizant of their responsibility to recruit and successfully retain Black students in their ATEPs until Black students have the opportunity to choose to attend a HBCU with accreditation.

This research is also important to the same program directors since the only mechanism to increase the ethnic diversity of the athletic training membership is by increasing the ethnic diversity of the accredited educational programs that produce certified athletic trainers (CATs). Continued failure on the part of ATEPs to successfully matriculate greater numbers of ethnically diverse students into the profession will result in the continued underrepresentation of ethnically diverse members in the athletic training profession. This will result in the athletic training profession's inability to demonstrate reasonable representation of the diversity of the athletes and physically

active clients it is dedicated to serving. In all three divisions of the National Collegiate Athletics Association alone, 28.4% of all male athletes and 20.9% of all female athletes self-identify their race as non-White (NCAA, 2003). A more ethnically diverse athletic training profession would allow all athletic trainers to learn more about each other, become better educated in the racial and cultural differences of our diverse athlete population, and become more effective and culturally sensitive in our care of ethnically diverse athletes and physically active individuals. A more ethnically diverse profession would also allow ethnically diverse athletes to seek attention from an athletic trainer who shares the same race (Hunt, 2004).

Since 1990, the total membership of the NATA has increased over 50%, growing from 14,598 members to 30,795 in 2003 (NATA, 2003). Between 1999 and 2007, ethnically diverse CATs have consistently accounted for 7-9% of the total NATA membership. African Americans have accounted for only 2-3% of that membership with African American men just slightly outnumbering African American women each year until 2003 (NATA, 2007). The ethnic diversity of student NATA members enrolled in accredited athletic training programs has increased slightly from 9.7% in 1999 to 15% in 2003 with Asian American and Hispanic American students each making up 4.3% of the students. African American student members account for 4.0% and Native American students with only 0.6% of the student membership (NATA, 1999; NATA, 2003).

In 2000, the *Journal of Athletic Training*, official journal of the NATA, focused attention on a letter to the editor by Dr. David Perrin calling for a need to recruit more ethnically diverse persons into the membership ranks of the NATA. This editorial drew attention to the statistics that placed the profession of athletic training into the category of

ill-diversified allied health professions (Perrin, 2000). Dr. Perrin followed up this editorial with an impassioned keynote address at the 2003 Eastern Athletic Trainers' Association (EATA) Annual Meeting, questioning the lack of ethnic diversity in the athletic training profession and challenging the EATA membership to create change for a more ethnically diverse profession. Perrin stated, "To become more diverse as a profession is to become more inclusive and accepting of colleagues, athletes, and patients regardless of color, national origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation." (Perrin, 2003, p. 2).

Perrin gave examples of his own efforts as an educator and administrator to increase ethnic diversity at his university. He indicated that he had participated in a campus wide formal mentoring program for ethnically diverse students and found it to be a rewarding and successful venture for both he and his students. He also indicated that he has applied for an EDAC grant with the primary mission to recruit, retain and educate ethnically diverse ATS at the graduate level. Perrin also made several suggestions to the membership to encourage their involvement in recruiting and retaining ethnically diverse students into ATEP and the profession. He encouraged current ATSs to recruit a diverse classmate to explore athletic training as a possible career. He suggested that CATs working with professional sports could contact guidance counselors at local schools with predominantly Black students to visit team facilities and to encourage their professional teams to support scholarship programs targeting ethnically diverse students interested in athletic training. Perrin recommended that CATs working at high schools could invite ethnically diverse high school students to attend workshops on athletic training and counsel them on attending an accredited ATEP. He also invited his colleagues at the

university level to incorporate multicultural education into the ATEP curriculum. He also encouraged the membership to read and follow the recommendations of the EDAC on recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students already made available through the EDAC brochures and web site (Perrin, 2003).

Additionally, this research is important to the athletic training membership as it begins to fill a gap in the area of ethnic diversity research in the profession of athletic training. Such research is nearly nonexistent. With the exception of a few unpublished dissertations and projects, no research on ethnic diversity could be found regarding the athletic training profession.

With the changing ethnic demographics of the United States, a similar ethnically diverse population of health care practitioners in all allied health and medical fields will be important to meet the health care needs of our increasingly diverse society. Athletes and other physically active individuals have a right to seek medical attention from members of their own culture and ethnicity. In order to fulfill that right, more ethnically diverse CATs are needed in the ranks of the athletic training profession.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSS?
2. What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women ATSS?
3. What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSS?

4. What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework that will guide this research project requires an approach that will not objectify the experiences of the participants, but will instead bring voice to a historically silenced population of women and encourage their journey from the margins to the center. Thus, a Black feminist theoretical framework will guide this study through data collection and analysis.

Black feminist theory (BFT) is a standpoint epistemology, which is the study of the world of experiences from the point of view of the historically and culturally situated individual (Denzin, 1997). Epistemology is a “system of knowing” that examines how an individual views the world based on their lived experiences in that world (Ladson-Billings, 1997 and Delgado-Bernal, 2002). According to Hartsock (1983), standpoint epistemology contends that there are some perspectives in society in which real lived experiences in the world are not visible or realized by all participants in that world. Two realities exist in standpoint theory. Persons who exist in the superficial reality do not realize or experience the same existence as those persons who exist in the deep reality. As such, persons in the superficial reality alienate those persons in the deep reality, progressing through their world ignorant and indifferent to the experiences of others. Persons in the deep reality realize and acknowledge their world and the world of the superficial. As such, those in the deep reality are in the unique position to inform and disclose their experiences to those in the superficial (Hartsock, 1983). This is what Collins (1990 and 1986) refers to as “outsiders within”.

In the case of BFT as a standpoint epistemology, it reveals the lived experiences of Black women who experience the world in society from the unique position created by simultaneously being Black women who are historically oppressed (deep reality). BFT offers Black women the opportunity to inform those who exist in the superficial reality of society (the dominant White male perspective) about their experiences in the margins.

BFT is the study and articulation of the experiences of Black women who are simultaneously situated politically and historically in society at a position based upon their race (Black), their gender (female), and their class (disadvantaged) (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986). BFT is a framework that defines and recognizes “a Black women’s perspective on and for Black women” (Collins, 1990, p. 53). Collins (1990) identifies the features of Black feminist ideals as experiences with racial and gender oppression that have resulted in distinct issues that are different from the issues faced by White women and Black men who have also been oppressed.

By placing Black women at the center of analysis and recognizing the intersection of race, gender and class in their experiences, Black women are brought from the margins to the center and their voices can be heard. Bringing voice to the marginalized cultivates resistance and brings power to the silenced (Forman, 1994).

By breaking the silence of the historically marginalized and allowing them to tell their own stories in their own words, Black women locate their voice, validate their experiences, and construct knowledge about what it means to be a woman and a person of color in a White male dominated society (Forman, 1994 and Smith, 1992).

Although BFT is the theoretical framework that guides the analysis of this dissertation, I would be remiss if I did not address the influence that Critical Race Theory

(CRT) will assert of my analysis. CRT is also a standpoint theory that informs and reveals the insidious, deep reality of color-blindness and meritocracy in society's institutions (administration, economics, politics and education) in order to create change. CRT submits that racism is a permanent institution of U.S. society and that giving voice to marginalized people is critical to reveal their experiences that go unrecognized by the dominant society (Bergerson, 2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Parker, Deyhle & Villenas, 1999; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Specific to this study, bringing voice to the Black women athletic trainers who struggled through the historically White male dominated athletic training educational institution and who work in the historically White dominated athletic training profession will hopefully result in the successful alteration of the existing social structure. Doing so may generate momentum toward educational transformation that values the Black woman as an equally proficient student and colleague.

## **CHAPTER LAYOUTS**

As a form of introduction, Chapter 1 of this work serves to initiate the topic of diversity in the profession of athletic training and how the lack of ethnic diversity, specifically Black women, negatively impacts athletic health care in general. It also includes a discussion of the purpose of this research project, which is to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and other factors on the retention and credentialing of Black women athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of those factors on the academic success of Black women athletic training students (ATs) in ATEPs. Chapter 1 then examines the problem of ethnic diversity in the health professions from the

perspective of the other health care professions, athletics and sports professions, and athletic training before examining the ethnic diversity of athletic training education and the students enrolled in ATEPs. Chapter 1 includes an examination of the significance of the topic of ethnic diversity in athletic training on the future of the profession and poses research questions directed at increasing the knowledge specific to the perceived role of mentoring on the successful matriculation of Black women in ATEPs. Chapter 1 also includes an introduction to the theoretical framework that will serve as the lens through which this study will be analyzed.

Chapter 2 will review literature specific to this qualitative study. It will include a discussion of various standpoint epistemologies that could serve as the theoretical framework for this project. Those standpoints presented range from feminist theory to several critical race theories. Chapter 2 then concludes with a review of literature surrounding the recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students and how mentoring influences college retention.

Chapter 3 will outline the methodology of this research project. The qualitative research design will be presented followed by a discussion of recruitment methods. The research instrument will be addressed as well as the procedures that were followed for data collection and analysis. A description and justification of the theoretical framework guiding this work will be detailed.

Chapters 4 will present the results derived from the analysis of data collected from the participant interviews. Details of the data collection will be presented followed by an introduction of each of the ten participants. A thorough description of the data



analysis will be detailed before presenting the results of the Personal Data Survey and participant responses to the research questions posed in this study.

Chapter 5 will present the findings of this study. Each description of the findings is followed by a review of relevant literature specific to each respective finding and a discussion of Black Feminist Theory applied to that finding. The chapter concludes with implications to the field of athletic training, recommendations for future research and limitations of the study.

# Chapter 2

## Review of the Literature

### Introduction

A review of the population and census literature reveals that American society is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse and will continue to do so through much of the initiation of the new millennium (Hollmann & Mulder, 2000; Manzo, 2000; PEW, 1993; Roach, 2001). The projected increase in the ethnic diversity of the United States will affect many facets of American society. One of those affects will be on the American health care system and how it will meet the varied needs of all patients regardless of race and ethnicity (PEW, 1993; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1985). The body of literature addressing health care in an increasingly diverse American society addresses the need for that racial/ethnic diversity to be closely mirrored in the persons working in the allied health professions, which include athletic training.

During the 1990's, colleges and universities aggressively recruited ethnically diverse students onto their campuses resulting in an increase in the number of ethnically diverse students enrolled in higher education. However, most of those newly diverse colleges and universities failed to equal their recruitment efforts with retention efforts, resulting in a dramatic lack of ethnically diverse student persistence, retention and graduation in virtually all fields of study, including the academic programs that prepare

allied health and medical professionals (Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Campbell, 2000; Roach, 2001; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis & Tomas, 1999; Thile & Matt, 1995).

Although many of the academic programs that prepare health professionals have attempted to increase their diversity, few have been successful at recruitment and certainly not at retention (Aiken, Cervero & Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Gupta, 1991; Lee, 1992; Fitz & Mitchell, 2002; Japsen, 1996). Several reasons have been cited for the continued absence of ethnically diverse students in medical and health profession preparation programs. Some of these include underpreparation for college, racism, and stereotyping. Another frequently cited reason is the dramatic lack of ethnically diverse role models and mentors currently present in the health professions (Aiken, et al., 2001; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Lee, 1992; Hill-Hogan, 1990). Another reason for the lack of ethnically diverse students is the hesitancy and/or inability of White health care professionals to serve successfully as mentors for ethnically diverse students pursuing education in the health care professions (Evans, 1999; Mann, 1992).

The initiation of a formal mentoring program between faculty and ethnically diverse students has been raised as one possible solution to the problem of ethnically diverse student retention and the absence of diversity in the allied health professions (Lee, 1992; Fitz & Mitchell, 2002; Griffiths & Tagliareni, 1999; Hill-Hogan, 1990; Mann, 1992; Pittman, 1995).

In order to better inform the researcher and reader about the current status of ethnically diverse student college retention as well as the concept of mentoring, the literature review will address the topics of ethnically diverse student retention and mentoring. However, before addressing these topics, the challenges of racialized

research, specifically qualitative research, the elaboration on several theoretical frameworks warrants inclusion and will initiate this chapter as part of the literature review. The definition of standpoint epistemology will be addressed first in order to illuminate its role in racialized, qualitative research. Next, several standpoint theories that are appropriate for framing this study will be presented: Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, and Critical White Studies.

Feminist theory is a standpoint epistemology that places women and their experiences at the center of analysis. It recognizes women's subordination in gendered power relationships in a White male dominated society and her resultant gender oppression. Because this research project will examine the experiences of women in during their athletic training education, Feminist Theory is a standpoint in which this study may be framed.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a standpoint theory that sprang from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) as a method to expose and resist racial inequality and oppression in American institutions (Parker, 1999; Taylor, 1998). CRT was developed by people of color in order to better understand their unique and collective experiences and to utilize the knowledge derived from that understanding to revolutionize the current paradigm in ways that could ultimately be viewed as costly to Whites and beneficial to people of color (Bergerson, 2003). As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT stands on the insistence that American society is not as de-raced as the law would have it seem and it forces us to critically confront the institutions of law, authority and policy as the focal promoters of White supremacy in order to break the bond between law and racial power. This dissertation will be examining the experiences of Black women athletic training students

as they move through the predominantly White educational establishments that remain entrenched in institutional racism.

Black Feminists Theory (BFT) is the study and verbalization of the lived experiences of Black women who are simultaneously positioned in society at a station based upon their race (Black), their gender (female), and their class (oppressed) (Collins, 1990; Collins, 1986; Delgado-Bernal, 2002). This branch of CRT is a relevant frame for this study, which will look at the effects of race, gender and class on the experiences of Black women in athletic training education programs.

Critical White Studies (CWS) is a subdivision of CRT that focuses on the critical study of racism and White supremacy and the methods that allow them to persist in American society (Karenga, 1999; Leonardo, 2004). It has an activist purpose directed at creating social and political change within American society. CWS examines White privilege as the center of racial institutional power as it pertains to the eradication of racism (Rodriguez, Bennefield & Fields, 1999; Warren, 1999). As a potential theoretical framework, CWS may serve as an appropriate lens through which to examine the institutional racism experienced by Black women in athletic training education programs.

The following discussion will illuminate the specifics of each of these standpoint epistemologies and reveal which will serve as the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

## **STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY**

An epistemology is the study of the world of experiences from the point of view of the historically and culturally situated individual (Denzin, 1997). Epistemology is a “system of knowing” (Ladson-Billings, p. 257, 1997). It examines how one views the

world based upon the knowledge one gains and the experiences they encounter in that world; how one lives and learns based on their surroundings (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). As a form of epistemology, standpoint theory is a “sense of being engaged not just a bias on the part of the author or researcher” (Hartsock, 1983). A standpoint theory asserts that there are some perspectives on society from which realistic human relationships in the world are not visible to all participants in that world. Hartsock (1983) makes the following claims about standpoint theory:

1. Material life not only structures but sets limits on the understanding of social relations.
2. If material life is in opposition of two groups, the vision of those two groups will also be in opposition (inverse); the vision of the dominant group will be imposed on the subordinate group.
3. The vision of the dominant group is forced on all parties and is truth, it cannot be denied.
4. As a result, the vision of the oppressed must be fought for; science is required to reveal the true social situation for all (dominant and oppressed); education is required for both to change the situation.
5. An engaged vision (standpoint) of the oppressed exposes the truth of relationships with the dominant culture.

Hartsock (1983) also contends that a standpoint theory involves two realities; a deep reality includes and reveals the superficial reality. The superficial reality is not apparent to both parties in the relationship. Standpoint theories attempt to disclose the logic that is used to permit those who exist in the superficial reality to alienate those who

exist in the deep reality. As stated by Ladson-Billings (2000), "...there are well-developed systems of knowledge, or epistemologies, that stand in contrast to the dominant Euro-American epistemology" (p. 258).

## **FEMINIST THEORY**

Feminist research theory places women and their experiences at the center of analysis; its focus is gendered. It recognizes women's subordination in gendered power relationships in a White male dominated society and her resultant gender oppression (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Collins, 1990; Collins, 1986; Baca-Zinn & Dill, 1996). As a standpoint epistemology, womanhood is an earned standpoint from which researchers can view the truth of the struggle of women in their relationships with men in a male dominated society (Harding, 1991). Torkelson (1996) identifies eight criteria for feminist research:

1. The researcher is a woman.
2. Feminist methodology is used.
3. The research has the potential to help its participants.
4. The focus is on the experiences of women.
5. It is a study of women.
6. The words 'feminism' or 'feminist' are used.
7. Feminist literature is cited.
8. The research is reported using non-sexist language.

As a standpoint theory in research, Hartsock (1983) indicates the following principles of Feminist Theory:

1. Money (material benefits) motivates social relationships.

2. Feminist standpoint threatens man's material security as the dominant gender that forces men to maintain the system and forces women to suffer under it.
3. Women and men are forced to participate in a male dominated system of relationships; it is real and cannot be denied.
4. Women must use scientific study to reveal the truth about their oppressed status and male dominated system. Women must educate men about the reality of the relationship and education women about how to struggle against male domination.
5. Research results in a feminist standpoint that exposes male dominance as truth in relationships between men and women in society.

Hartsock (1983) goes on to indicate that feminist standpoint theory is important to the purposes of revealing, understanding and then opposing all forms of domination in society. As a critical theory, research framed in a feminist theory lens aims to generate knowledge that critically examines and exposes gendered power and privilege within a social context and ultimately initiate change for those who are oppressed by their gender (Hartsock, 1983; Merriam, 1998).

In 1991, Anderson conducted a qualitative dissertation study in order to investigate and describe the perceived experiences of the first women who became certified athletic trainers and entered the male dominated field of athletic training in the 1970s. Anderson's (1991) study was the first study of women in athletic training and very little was known about the early experiences of the first women athletic trainers, the



barriers they faced and the strategies they used to cope. Anderson conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen women, all of whom were White, who were identified from the 1989 NATA Membership Directory as CATs between January 1970 and December 1974. At the time of the interviews the participants ranged in age from 38-56. Feminist and oppression theories were the theoretical frames used to analyze and discuss the experiences of the participants. Anderson (1991) identified several findings in her study:

1. Athletic training was a male domain.
2. Women athletic trainers were excluded from access to programs, facilities, equipment, budgets, high risk sports and supervision that male athletic trainers had access to.
3. Coaches, athletic directors and male athletic trainers did not understand what the role of women athletic trainers and were not supportive of the women.
4. Women athletic trainers were responsible for a heavier workload assignment.
5. There was a good ole' boys network in athletic training.
6. Women athletic trainers faced homophobia regardless of their sexual orientation.

Anderson's (1991) study revealed that the first women athletic trainers faced a prevalence of sexism and homophobia in the physical education and athletic training environments. The oppression that the participants experienced because of their gender in a male dominated setting kept them silent about their situations and feeling isolated, fearful and powerless. Anderson also found that the participants did not share the perception of shared identity as a subordinate or isolated group with other women athletic

trainers. As a result of her findings, Anderson (1991) recommended that women CATs needed to educate themselves about sexism and homophobia, develop a collective identity as women CATs, and develop mentoring relationships and support networks with each other to start to create change for women in the profession.

In utilizing interviews to collect data from the participants, the investigator serves as the research instrument. Due to the fact that the investigator in this study is a woman and the participants are also women, a ready assumption could be that this research project would be framed and guided by a feminist theoretical framework. After all, feminist research is defined as “research on women, by women, for women” (Webb, 1993, p. 422). Feminist research theory places women and their experiences at the center of analysis; its focus is gendered. It recognizes women’s subordination in gendered power relationships in a White male dominated society and her resultant gender oppression (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Collins, 1990; Baca-Zinn & Dill, 1996).

This research project certainly meets several of the criteria outlined above:

1. The researcher is a woman.
2. Feminist methodology is utilized.
3. The intent of the research is to produce results that will benefit the participants.
4. The focus of the investigation is on the lived experiences of the participants.
5. The research participants are women.
6. The terminology “feminism” appears in the content.
7. Feminist literature is cited.

Despite meeting these criteria, a feminist research theory will not be the framework through which this study is guided. Although the investigator in this research project shares the same gender with the participants, she does not share the same race; the investigator is White and the participants are Black. With this interracial dynamic between the researcher (research instrument) and the participants, a traditional feminist theoretical framework becomes a frame that warrants avoidance.

The problem that traditional feminist theory poses to a “multicultural” study such as this is that traditional feminist scholarship has historically placed the White, middle class (privileged) woman at the center of analysis, acknowledging gender, but excluding its intersection with race/ethnicity and class oppression (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986). By focusing on White women in their studies on the experiences of women, traditional feminists failed to recognize that while they may have been oppressed by their feminine gender, White women were also privileged by their Whiteness.

In the feminist struggle for gender equity and women’s liberation, shared race (White) was a more powerful social and political factor in the movement than shared gender. Black women continued to be oppressed by their gender AND again by their race. This resulted in increased knowledge of the experiences of White women who were then able to parlay that knowledge into beneficial action in order to enjoy greater equality and less sexism in a White male dominated society. Unfortunately, this early feminist research also resulted in an assumption that the experiences of White, middle class women were the universal norm for all women regardless of race or class. As such, ethnically diverse women were excluded from the liberation enjoyed by White women,

their voices silenced, and their experiences marginalized (Forman, 1994; Taylor, 2001; Collins, 1990; Collins, 1986; hooks, 1989; hooks, 1981; Baca-Zinn & Dill, 1996).

Black women (and other ethnically diverse women) continue to be objectified at the hands of traditional feminist research, which may include data collected from ethnically diverse research participants, but is ultimately analyzed and interpreted with the White woman and her experiences (the assumed “norm”) at the center (Collins, 1990; Taylor, 2001; hooks, 1989).

## **CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a derivative of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which originated from American law during the mid-1970s and is grounded in activism. CLS is an activist legal movement that evolved when traditional civil rights litigation failed to create significant racial reform in the U.S. The CLS movement challenges legal scholarship that was originally developed exclusively by members of the dominant (White male) culture. CLS focuses on a policy analysis, which favors a form of law that specifically addresses individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts. By doing so, CLS attempts to expose inconsistencies in the law based upon racism, which has perpetuated White dominance in American Society (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Taylor, 1998).

CRT is a standpoint theory that sprang from CLS to address and expose racial neutrality and color-blindness in arenas beyond the judicial system such as administration, economics, politics, sociology, women’s studies and education (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999; Taylor, 1998). CRT was developed by people of color in

order to better understand their unique and collective experiences and to utilize the knowledge derived from that understanding to revolutionize the current paradigm in ways that could ultimately be viewed as costly to Whites and beneficial to people of color (Bergerson, 2003). As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT stands on the insistence that American society is not as de-raced as the law would have it seem and it forces us to critically confront the institutions of law, authority and policy as the focal promoters of White supremacy in order to break the bond between law and racial power (Bell, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Taylor, 1998).

Within the American educational system, CRT can be a useful framework to allow researchers to evaluate the effects of racism on the educational experiences of ethnically diverse students from the perspective of those students (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso (p. 63, 2000) describes CRT in education as a theory that,

... offers insights, perspectives, methods and pedagogies that guide our efforts to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom.

As a critical research theory, the knowledge produced by educational research framed in CRT is an ideological critique of privilege, power and oppression in the areas of American educational practice. When such knowledge is created, resistance against oppression within the educational institution is better able to initiate transformation (Merriam, 1998; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002).

Parker and Lynn (2002) insist that CRT is needed in educational research in order

to give voice to historically marginalized groups, equalize the dominant culture's racial bias propagated by traditional methods of research and rectify knowledge generated by inappropriate methods.

There are several tenants of CRT, which drive this framework. The first is that racism is permanent and rooted in all aspects of American society. Racism is so common in American society, and is so ingrained in the U.S. social order, that it appears both normal and natural to the people participating in that society. Racism is a central and enduring fixture that operates at all levels of American life. It is such a normal part of daily American life that racism, whether overt or subtle, goes unrecognized and unacknowledged by the dominant culture (Bell, 1993; Bergerson, 2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Taylor, 1998). The institutionalism of racism in the American education system results in the alienation, marginalization and silence of ethnically diverse students, especially those educated within a PWI (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

A second tenant of CRT is the collection and integration of experiential knowledge of ethnically diverse people through storytelling or counter storytelling (Bergerson, 2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998). Storytelling is an acceptable, qualitative method "to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture" (Ladson-Billings, p. 264, 1997). Counter stories are "narratives that challenge the dominant version of reality" and oppose the negative stereotypes and beliefs promoted by Whites about non-Whites in order to maintain racial power (Bergerson, p. 54, 2003;

Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998). Storytelling gives voice to the marginalized and exposes the truth about racism informed by the lived experiences of the subordinate culture (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998).

A third tenant of CRT is a critique of liberalism. Just as CLS challenges traditional, liberal legal scholarship for being ineffective in combating racism within the American legal structure, CRT challenges the liberalism as being ineffective in reversing the institutional racism that plagues American society. CRT asserts that traditional liberal practices are too slow and unproductive in making worthwhile and tangible progress and change in the struggle against racism (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). As stated by Ladson-Billings (p. 264, 1997), “Racism requires sweeping, immediate changes, but liberalism has no mechanism for such change”. CRT is skeptical of liberal methods such as neutrality, color blindness and meritocracy as weapons against racism, instead considering them tools that are more effective in sustaining racial discourse. If these ideologies were effective, racism could not persist in American culture (Bergerson, 2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Taylor, 1998).

A fourth tenant of CRT is that White people have benefited most as a result of civil rights legislation because it fell under the concept of interest convergence. For example, White women benefited most from Affirmative Action in the employment market. Affirmative Action was a worthwhile program and met with government approval and lawful enforcement (both predominantly White entities) because it also

contributed to the self-interests of White Americans (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Taylor, 1998).

DeCuir and Dixon (2004) conducted a qualitative study utilizing CRT to illustrate the presence and effects of racism on the experiences of African-American students enrolled in a predominantly White independent secondary school. The school where the study took place was located in a large city in an affluent, predominantly White area in the Southeast. The study took place during the 2002-2003 school year when the enrollment consisted of 599 students, K-12, with only 44 African-American students enrolled. Two African-American students were interviewed in this study; Malcolm, a 17-year-old senior from a middle class family and Barbara, an 18-year-old recent graduate from an upper class family.

One of the tenets of CRT is counter-story telling as a means of giving voice to those who are silenced by their positions as marginalized within society. Quite often Malcolm and Barbara were silenced by their isolated and marginalized positions within the predominantly White school. This study gave them the opportunity to share their stories and experiences, giving them voice and exposing the “Othering” they experienced at a school that claimed to celebrate diversity (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Another tenet of CRT is the permanence of racism. Malcolm cited an incident in which a White male student was not expelled from school for making terroristic and racialized threats against an African American student. Malcolm felt that the White administrators did not consider the racialized threats serious or significant enough to warrant expulsion. Because racism is a permanent fixture in U.S. society, the administration was not surprised by the racist incident (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).



Another tenet of CRT is interest convergence. In another example cited by Malcolm, he was asked several times on the first day he attended school if he played football. He felt stereotyped by the White students as a Black athlete and that he would be more welcome at the school if he could contribute to the football team. The school's interest in improving its football program converged with Malcolm's interest in attending a good school and getting a strong education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

### **BLACK FEMINIST THEORY**

Black feminist theory (BFT) as a standpoint epistemology has been extensively written upon by a great number of Black feminists. BFT brings attention to the unique lived experiences of Black women who participate as “outsiders within” a society at the intersection of race, class, and gender (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986). In the case of BFT, it is the study and articulation of the experiences of Black women who are simultaneously situated politically and historically in society at a position based upon their race (Black), their gender (female), and their class (oppressed) (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986 ). Delgado-Bernal (2002) describes BFT as a critical raced-gendered epistemology that creates knowledge and understanding based on the racialized and gendered experiences of non-White people. BFT is a framework that defines and recognizes “a Black women's perspective on and for Black women” (Collins, 1990, p. 53). As stated by Forman (1994, p. 38),

By seeking to multiply rather than reduce the known variables that influence positionality and perspective, Black feminist theorists are able to apply standpoint theory to their experience with greater precision and utility. In this sense, one can begin to address precise questions about how the experiences of Black women can

be approached from within the theoretical contexts of feminist and Afrocentric analyses.

Taylor (2001, pp. 18-19) further describes Black feminism as a theory that,

...attacks racism, sexism, and poverty simultaneously. Black feminism places Black women at the center of analysis and addresses the simultaneous convergence of racism, sexism and poverty in the experienced life of Black women in a patriarchal society that is dominated by eurocentrism. The ultimate goal of Black feminism is to create a political movement that not only struggles against exploitative capitalism... but that also seeks to develop institutions to protect what the dominant culture has little respect and value for – Black women's minds and bodies.

Collins (1990) identifies the features of Black feminist ideals as experiences with racial and gender oppression that have resulted in distinct issues that are different from the issues faced by White women and Black men who have also been oppressed. The knowledge produced by research framed in the lens of BFT emerges from the experiences that Black women have lived through while standing at the intersection of racism, sexism, and classism (as well as other potential forms of oppression) (Delgado-Bernal, 2002).

By placing Black women at the center of analysis and recognizing the intersection of race, gender and class in their experiences, Black women are brought from the margins to the center and their voices can be heard. Bringing voice to the marginalized cultivates resistance and brings power to the silenced (Forman, 1994).

Aiken, Cervera and Johnson-Bailey (2001) conducted a qualitative study to explain factors that encouraged and discouraged the participation of Black women in registered nursing (RN) completion programs. Their study was analyzed and discussed through BFT framework. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with ten female participants, all of whom self identified as Black. The results revealed that the participants were encouraged to continue in the RN program by their personal character traits and belief system as well as their motivation to improve their social mobility. The participants with greater previous nursing experience found it easier to continue in the program. The results also revealed that the participants were discouraged by feelings of alienation (outsiders), intimidation, different treatment, silence, indifference, and humiliation because they were Black.

### **CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES**

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is "...the exploration of what it means to be White..." (Rodriquez, Bennefield & Fields, p. 20, 1999). It is a subversion of CRT that focuses on the critical study of racism and White supremacy and the methods that allow them to persist in American society (Karenga, 1999; Leonardo, 2004). CWS is often misunderstood as a White supremacist movement or a study of "White trash" culture. Although it includes the study of White popular culture, CWS is a strand of CRT with an activist purpose directed at creating social and political change. CWS examines the unearned privileges of Whiteness as the center of racial institutional power as it pertains to the elimination of racism (Rodriquez, Bennefield & Fields, 1999; Warren, 1999). Instead of investigating racism from the margins (non-White and racially oppressed), CWS investigates racism from the center (White and racially privileged) (Warren, 1999).

CWS attempts to reveal how White people view themselves and others in relation to non-White people and how Whites define Whiteness. CWS also examines how Whites define race, view racism and White privilege and how Whiteness is socially constructed. These are all examined under the frame of CWS in order to end racism and the racist practices of White society that create and continue to recreate racial oppression and White supremacy in American Society (Leonardo, 2004; Rodriguez, Bennefield & Fields, 1999; Warren, 1999).

Croll, Hartmann and Gerteis (2006) conducted a research study using survey data from the American Mosaic Project and following a CWS theoretic framework to guide the analysis. The American Mosaic Project is a multi-year, multi-method study of the bases of solidarity and diversity in American life. The survey portion of the American Mosaic Project was administered via random-digit-dial phone survey to 2,081 participants in the summer of 2003. The researchers sought to analyze three specific propositions:

1. The salience of White identity (that Whiteness is invisible).
2. Awareness of White privilege (the lack of awareness of White privilege).
3. Adherence to colorblind, meritocratic individualism (that hard work is the American way).

In their analysis of the data, Croll, et al. (2004) focused on the ideal of CWS as a deep, normative, taken-for-granted quality of Whiteness. They found that Whites see their race as less salient, visible and important than others do and that they are less aware of White privilege than other racial groups. Another finding was that Whites adhere to the colorblind ideology and system of meritocracy as the reason for their success. They also

found that Whites are more connected to their own White identities and more aware of the advantages of Whiteness than previously thought. The surprise finding in this study was that all Americans, regardless of age or race, believe in a colorblind ideology; in other words, all American share a similar vision of the American dream (Croll, et al, 2006).

## **ETHNICALLY DIVERSE COLLEGE STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

The call for more ethnically diverse allied health professionals appears to be a major factor in the need to retain diverse students in the academic preparation programs that feed those professions. Another interesting driving force to support the retention and persistence of ethnically diverse students is being recognized following the assessment of the 2000 U.S. Census and a publication from the Educational Testing Service. These reports predict a coming surge in ethnically diverse student college enrollment.

Institutions of higher education will need to prepare for an even greater ethnicity of college students between the ages of 18 to 24 by the year 2015, when a potential 1.6 million students will enroll in higher education. By 2015, approximately 80% of the increase in enrollment will be attributed to ethnically diverse student enrollment, while the White student presence on campuses will decrease from 71% to 63% of total student enrollment. It is anticipated that the enrollment of African American students will grow just slightly and remain relatively constant with current enrollment at 13%. Asian American college students are predicted to be the fastest growing population, increasing from 5% to 8% and outnumbering African American college students by 2006. Hispanic

Americans will increase from 11% to 15% to represent the largest college enrolled ethnically diverse group by 2015 (McGlynn, 2000; Roach, 2001; Manzo, 2000).

These ethnically diverse undergraduate student enrollment trends already are being demonstrated in the NATA undergraduate membership demographics, with Asian American and Hispanic American athletic training students outnumbering African American students. Asian American students have made the biggest jump in enrollment from 2.2% in 1999 to 4.3% in 2003 (NATA, 1999; NATA, 2003).

During the last decade, institutions of higher education recognized the need to improve the diversity of their campuses and initiated vigorous recruitment efforts of ethnically diverse students. Their efforts resulted in a considerable increase in the number of ethnically diverse students who enrolled in higher education (Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Campbell, 2000; Roach, 2001; Schwitzer et al., 1999; Thile & Matt, 1995). Both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) enjoyed this surge in college student enrollment. However, PWIs saw the greatest growth with 75% of African American students attending PWIs (Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Harris, 1999). Despite efforts to recruit and enroll diverse students into higher education, most of the newly diversified institutions failed to assert the same efforts, energy and attention on retention methods and programs to help ethnically diverse students persist in college to the point of graduation. This failure resulted in a remarkable increase in ethnically diverse student drop out rates in virtually all fields of study, including the academic professional programs that prepare allied health professionals (Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Campbell, 2000; Roach, 2001; Schwitzer et al., 1999; Thile & Matt, 1995).

As PWIs have had to recognize their responsibility to support ethnically diverse student persistence and retention, researchers have attempted to assess the reasons contributing to the failure of PWIs to retain their diverse students. A plethora of reasons have been noted in an overwhelming amount of literature. African American students have encountered the following challenges to their academic success and retention (Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Thile & Matt, 1995; Feagin, Vera & Imani, 1996; Amaury & Cabrera, 1996; Chavous, 2000; Douglas, 1998; Freeman, 1997; Rowser, 1997):

1. Difficulty adjusting to a predominantly White social and academic environment.
2. Subtle and overt racism.
3. Student segregation (institutional or self imposed).
4. Perceived unwelcome campuses to diverse students.
5. Lack of ethnically diverse faculty and staff mentors and role models.
6. Culturally insensitive faculty and staff.
7. Socioeconomic problems.
8. Poor secondary academic preparation.
9. Dissatisfaction with academic program.
10. Unclear academic and career objectives.
11. Greater levels of stress.
12. Negative stereotyping.

African American female college students contend with these, as well as additional challenges, impeding their successful matriculation through college to graduation. Not only does the African American female student face the challenges of

being a person of color, but she also faces the challenges of being a person of color and a female (Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998). Abney and Richey (1991) referred to this unique challenge as a “double whammy”. The African American female is often stereotyped by the surrounding White environment as a “whore”, welfare queen and not “fully human” (Feagin et al., 1996). People assume she is unqualified academically to be in college and was admitted to fill an affirmative action quota. Quite often, she feels she must put her social life on hold until after college due to the unavailability of African American male students who are far fewer in number than African American women on college campuses and who also “discover White women” (Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998). Just as the African American female college student is socially alienated from her peers, she is also less likely to find support from the predominantly White male faculty who tend to mentor students more like themselves (White and male) (Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992)

The 1990’s saw the initiation of several formal mentoring programs with the primary purpose of increasing ethnically diverse student retention implemented in higher education. It was proposed that college retention rates of ethnically diverse students could significantly improve with the formal and informal assistance and participation of faculty sponsors and mentors. Those ethnically diverse students who did complete college degrees recognized for themselves the importance of connecting with a faculty member to guide them through college and into their professional career path (Brown, 1998; Evans, 1999; Thile & Matt, 1995; Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Haring, 1999; Lee, 1999; Murrell, Crosby & Ely, 1999; Wilson, 2000).



## **MENTORING AND RETENTION**

The concept of mentoring, as a means to improve ethnically diverse student college retention, has been shown to have merit. However, there are several problems that decrease the effectiveness on ethnically diverse student recruitment. An obvious problem is the lack of mentors, specifically ethnically diverse mentors, at predominantly White colleges and universities (Lee, 1999; Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Mann, 1992; Evans, 1999; Haring, 1999; Murrell, Crosby, & Ely, 1999). Another problem surrounding the mentoring model is the assumption that a mentor is someone with status who assists a protégé who needs to be mentored. For the ethnically diverse student, this assumption promotes a negative connotation that the protégé's need is based on weakness or a deficit of some kind (Haring, 1999; Leon, Dougherty & Maitland, 1997).

Traditional mentoring relationships also are founded in homogeneity that significantly favors Eurocentricity, meeting the needs of the White male and alienating women and people of color (Harris, 1999; Murrell, Crosby & Ely, 1999). Mann (1992) and Pittman (1995) agree that traditional models of mentoring are hierarchial and allow an unequal power relationship that favors European American males and places women and ethnically diverse people at risk. Bulstrode and Hunt (2000) go so far as to refer to mentoring as a form of "nepotism" supported by sexism and racism. Another obstacle to the successful mentoring of diverse students is the tendency for mentors to focus their mentoring attention on persons similar to themselves (Mann, 1992; Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992).

There is evidence to indicate that successful mentoring has a positive effect on ethnically diverse students' college retention and professional success (Brown, 1998;

Campbell, 2000; Lee, 1999; Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Thile & Matt, 1995).

Therefore, it will be important to determine if ethnically diverse female students enrolled in ATEPs have access to mentors, if ethnically diverse female students do participate in successful mentoring relationships, and if the mentors are White or non-White mentors. It also will be important to determine if the ethnicity of the mentor is important for the relationship to be successful in terms of graduation and professional matriculation.

A handful of studies suggest that mentors who share the same race and gender with their students are desirable. However, shared race and gender are not necessary so long as the mentor is connected to a professional network and able to effectively introduce his/her students into their shared profession. Brown (1998) published an article citing an informal assessment she performed with colleagues at a conference regarding their academic success leading to professional success. She found that 100% of her ethnically diverse female colleagues believed that their mentor, usually a White male, had made the biggest difference in assisting them to “survive” their educational experience in the sciences.

In their book *How to succeed on a majority campus: A guide for ethnically diverse students*, Levey, Blanco & Jones (1998) present their survival strategies for women of color enrolled at PWIs. One of their suggestions is to find a mentor, a task the student should consider a high priority upon arrival on campus. They also indicate that it may be necessary to look for that mentor among White faculty members who have a reputation for being supportive and sensitive to African American student culture.

Lee (1999) conducted a qualitative study at a large, urban, research institution in the Southeast United States to answer such questions. The institution’s enrollment was

predominantly White with 81% of the undergraduate population being White, 11% African American, and the remaining 9% represented “other” ethnically diverse students. The six-year completion rate for the Class of 1998 was 55% for all students, but only 37% for African American students. Only 4% of the tenured faculty consisted of African Americans, resulting in a ratio of one faculty member to every 27 African American students. This ratio created a poor mentoring/role-modeling to ethnically diverse student ratio for same-race mentoring.

In this study, Lee investigated the University Transition Program (UTP) to assess the program’s contribution to first year ethnically diverse college student persistence. She conducted a qualitative study to ascertain the perspectives of diverse students toward their adjustment to college at a PWI and the value they placed on faculty mentor relationships. Her study consisted of focus group interviews conducted three times per academic calendar. Each focus group consisted of seven students. A total of 120 students participated in the focus group sessions. Lee specifically studied three particular areas:

1. The students’ perspective of adjustment to life on a predominantly White campus.
2. The students’ perspective on having a mentor.
3. The students’ perspective on the importance of having a same-race mentor.

Lee found agreement among the participants that the transition to student life at a PWI is a yearlong process that requires the student to adjust to the majority culture. The investigator also found there was significant agreement among the students who thought

that a mentor would be a tremendous help to their academic and professional development, and would assist them in persisting until graduation. Additionally, there was strong agreement among the participants that connecting with African American faculty mentors was less important than having a mentor in their career field. Most felt they could get the cultural connection through a role model outside the university setting. Most of the students also felt that there was a strong need for cross-cultural mentoring, and that diversity was needed to promote multicultural perspectives of the real world, as well as gain insight into the dominant culture. Race was less important than the quality of the faculty interaction, and ethnically diverse students preferred mentor relationships matched by academic career paths. The author recommended that future research be conducted at other institutions to determine if her findings on mentoring and retention extended elsewhere (Lee, 1999).

Campbell (2000) also examined the differing perceptions of mentoring relationships between ethnically diverse students and faculty. In this study conducted between 1995 and 1998, a questionnaire was sent to a random sample of students and faculty mentors participating in a mentoring program at a large West Coast metropolitan university. Responses were collected from 205 faculty mentors (38%) and 182 students (17%). Sixty-three percent of the faculty respondents were women, 66% were White, 13% were Latino, 10% were Asian and 8% were African-American. Fifty-eight percent of the student respondents were women, 70% were Latino and 18% were African-American. Both students and mentors perceived that the mentoring relationships were valuable to both students and faculty and both parties benefited from the mentoring

relationships. The perceived benefits of the mentoring relationship did not differ due to gender or ethnicity of the students or the faculty.

Lee (1999) and Campbell's (2000) conclusions seemed consistent with several other studies that also found that quality, networked mentoring was critical and desirable to ethnically diverse students. They also found that same-raced mentoring was welcomed when the opportunity presented, but was not as critical (Enomoto, Gardiner & Grogan, 2000; Gibbons, 1993; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Haring, 1999; Harris, 1999). Similarly, Wilson (2000) made the distinction that, although African American male mentors held a special place in the growth and development of African American male students at predominantly White colleges and universities, mentors from both races were welcome with the importance lying in the actual existence of the mentoring relationship.

In another study, Thile and Matt (1995) investigated the Ethnic Mentor Undergraduate Program (EMU) at a predominantly White state university. The EMU program was a yearlong program targeting African American freshmen and transfer students in the College of Health and Human Services or who were undeclared. The focus of the program was centered around the interaction of the student with the assigned faculty mentor in both individual and organized group process. The purpose of their study was to assess:

1. whether the program helped protégés to perform better in their first year than all freshman and transfer students.
2. whether protégés were more likely to return the next academic year than all freshmen and transfer students.

3. whether protégé self-esteem , generalized contentment, and academic self-efficacy changed during the first academic year.

Participants for this study consisted of 27 women and five men, ten of whom were African American, 19 who were Hispanic Americans, and three who were Filipinos. Seventeen of the participants were freshmen and 15 were transfer students. Eighteen of the participants had declared a major, while 14 were undeclared. The participants were matched as closely as possible with a faculty mentor according to ethnicity and major (specifics of faculty ethnicity were not included in the study). Measures used in this assessment were administered as a pretest in the fall of 1990 at the beginning of the semester and then again as a posttest at the end of the spring 1991 semester.

Results demonstrated that the freshmen participants' grade point average (GPA) dropped slightly but was higher than the total university freshmen population. The transfer student participants' GPA rose significantly, while the GPA of total university transfer student population remained the same. The telling results were the 82% return rate (retention) of the participating freshmen and 87% return rate of the participating transfer students in comparison to the 73% and 67% return rates of the corresponding university populations. The results lead to a conclusion that the faculty mentor relationship with the participants of the EMU program had a positive influence on retention of the ethnically diverse student participants. The authors indicated that future research on mentoring as a means of retention would benefit from assessing the nature of mentor-protégé interaction (Thile & Matt, 1995).

Schwitzer et al. (1999) conducted a study assessing the transitions of African American college students to PWIs. Participants of their qualitative investigation were

fourth year African American college seniors. Twenty-two participants, 13 women and nine men, took part in a series of focus groups. They were asked three open-ended questions about their social adjustment to the college experience. Four factors of African American student social adjustment at PWI were identified. Of particular interest was the agreement among participants that they desired a mentoring relationship with a faculty member they would be comfortable with. The researchers recommended that new students be matched with a faculty mentor based upon cultural/racial similarities (Schwitzer et al., 1999).

In 2001, Aiken et al. conducted a qualitative study using a Black feminist theoretical framework to examine the factors that encouraged and discouraged African American women from participating in registered nurse completion programs. Their problem of focus was motivated by the lack of research assessing the educational experiences of non-White adult students pursuing nursing education and that omission resulted in the assumption that the experiences of White students were the norm. Their subjects consisted of seven women who were enrolled in registered nurse completion programs and three women who were recent graduates programs of a registered nurse completion program. All subjects self identified as Black.

The subjects participated in a semistructured, individual interview that was tape-recorded in a two-hour session. Investigators also took field notes during the interview process. Data were analyzed by constant comparative methodology and subjected to peer examination to improve internal validity. Findings produced factors that encouraged program completion as well as factors that discouraged program completion.

Two themes emerged as factors that encouraged the subjects to complete their programs and were grouped as intrapersonal and cultural. Interpersonal factors that encouraged subjects to complete their program were personal characteristics such as determination and self-motivation and belief systems such as a belief in God, faith and spirituality. Cultural factors that encouraged program completion were social mobility, professional advancement and previous nursing experience.

Two themes also emerged as factors that discouraged the subjects to complete their programs. One theme was consistent with the theories grounded in Black feminism in which the Black woman is aware of herself as an outsider when compared to the norm (assumed to be White). This awareness of being an outsider resulted in feelings of alienation from classmates and instructors both in the classroom and the clinical setting. Thus, mentoring relationships were not formed with their instructors and clinical supervisors. The other theme of factors that discouraged program completion revolved around cultural racism and racial discrimination, resulting in a sense of injustice and psychological distress for the subjects. As described by the authors, the culture of racism experienced by the participants involved situations when the Black women nursing students were discriminated against by way of intimidation, difference in treatment, and being ignored or humiliated in with respect to their White classmates. Ultimately, the authors concluded that institutional racism is a barrier to Black women enrolled in registered nurse completion program, resulting in poor retention of those women in such programs and a lack of representation in the nursing profession.

Specific to the mentoring of Black women in athletics, Abney (1988) conducted a qualitative study to examine the significance and influence of persons on the professional



development of Black women in athletics at institutions of higher education. In addition to other factors, her study included a specific analysis of the influence of role models and mentors in the lives of her subjects. Subjects were identified from the 1986-1987 National Directory of Intercollegiate Athletics. A survey questionnaire was used to identify Black women coaches and athletic administrators. One hundred and ninety one Black women were identified as coaches or athletic administrators and were surveyed. Ninety-one (48%) responded to the second survey. Twenty Black women were then selected to participate in an interview with the researcher.

Most of Abney's subjects were between the ages of 20 to 40, unmarried, born in the South, raised in large communities, and were Baptist. The participants listed the following factors as most helpful in the development of their professional careers: having strong drive and determination, being confident, being competent, believing in God, having family support and being a good athlete. The participants also named the following factors as the most experienced barriers to their career development: inadequate salary, lack of support groups, being a woman, employer discrimination (sexism and/or racism), and the lack of cultural and social outlets (at PWIs).

Mentors and role models were not available to the greater percentage of the Black women coaches and athletic administrators in Abney's study (1988). As such, the subjects turned to family members and friends to fill these roles. The respondents listed mothers, teachers and coaches as influential role models. For Black women at HBCUs, the respondents named teachers, administrators and coaches as their mentors with most being Black, teachers being women and administrators and coaches being men. For Black women at PWI, mentors tended to be a coach, friend, or mother with most coaches

being White females and most friends being Black men and women equally. Interviews with the subjects brought out the perception that the mentoring process was more directed than guided for a majority of the Black women and that a bond was not established with the mentor.

For the participants in Abney's study who did not experience the guidance of a mentor during their career development, they felt that had they enjoyed the guidance of a mentor, their career development would have been different. Ninety three percent of the subjects interviewed were committed to mentoring and indicated that they had acted as a mentor in the past, while 70% indicated that they were strongly committed to acting as a mentor in the future.

The 20 women interviewed in Abney's study (1988) were asked why they perceived there were so few Black women in coaching and athletic administration as well as what their specific obstacles were in obtaining and maintaining their current positions as coaches and administrators. Of the several responses, the respondents included the lack of role models, mentors and networks. The participants also believed that an increase in the number of Black women in athletics could be realized by several changes which included more mentors, role models and networks as well as more visible and qualified Black women in the profession to help prepare young Black women for careers in athletics. Forty-five of the respondents indicated that there were no Black women available to them as role models and mentors during their career development years. Several of the respondents who did have a role model or mentor indicated it was a positive relationship. Ninety percent of the Abney's participants perceived it was important for young Black women to have a mentor. Fifty-nine percent thought a Black

woman should be the mentor and 40% did not indicate the mentor had to be a specific person by race or gender. Abney (1988) recommended that this study be replicated on Black women in other career fields in order to inform the literature on the importance of role models, mentors and mentoring to the professional success of the Black women in those respective fields. As will be described later, this dissertation study expands on Abney's recommendation to replicate her study.

Revis-Shingles (2001) conducted a study of the experiences of diverse women CATs in order to describe their perceptions of the following: 1) differences and similarities of educational and career experiences in athletic training, 2) opportunities provided by changing social structures caused by Title IX in women's sport, 3) social processes and structures of discrimination and oppression in athletic training, 4) women's experiences of empowerment in athletic training, 5) intersections of race/ethnicity, sexuality and gender in the perceptions of women athletic trainers.

Revis-Shingles (2001) used both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve a richer description of these factors as perceived by her subjects. A random sample of 419 diverse women CATs were sent surveys assessing their perceived experiences in athletic training. Five participants from each ethnically diverse group (American Indian/Alaskan Native; Asian/Pacific Island; Black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; White, non-Hispanic) were randomly selected from the survey respondents to participate in an interview.

Revis-Shingles (2001) found that the experiences of women CATs were not universal based on the single fact that all of the subjects were women, and that those experiences were generated by the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other social conditions. Significant differences existed between diverse women CATs

and their perceptions of sexuality and use of the lesbian label in athletic training, interactions with colleagues and general educational experiences, and issues of structural power.

Upon analysis of the qualitative data, Revis-Shingles found that most women CATs formed “tight knit” group relationships with classmates and instructors. The diverse women CATs generally agreed that their classroom experiences were comparable to that of their male and other female classmates. However, qualitative data revealed that two African American/Black women had described perceived experiences of marginalization, alienation and “tokenism” (a disadvantage of their ethnic diversity) in their athletic training education as well as a lack of support by instructors.

Revis-Shingles (2001) also found that women CATs in culturally diverse settings experienced good or professional relationships with coaches except when those coaches disregarded or disrespected the women’s professional decision making. Also, African American/Black and some Hispanic women enjoyed connections with athletes of their same race/ethnic group (an advantage of their ethnic diversity). Women CATs experienced sexual harassment and were affected by issues of sexuality and the lesbian label. Interestingly, some of the women CATs no longer perceived that being a woman CAT was unique, although others did express pride in that accomplishment. An overall conclusion of the Revis-Shingles study was that women CATs were both privileged and oppressed simultaneously by race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality depending on social location. With regard to mentoring and role modeling, Revis-Shingles found that almost all of the women CATs had a desire to be a good role model or mentor regardless of student race/ethnicity.

Among the participants' recommendations to improve the experiences of women CATs, the participants suggested that athletic training educators and clinical instructors interact with students of color, particularly African Americans, in order to determine if those students are experiencing isolation and to create "safe spaces" for them within the campus community. The participants also suggested that athletic training educators and clinical instructors avoid stereotyping ethnically diverse students. Revis-Shingles (2001) indicated that future research should include a more comprehensive examination of the social meaning of race/ethnicity and its impact of diverse women athletic trainers.

Grant-Ford (1997) conducted a study to investigate the perceived ethnic and gender based external barriers experienced by pioneer (the first) ethnic ethnically diverse women CATs during their athletic training educational experience and their first five years as a CAT. The 16 participants provided demographic information prior to participation in a semistructured interview. Six of the participants were African American, four were Asian American, five were Hispanic American and one was Native American. The participants ranged in age from 32 to 46 years of age. Eighty one percent of the participants attended an ethnically diverse college, 37% graduated from a NATA approved curriculum program, while 62% pursued the internship route to BOC certification. The participants had an average of 15 years of experience in athletic training. Sixteen of the participants had achieved a graduate degree, 2 had an earned doctorate, and 5 were dual credentialed as physical therapists. Eleven of the 16 participants were still active in the athletic training profession, ten were still employed in the traditional athletic training setting, and the remaining 6 had left the athletic training profession.

Thirteen of the pioneer ethnic ethnically diverse women CATs in Grant-Ford's study indicated they had experienced the positive influence of a role model or mentor. Most often the role model was a White woman, although two participants acknowledge her role model was of the same ethnicity (one woman, one man). Nine of the participants indicated they had mentors who were most often White by race but equally gendered between women and men. Although the participants described the profound affects of mentors, they also indicated that often the level of involvement of the mentors was not sufficient to prevent some of the negative barriers the subjects faced in their pursuit of the athletic training profession.

An interesting result of Grant-Ford's study revealed that with only ten of 16 of these pioneer ethnically diverse women CATs still engaged in the traditional athletic training setting, there is a significant loss of the most experienced ethnically diverse women to serve in leadership positions and as visible role models and mentors to young ethnically diverse women (and men) pursuing the profession of athletic training.

Chapter 2 presented a review of the challenges experienced by researchers who pursue racialized research, especially when that research methodology is qualitative research. Several standpoint theories were presented: Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, and Critical White Studies. Any of these theories held the potential to provide the theoretical framework through which this research could be viewed for analysis. However, BFT offers the most appropriate lens to serve as the theoretical framework for this study. As the study and verbalization of the lived experiences of Black women who are simultaneously positioned in society at a station based upon their simultaneous race, gender, and class, BFT shares similarities with CRT

(Collins, 1990). As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT stands on the insistence that American society is not as de-raced it would seem and it forces us to critically confront institutional racism and White privilege.

Additionally, Chapter 2 attempted to better inform the researcher and reader about the current status of ethnically diverse student college retention as well as the concept of mentoring in education. Understanding of these concepts informs the reader about how Black women athletic trainers are uniquely positioned in society and the ATEPs they attended and their perceived experiences with mentoring as students.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine mentoring and other factors that lead to college persistence of Black women CATs in order to understand the importance of those factors on the retention of Black women ATs in ATEPs. This chapter will describe the research methods and procedures followed in this study. The chapter will begin with an overview of the qualitative research design selected for data collection to include a detailed discussion of the use of interviews and case studies with justification. The processes for selection of the interview participants will be detailed followed by a description of the design of the interview schedule including a comparison of methods between this dissertation study and the study being replicated. Next, Chapter 3 will describe in detail the procedures that were followed, as per the Duquesne IRB approved methodology, to conduct the interviews. A description of the design of the case study interview schedule will be presented followed by a detailed outline of the steps followed to select the case study participants. Next, a detailed description is provided of the procedures followed to conduct the case study interviews. Finally, the data analysis and theoretical framework are presented before Chapter 3 is concluded with a summary.

### QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is an investigation of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants in order to gain a new and deeper understanding of mentoring and other



factors that lead to college persistence and retention through graduation. Thus, the design of this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is characterized by in-depth study and is focused on understanding the participants' perspective of how they experience the world they live in (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Maykut & Morehouse, 2001; Merriam, 1998). Gay and Airasian (2000) and Merriam (1998) describe five characteristics of qualitative research:

1. It is conducted in a real-world setting utilizing the researcher as the research instrument for data collection and analysis.
2. It pulls out descriptive data instead of numerical data.
3. It brings a holistic approach to the setting and research participants.
4. Data analysis is induced and interpreted by the researcher.
5. It emphasizes the perspective of the research participants.

According to Merriam (1998), there are three basic forms of educational research; Positivist research, Interpretive research, and Critical research. Quantitative methodology is associated with Positivist research. Positivist research investigates education as an object where the knowledge that is gained through quantitative, scientific methods is objective and measurable. With interpretive research, education is a process that is experienced by students. If researchers can gain understanding of the process, and the experiences of students, they will produce knowledge about that educational process. Finally, with critical research, education is a social institution capable of social and cultural transformation. The knowledge produced through critical research reveals how the institution of education and educational practices are structured to promote the dominant culture while supporting the oppression and marginalization of the subordinate

culture. The goal of revealing such knowledge is to create social change and transformation (Merriam, 1998).

## **INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative data was collected through the utilization of a personal interview conducted by telephone. Gay and Airasian (2000) define the interview as a “purposive interaction between two or more persons, one trying to obtain information from the other”. Interviews are active interactions between two or more people resulting in negotiated, contextually based data, which are used for the purpose of understanding the perspectives of those interviewed (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). An excellent definition of interviews is offered by Seidman (1991; p.3) stating,

“The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to “evaluate” as the term is normally used.

At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience”.

Interviews can be especially useful in explaining data that has already been collected from other methods of data gathering or collecting greater depth and detail of data that wasn't realistic to explore in a survey (Morgan, 1997). The personal interview method is an important tool that allows researchers to “hear the voices” of ethnically diverse women who have not historically been able to speak for themselves, in their own words and languages (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe 5 specialized interview methods; ethnographic interviewing, phenomenological interviewing, elite interviewing, focus group interviewing, and interviewing children. Particular to this study, phenomenological

interviewing methodology will be most appropriate to uncovering the information desired. Phenomenological interviewing allows the researcher to study the lived experiences of the participants and derive understanding of how those participants viewed the world they move in as a result of those experiences. This form of interviewing method assumes that there is a socialized structure to shared experiences between participants that can be told or narrated. The goal of revealing these lived experiences is to produce knowledge of a phenomenon that is shared by participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For example, what lived experiences will the participants of this study share based on their unique standpoint as women who are also Black within a PWI and historically White male dominated major?

There are several different types of interviewing methods utilized in qualitative research. Unstructured interviews are used when the researcher wishes to obtain spontaneous information on a chosen topic by facilitating informal conversations with participants. Unstructured interviews allow for open-ended (cannot simply respond with “yes” or “no” responses), in-depth responses from participants. Interviewers are free to probe for deeper understanding of participant responses and explore unscripted topics. Structured interviews involve the use of interview questions that are predetermined and ordered in a logical sequence. This method limits participants to a more limited set of categorical responses but allows researchers to code those responses for more controlled analysis. Qualitative research interviews tend to be unstructured to allow for greater depth of understanding of the topics that arise during an interview (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Merriam, 1998). However, semistructured interviews support the cultural traditions of storytelling among Black women, thus encouraging active engagement of the interviewee

and license to be heard (Vaz, 1997). Semistructured interviews involve questions, which are predetermined and ordered in presentation, however they allow for open-ended responses from participants (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

The purpose of utilizing the interview method in this study was to gather in-depth responses specific to the participants' experiences and perceptions with mentoring and its effects on their education, credentialing, and career patterns. The interview process was also used to gather the participants' perceptions on how the process of mentoring may be used as a tool for the retention and successful educational of young Black women enrolled in ATEPs. The interview questions were posed in an open-ended manner in order to give voice to the participants and allow them to tell their stories to the researcher for documentation. The interview schedule was semi-structured in order to allow the researcher to gather comparable data across subjects based upon the predetermined schedule of questions yet allowing the researcher to probe for greater detail and follow where the participant may lead (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

## **CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY**

In addition to the interview methodology employed in this study, case study methodology was also utilized. The purpose of the case studies was to acquire in-depth descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants in order to answer questions about the effects of mentoring and other factors that contributed to the participants' persistence in athletic training education. The case studies were utilized as a follow-up to delve further into the results revealed from the phone interviews and to validate the knowledge acquired in those phone interviews.

The case study is recognized by Merriam (1998) as one of the five types of qualitative research commonly used in educational research. Case studies are utilized when the researcher wants to identify and explain specific problems and issues and gain greater depth of understanding and meaning of those problems and issues. They are more focused on the research process than the outcome; context than variables; and discovery versus confirmation of a hypotheses. The uniqueness of the results derived and revealed from case study research may hold direct influence on effecting policy, practice and future research in education. Case studies may be conducted with individual participants, programs, events, groups and communities so long as the object being studied is bound to a single unit or entity of investigation (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984).

Merriam (1998, p. 21) defines the case study as "... an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit".

Specific to this research study, I was interested in not only revealing the findings of the phone interviews with greater depth and meaning by employing case study methodology, I also hoped to increase validity of those findings by including multiple cases as part of a collective case study investigation. According to Merriam (1998, p. 40), "The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be".

## **SELECTION OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

Qualitative research is characterized by in-depth inquiry of the participants' perspectives from a particular context or standpoint. The goal of qualitative research is not the generalization of results to other settings and situations. Thus, the sampling procedure most appropriate in this study is purposive. Purposive sampling, also known as

judgment sampling, occurs when the researcher selects a sample of participants based upon his/her experience or knowledge of the group of persons who have the potential to be sampled. A sample is obtained according to the discretion of someone who is familiar with the relevant characteristics of the population. Participants need to have information, perspective and experience about the research topic and be willing to provide that information. Specifically, criterion sampling was used in this study in order to select participants who were most likely to possess, and be willing to provide, pertinent information, perspective and experience with mentoring while matriculating through an ATEP. In utilizing criterion sampling the researcher sets criteria or characteristics and identifies participants who meet those criteria for inclusion in the study. This method of sampling is very strong in quality assurance (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

The participants met the following criteria for inclusion in this study:

1. Self identify as Black or African American.
2. Hold BOC certification as a certified athletic trainer.
3. Are employed or were employed as a certified athletic trainer.

These criterion were established to identify a sample of participants who represent the range of experiences related to mentoring and its perceived effect on influencing the successful matriculation of the participants in an ATEP to the point of BOC credentialing and employment in the field.

To assist the researcher in identifying twelve potential participants for this study, the aforementioned criteria were shared with the current and former chairpersons of the Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council to the NATA. Both chairpersons are Black women and CATs with intimate knowledge and familiarity with other colleagues and peers who

are ethnically diverse. As such, they were able to serve as experienced and knowledgeable experts and identify participants who met the researcher's delineated criteria (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001).

For the purposes of this study, the following key terms further defined the criteria used to select participants:

Black or African American – persons with at least one parent of African origin.

Certified athletic trainer (CAT) – a member of the NATA holding “Regular Certification” through the BOC.

## **DESIGN OF THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The interview schedule (Appendix 1) was modified from one designed and used by Dr. Robertha Abney in her doctoral dissertation entitled, “The effects of role models and mentors on career patterns of Black women coaches and athletic administrators in historically Black and historically White institutions of higher education” and defended in 1988. In addition to other factors, Abney's qualitative study examined the influences of mentors and role models on the professional development of Black women in athletics at institutions of higher education, both PWIs and HBCUs. Subjects were identified from the 1986-1987 National Directory of Intercollegiate Athletics. A survey questionnaire was used to identify Black women coaches and athletic administrators employed at institutions of higher education. One hundred and ninety one Black women were identified as coaches or athletic administrators and were surveyed for quantitative data. Ninety-one (48%) responded to the second survey. Twenty Black women were then selected to participate in an interview with the researcher.

Mentors and role models were not available to the greater percentage of the Black women coaches and athletic administrators in Abney's study. Interviews with the subjects brought out the perception that the mentoring process was more directed than guided for a majority of the Black women and that a bond was not established with the mentor. The 20 women interviewed were asked why they perceived there were so few Black women in coaching and athletic administration as well as what their specific obstacles were in obtaining and maintaining their current positions as coaches and administrators. Of the several responses, the respondents included the lack of role models, mentors and networks. They also believed that an increase in the number of Black women in athletics could be realized by several changes which included more mentors, role models and networks as well as more visible and qualified Black women in the profession to help prepare young Black women for careers in athletics. Forty-five of the respondents indicated that there were no Black women available to them as role models and mentors during their career development years. Several of the respondents who did have a role model or mentor indicated it was a positive relationship. Ninety percent of the subjects perceived it was important for young Black women to have a mentor. Fifty-nine percent thought a Black woman should be the mentor and 40% did not indicate the mentor had to be a specific person by race or gender.

Abney's interview schedule provided a reliable instrument in the replication of her study of Black female coaches and athletic administrators with this study of sister professionals in athletic training. The instrument in this research was slightly modified by directing the questions and terminology to athletic trainers instead of the coaches and athletic administrators in Abney's study. Additionally, this dissertation study did not



formally address the component of family and church as was included in Abney's study in order to narrow the focus of inquiry. Thus, the research instrument was modified to eliminate specific questions addressing family and church. However, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed participants to discuss these components at will. With the aforementioned modifications, Abney's interview schedule was designed to measure the perceived experiences of Black women CATs with mentoring and its influence on career development. Table 3.1 illustrates a comparison of this study with Abney's 1988 study.

Table 3.1

Summary of Abney vs. Siple's Methods

	Abney	Siple
Title	The effects of role models and mentors on career patterns of Black women coaches and athletic administrators in HBCUs and PWIs of higher education.	Mentoring and other factors contributing to the retention of Black women in ATEPs.
Date	1988	2008
Participants	Black women coaches and athletic administrators	Black women certified athletic trainers
Number of Participants	191 survey participants 20 interview participants	10 survey participants 10 interview participants 3 case study participants
Participant Selection	1986-1987 National Directory of Intercollegiate Athletics Random Selection	2004 National Athletic Trainers' Association Membership Purpose Sampling
Methodology	Qualitative	Qualitative
Interviews	20 Personal Interviews	10 Phone Interviews 3 Personal Interviews
Theoretical Framework	Black Feminist Theory	Black Feminist Theory

There were other differences in methodology between this dissertation study and Abney's 1988 study. Abney sent the personal data survey to all 191 Black women listed

in the 1986-1987 National Directory of Intercollegiate Athletics and had a 48% response rate with 91 participants responding with the personal data survey. She then randomly selected twenty women for the interview portion of her study. For this study, the current and former chairpersons of the NATA EDAC were asked to utilize criterion sampling (criteria pre-determined) to identify (purposive sampling) ten women from the NATA membership for participation in the personal data survey and interviews. Abney conducted her interviews in person while this dissertation study utilized phone interviews. Additionally, I conducted case studies with three of the participants from the phone interviews in order to further inform the findings. Abney did not conduct case studies in her 1988 study.

## **PROCEDURES FOR THE INTERVIEW**

Upon approval of the Duquesne University Internal Review Board, I requested and received from the NATA membership director a comprehensive list of all women who self-identified as Black or African American, were certified athletic trainers, and were employed actively as an athletic trainer. Inclusion on this list from the NATA membership director meant that these members had given their consent to be contacted by researchers and included their preferred contact information. Upon securing this membership list from the NATA, I forwarded the list to the current and former chairpersons of the EDAC to review. When I formed my dissertation committee, I invited Dr. Paula Turocy to serve on my committee, which she agreed to. Dr. Turocy is the ATEP Director at Duquesne University. She was also (and remains so at the time of writing) the Chair of the Committee on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). This position exposes Dr. Turocy to many CATs in the field and in athletic

training education. As such, Dr. Turocy recommended early on that I contact and seek the guidance of Dr. René Revis-Shingles, the former Chairperson of the EDAC. At the time I was putting my dissertation proposal together, Dr. Turocy and I were both in attendance at a professional conference where she introduced me to Dr. Revis-Shingles. I shared my dissertation proposal with Dr. Revis-Shingles and asked for her help in identifying potential participants in my study. Dr. Revis-Shingles agreed to my request, offered any assistance I might required, and asked me to contact the current chair of the EDAC, Ms. Veronica Ampey, to seek her participant identification assistance and additional support, which I did. The chairpersons were asked to identify potential participants they felt confident would be most likely to possess, and be willing to provide, pertinent information, perspective and experience of matriculating through an ATEP as a Black woman. The two chairs in collaboration with each other initially identified seventeen women who met those criteria. I narrowed down the list of 17 even further by purposely selecting participants from different geographical regions, dates of graduation, work settings and continuing education. The final ten participants met the aforementioned criteria. The chairs of the EDAC did not identify two of the initial ten participants. I selected one of the participants, whom I knew personally. A professional colleague of mine identified the other. Both potential participants did appear on the NATA membership list given to me by the NATA membership director.

The Personal Data Survey was uploaded onto the web-based program Surveymonkey™ for the convenience of the participants if they chose to take the survey in this delivery format. I contacted the first ten participants in alphabetical order by telephone to invite each woman to participate in my study. Upon initiation of the phone

conversation, I identified myself, my affiliation with Slippery Rock University and Duquesne University, my purpose for calling, and explained how the EDAC chairs had identified her as a potential participant in my study. As each potential participant expressed interest in participating in my study, I indicated that I would immediately e-mail to them attachments of my Cover Letter (Appendix 2), Informed Consent Form (Appendix 3), and Personal Data Survey (Appendix 4), as well as the link to the Personal Data Survey also available at [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). I asked each potential participant to read the Cover Letter, read, sign and return the Informed Consent Form via e-mail attachment and follow the Surveymonkey™ link in order to complete the Personal Data Survey. If the participant preferred to receive the aforementioned materials via U.S. Mail and return it to me the same way, I offered to mail the materials including a self-addressed stamped envelope. All of the participants preferred to correspond via e-mail. It was not necessary to send participation reminders. I chose to make the Personal Data Survey available to the participants as an alternative to the paper format after having completed several surveys myself over the previous year on Surveymonkey™. I found it to be very easy to complete surveys using this mechanism and considerably more convenient, which I thought would be appealing to the participants. The results garnered by Surveymonkey™ were much easier for me to save electronically and to assess.

As I was calling each potential participant, at the end of my initial conversation with a woman identified by the pseudonym Deborah, she recommended that I contact one of her classmates from graduate school for participation in my study. She gave me her classmate's name and contact information. I cross-referenced her classmate's name against the NATA membership list and found her and her contact information included

there. I did need another participant in the same age range as Deborah so I contacted her classmate, identified as Elisha, and followed the aforementioned procedures in securing Elisha's participation in my study.

I received consent to participate from nine of the ten potential participants initially identified. After several attempts to contact the tenth potential participant with no success, I referred to the list of 17 women identified by the EDAC chairs to select another potential participant. As I reviewed the list of names, one woman appearing on the list had been identified by one of the other consenting participants, identified as Hanna, during our initial phone conversation. As I shared the participation criteria with Hanna, she gave me the name of a woman, identified as Moriah, and recommended that I invite her to participate in the study as she felt she had experiences that would be critical to my study. Moriah met the participation criteria and was also selected by the EDAC chairs, thus, I called her and followed the same procedures used in contacting the first nine participants. Moriah consented to participating in my study and also selected to correspond via e-mail and SurveyMonkey™.

Upon receipt of the Informed Consent Form, I called each of the participants to establish a date and time for the phone interview. I reminded each participant that her responses would remain confidential and offered to answer any questions she may have had at that time. I indicated that the individual interviews would take place with each participant by telephone at a date and time designated by the participant. I requested that the location allow for private conversation and be conducive to an audio recording of the interview. I also asked the participants to take the Personal Data Survey on

SurveyMonkey™ at their earliest convenience. At this time, I also assigned a pseudonym to each participant for future identification in the study.

At the designated date and time agreed upon with each participant, I called each woman using the phone number preferred by that participant. I conducted all phone interviews from my private office at Slippery Rock University of PA with the permission of my department chairperson. This was especially helpful in recording the telephone interviews with a RadioShack™ Telephone Microcassette Recorder since a traditional earpiece-to-base cord was required to be hooked up to the recording device. My cellular phone and home phone were wireless and could not be used with the recorder. Sixty minute Maxell™ UR Microcassettes were used for recording the interviews. A Realistic™ Minisette-15 Compact Cassette Tape Recorder and 60 minutes cassettes were present during all interviews as a backup in the event that the RadioShack™ recorder would malfunction during the interview.

Prior to the start of the interview, each participant was reminded that the session was being audio recorded and that her responses would remain confidential. Each session was audio taped in its entirety and I took notes throughout the interview on a form that I developed listing each question with ample space for note-taking between questions. At the conclusion of each interview I answered the participants' questions and expressed gratitude for the subjects' participation. I also asked each participant if she would be attending the NATA national convention in Atlanta, GA, in June, 2006. As each participant indicated her intent to attend the NATA convention I asked those who would be attending if they would consent to participating in a follow-up personal

interview. All contact, both written and verbal, was tracked on the Correspondence Check-Off List (Appendix 5).

Throughout the process of conducting the phone interviews with each of the ten participants and following each interview, I reflected on the responses of the participants. I reviewed the notes I had written during the interviews, making additional notes about each participant's voice, perceived attitude and emotion, and highlighted the points I thought were of particular interest or that I was unclear about. I added further thoughts, ideas and reflections and ensured the accuracy and clarity of the notes I had written while it was fresh. This process further allowed me to maintain organized notes specific to each of the questions posed to the participants. While reviewing my notes I also looked for commonly appearing follow-up questions or cues that I was asking the participants in order to remember to pose the same questions or cues to the remaining participants. Additionally, I looked for common themes and unexpected issues that began to emerge from the data in these initial interviews. These first emergent themes were utilized to further prepare the interview schedule to be used during the case study portion of the study. Questions were revised or added in order to gather additional information or seek participant experiences specific to the common themes and unexpected issues that emerged from the interviews.

The audio recordings of each participant's interview were delivered by me to a paid transcriptionist to be transcribed into text using Microsoft Word. The Word files were attached to an e-mail and sent directly back to me upon completion of transcription. All of the transcript files for each participant were also saved to a compact disk and given to the researcher when the transcriptionist completed all transcripts. The transcriptionist

then deleted all transcript files from her personal computer and returned all microcassette tapes to me. I read the transcripts of the interviews while simultaneously listening to the recordings in order to check for accuracy of the transcripts against the participant interviews. All necessary corrections to the transcripts were made at that time. As each transcript review was completed, I sent the transcripts via e-mail attachment to the corresponding participant to review for accuracy (member check). All participants reviewed their own transcripts and affirmed accuracy of the content in writing via e-mail with very few corrections.

### **DESIGN OF THE CASE STUDY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Following analysis of the data revealed in the phone interviews, topics for further discussion were identified to serve as guides for open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the participants selected for case study (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). The three case studies were conducted in order to explore more deeply the unique experiences of the participants who dealt with more excessive occurrences of racism and sexism as athletic training students. Appendix 6 delineates the topics that served as guides for the case study interviews. Questions were developed with the objective to seek richer, more in-depth descriptions specific to the data revealed by the phone interviews in an attempt to better understand and gain greater comprehension of the perspectives detailed by the participants. Additionally, the questions posed to the case study participants sought to validate the information revealed through the phone interview process (Merriam, 1998).

### **SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS**



The purpose of the case studies was to acquire more in-depth descriptions of how the participants confronted the specific problems experienced in their matriculation through an ATEP and further inform and validate the findings revealed in the phone interviews. The case studies also afforded me the opportunity to present my initial outcomes from the previous interviews and get reaction and feedback from the three case study participants. In this qualitative study, the participants have unique experiences that can add unique knowledge to athletic training education, which is the desired outcome. As such, the participants are themselves unique and were selectively chosen. Thus, nonprobabilistic sampling was most appropriate in selecting the case study participants for this investigation. The most common method of nonprobabilistic sampling is purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). The participants in this study were purposely chosen because of their unique experiences as Black women in athletic training who alone can offer their expert opinions specific to the questions being studied. Only Black women athletic trainers can offer the unique richness and depth of knowledge specific to their lived experiences, which are the central focus of this research study.

Upon conclusion of the interview process and while the interview transcripts were being finished, I began the case study portion of the study. Three participants were purposely selected from the ten original interview participants to take part in further case study interviews. The initial criteria for selection included:

1. The participant is currently employed within the dominant/traditional employment settings in the profession of athletic training.
2. The participant identified a mentor who positively influenced her successful matriculation through an ATEP and professional credentialing.

3. The participant indicated willingness to participate in a case study following the phone interview process.

Additionally, each of the three selected participants shared other common criteria leading to their selection as a case study. The three case study participants had shared the most significant quantity and quality of experiences from their undergraduate athletic training experiences. The three case study participants represented graduates of the 1980's, 1990's and 2000's. I also felt that I had developed the strongest rapport with the three women selected for case study, had earned their trust and confidence, and would be able to draw even greater detail from their stories and experiences to enrich the content of my study. Perhaps most important in the selection of two of the women in particular for participation in the case studies were their more extreme experiences with racism and sexism.

### **PROCEDURES FOR THE CASE STUDY**

I was able to conduct face-to-face interviews with two of the three case study participants at the NATA national convention in Atlanta, GA, in June of 2006 as originally planned. I followed the same procedures with the case study interviews as I did with the phone interviews, reminding the participants of the principles of informed consent previously provided to them, signed and returned to the researcher for the phone interviews as well as their assured confidentiality in the study. I also indicated that the interviews were being audio recorded. I carried my back-up recorder in case the first one malfunctioned. I posed semi-structured, open-ended questions to all three of the case study participants based upon the interview schedule created from the initial data in the first ten phone interviews (Appendix 6).

The first participant selected for the case study process was Deborah. In addition to the aforementioned criteria outlined for case study selection, Deborah shared stories and experiences with me of the most extreme situations specific to sexism and sexual harassment. I met with Deborah on the first day of the convention in the convention center. We had previously shared our cell phone numbers with each other knowing that we would have to use them to find each other and a convenient place to meet since neither of us was familiar with the convention center in Atlanta. I offered to make myself available at her convenience. After staking out the convention center I found an excellent, private meeting room conveniently located next to a Starbucks™. Upon hearing from Deborah, I suggested that we meet at the Starbucks™, which she agreed to and offered a time. We met at the designated time and location and settled into the private meeting room next door with two iced lattes. The room was private and offered us the opportunity to speak openly with each other and for me to properly record the interview.

Deborah and I knew each other right way and she immediately offered her hand in introduction. The perception Deborah had given me over the phone during the initial phone interview with her was very accurate. As the second to youngest of the participants in my study, she gave off a very youthful exuberance. She was indeed very animated when she spoke, and was very passionate about telling me the stories of her athletic training education experiences. Deborah was especially intent on sharing with me the concerns she had for upcoming Black women students who had to deal with significant sexual harassment, based on her own experiences with it. Deborah felt that her mentor in undergrad had protected her from being subjected to the sexual harassment

she saw other Black women coping with as athletic training students, which ultimately drove them away from the profession or got them into trouble. We spent approximately two hours conducting the interview. At the conclusion of our interview we spoke about unrelated topics like my pursuit of my doctorate and her future employment search. I felt that in our few conversations I established an excellent rapport with Deborah, even becoming something of a mentor to her as well. I thanked her for her contributions to my dissertation study and we hugged each other as we parted company.

The next woman selected for participation in a case study was Gabriella. In addition to the aforementioned criteria for case study selection, I felt that I had established an excellent rapport with Gabriella and her phone interview left me feeling she had more she would like to have shared with me. Her phone interview did not reveal any extreme examples of sexism or racism, but her challenges were unique from a classism perspective in that she had to overcome the challenges of being a dual major in two professions that are not very cohesive; athletic training and physical therapy. During her time as an athletic training student, she was discriminated against by the athletic trainers, especially the head athletic trainer, because she was also pursuing physical therapy. This was a particularly difficult challenge for Gabriella to overcome and could very easily have lead to her withdrawal from the athletic training program to pursue physical therapy alone.

I met with Gabriella at the convention. Gabriella and I had also exchanged cell phone numbers in order to set a time and location for her case study interview. She called me the morning of the second day of the convention upon her arrival. Oddly enough, as we were talking to each other on our cell phones we were both walking

through the convention center. As I was describing to her the directions to the meeting room I had used with Deborah, I discovered I was at the same landmark Gabriella was and we were talking to each other from 20 feet away. We hung up and laughed as we hugged like old acquaintances. Such a display of familiarity is common for me, but I thought it amusing that Gabriella felt compelled to share with me that it was “custom for Black people to hug, so expect it from me”. We chatted briefly and set a time for our interview the next day, meeting at the Starbucks™ again. The next day at the designated time and location we, too, settled into the same private meeting room with our preferred caffeinated beverages to do her case study interview. Gabriella is just a few years older than me and one of only two of the ten participants who have children. She was very warm, cheerful and maternal in the way she spoke and in her mannerism. Gabriella was very thoughtful in her responses, often pausing and pondering the question before answering. Quite a few times the topic would take us down a different but related path and I had to pay close attention to what brought us to that tangent in order to return to task. I appreciated her perspective very much. When I had asked all of my questions, we spent some time at the end talking about my dissertation and how I came to pursue this topic. Gabriella was very encouraging and offered me many good wishes toward completing my project and how she felt it was a very worthwhile topic, which I certainly appreciated. After approximately two hours, I thanked Gabriella for her participation and support and we hugged each other good-bye.

I could have interviewed several of the other phone interview participants in person who were in attendance of the convention; however, I felt that the third participant selected for case study was the best individual to speak further with in the case study

phase of the study. The third selected participant, Moriah, met the criteria I had established for selection to the case study. Unfortunately, she was not able to attend the NATA national convention. In order to conduct the case study with Moriah I decided it was better to interview her again via telephone than to not include her in the case study at all. She consented to another longer phone interview, which we conducted after I returned from the NATA convention. I followed the same procedures recording her phone interview as I did the previous ten phone interviews.

Based upon my review of the initial phone interviews, Moriah seemed to have experienced the most difficulties in pursuing athletic training as an undergraduate major in college. Those difficulties presented themselves in several forms, including racism, sexism and classism. However, the most prominent of those difficulties was racism. Because of the varied experiences and stories she had shared with me in her initial phone interview, including her transferring from her first college, I had a lot of questions to ask and points to clarify with Moriah. Before beginning to ask the questions from my interview schedule, I retraced the timeline of Moriah's matriculation through college, reviewing her experiences and answering my questions about why she chose to transfer from her first college, as well as how she chose the colleges she attended. Even though I could not see Moriah, I could hear the pain and frustration in her voice as she shared her experiences with me. She was very forward with me in sharing that she is very jealous of the young Black women who are recent graduates and current students of her alma maters and who now enjoy the benefits of a program, faculty and campus climate that are far more supportive of ethnically diverse students than what she experiences. At the end of our interview, Moriah had several questions for me about my dissertation topic and what

I was discovering. We spoke for approximately two hours. At the end I was very glad that I had the opportunity to include Moriah in the case study portion of my study and that her story was included in my dissertation.

Throughout the process of conducting the case study interviews with Deborah, Gabriella and Moriah, and following each interview, I reflected on the responses of the participants. I reviewed the notes I had written during the case study interviews, making additional memos about each participant's voice, perceived attitude and emotion, and highlighted the points I thought were of particular interest. I added further thoughts and reflections and ensured the accuracy and clarity of the notes I had written while it was fresh. While reviewing my notes I also looked for commonly appearing follow-up questions or cues that I was asking the participants in order to remember to pose the same questions or cues to the other participants. Additionally, I looked for common themes and unexpected issues that began to emerge from the data during the case study interviews.

The audio recordings of each case study participant's interview were delivered to the same transcriptionist to be transcribed into text using Microsoft Word. The Word files were attached to an e-mail and sent directly to the researcher upon completion of transcription. All of the transcript files for each case study participant were also saved to a compact disk and given to the researcher when all transcripts were completed by the transcriptionist. The transcriptionist then deleted all transcript files from her personal computer and returned all microcassette tapes to me. I read all the transcripts of the case study interviews and simultaneously listened to the recordings in order to check for accuracy of the transcripts against the case study participant interviews. All necessary

corrections to the transcripts were made at that time. As I completed the review of each transcript, I sent the transcripts via e-mail attachment to the corresponding participant to review for accuracy (member check). All case study participants reviewed their own transcripts and affirmed accuracy of the content in writing via e-mail with no need for additional corrections.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

In order to identify similar or consistent themes within the responses to the questions, I reviewed each of the transcripts. Analysis of these themes was accomplished by following the four steps in classifying data described by Gay and Airasian (2000): reading/memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting. Gay and Airasian describe this as a “cyclical process” that revolves around (1) becoming familiar with the data and identifying the main themes (reading/memoing); (2) examining the data in depth to provide detailed descriptions of the setting, participants and activities (describing); (3) categorizing and coding pieces of data and physically grouping them into themes (classifying); and (4) interpreting and synthesizing the organized data into general conclusions or understandings (interpreting) (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.239).

In a qualitative study such as this, the researcher serves as the research instrument. Thus, the data analysis and resultant conclusions are based upon the researcher’s understanding of the data through induction and interpretation (Gay & Airasian, 2000). As the research instrument I needed to avoid objectifying the participants, their experiences and their individual and collective voices. In order to accomplish this goal, I adhered to a Black Feminist theoretical framework throughout the data collection and its analysis. By utilizing a Black Feminist theory to guide the



research, the Black woman was placed at the center of the analysis, the intersection of race, class and gender was considered, and the voice of the participants were heard and honored, bringing validation to the conclusions interpreted from the themes (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989). Additionally, the transcripts of the interviews were sent to each participant for review to ensure accuracy of the information shared by the participant with the researcher. While following the cyclical process of data analysis, the data was classified into categories consistent with the three intersecting themes of BFT; race, gender and class.

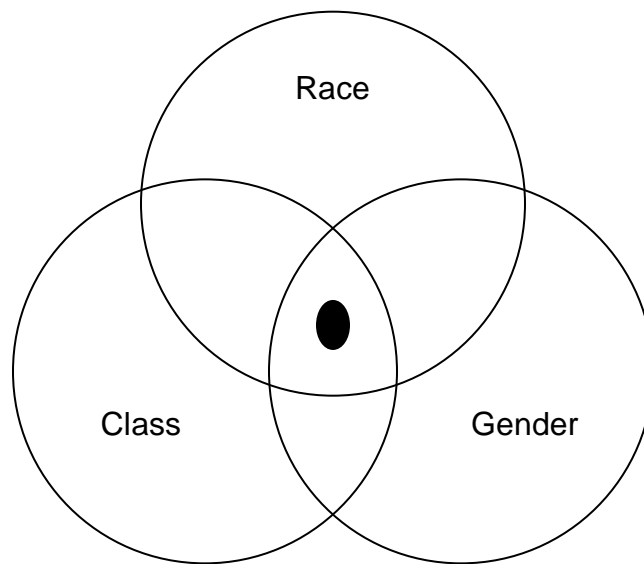
## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The methodology utilized in this research project required an approach that would not objectify the experiences of the subjects, but bring voice to a traditionally silenced population of women. Thus, a Black feminist theoretical framework guided this study through data collection and analysis. Black feminist theory as a standpoint epistemology has been extensively written upon by a great number of Black feminists and is included in the literature review of this research. Black feminist theory (BFT) is a standpoint epistemology, which is the study of the world of experiences from the point of view of the historically and culturally situated individual (Denzin, 1997). In the case of BFT, it is the study and articulation of the experiences of Black women who are simultaneously situated politically and historically in society at a position based upon their race (Black), their gender (female), and their class (disadvantaged) (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986). Black feminist theory brings attention to the unique lived experiences of Black women who participate as “outsiders within” a society at the center where race, class, and gender intersect (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986). The simultaneous tri-point of convergence of

these three standpoints creates the unique place from which only Black women can experience the world. Figure 3.1 conceptually represents the convergence of race, class and gender with the Black woman centered in the midst.

Figure 3.1

#### Black Feminist Theory Framework



This dissertation study incorporated a second theoretical framework to guide the analysis of data. CRT served as that secondary lens. It is also a standpoint epistemology. CRT was developed by persons of color who wished to expose the flaws of racial neutrality and color-blindness in predominantly White U.S. institutions such as administration, economics, politics, sociology and education (Parker, Deyhle & Villenas, 1999 and Taylor, 1998). CRT is a form of oppositional scholarship that wishes to transform systems that oppress the ethnically diverse while continuing to advantage White, dominant society. The primary tenets of CRT drive the research (Bergerson,

2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000):

1. Racism is permanent and embedded in all aspects of U.S. society. The dominant society (White) does not recognize or acknowledge the persistent presence of racism in the greater society. Individuals in the non-dominant society experience the world affected by racism.
2. Experiential knowledge of ethnically diverse persons is collected through the qualitative method of storytelling. These stories serve as evidence in opposition of the dominant perception of the world.
3. Traditional liberal practices such as objectivity, neutrality, color blindness and meritocracy are ineffective in challenging institutionalized racism.

By embracing BFT as the guiding framework of this study and also pulling in the tenets of CRT, the researcher intends give voice to the Black women who shared their unique experiences as ethnically diverse female athletic trainers in a predominantly White profession with a predominantly White educational system. By placing Black women at the center of analysis and recognizing the intersection of race, gender and class in their experiences, Black women are brought from the margins to the center and their voices can be heard. Bringing voice to the marginalized cultivates resistance and brings power to the silenced (Forman, 1994, p. 39):

Coming to voice as a preliminary objective of political struggle can, in a Foucauldian sense, contribute to the acquisition of power at the margins.

Feminist standpoint theory offers a further theoretical means to generate a radical

project of empowerment from a position of marginality. In light of this, coming to voice is regarded as a key element of Black feminist thought.

By breaking the silence of the historically marginalized and allowing them to tell their own stories in their own words, Black women locate their voice, validate their experiences, and construct knowledge about what it means to be a woman and a person of color in a White male dominated society (Forman, 1994; Smith, 1992).

Specific to this study, bringing voice to the Black women athletic trainers who struggled through the historically White male dominated athletic training educational institution and who work in the historically White dominated athletic training profession will hopefully result in the successful alteration of the existing social structure and generate momentum toward educational transformation that values the Black woman as an equally proficient and valued student and colleague. The Black women who matriculated through ATEPs will be given the opportunity to voice their experiences in the traditionally White male dominated educational system and inform the reader, and potentially the membership, about how mentoring influenced those experiences.

## **SUMMARY**

I believe that the methods I followed in conducting this dissertation study complied with the methods approved by the Duquesne University IRB. With the assistance of the EDAC chairs I selected seventeen participants from the NATA Membership Directory who met the necessary criteria for inclusion in this dissertation study. From that initial list of seventeen potential participants, I selected eight women. The ninth participant I selected was a Black women CAT whom I knew personally and the tenth participant I selected was referred to me by a professional colleague. Both of the

women were also in the NATA Membership Directory and met the necessary criteria. The ten participants attended college in various locations across the country, graduated at various times over the last thirty years, and worked in a variety of traditional and non-traditional athletic training settings.

Upon initial contact with the participants, they were all very happy to accept my invitation to participate in my dissertation study and offered support and words of encouragement. They quickly returned the Informed Consent forms to me and completed the Personal Data Surveys via SurveyMonkey™.

As I conducted the phone interviews, I quickly became more comfortable, confident and efficient at conducting the procedures, facilitating the interviews, offering prompts or cues and gathering data and notes. The participants were able to recall stories and experiences from their time as athletic training students, which lead to a collection of rich and salient data. Through the analytical processes of reading and memoing, describing, classifying, and interpreting I was able to begin to see common themes and codes and create new questions about the data.

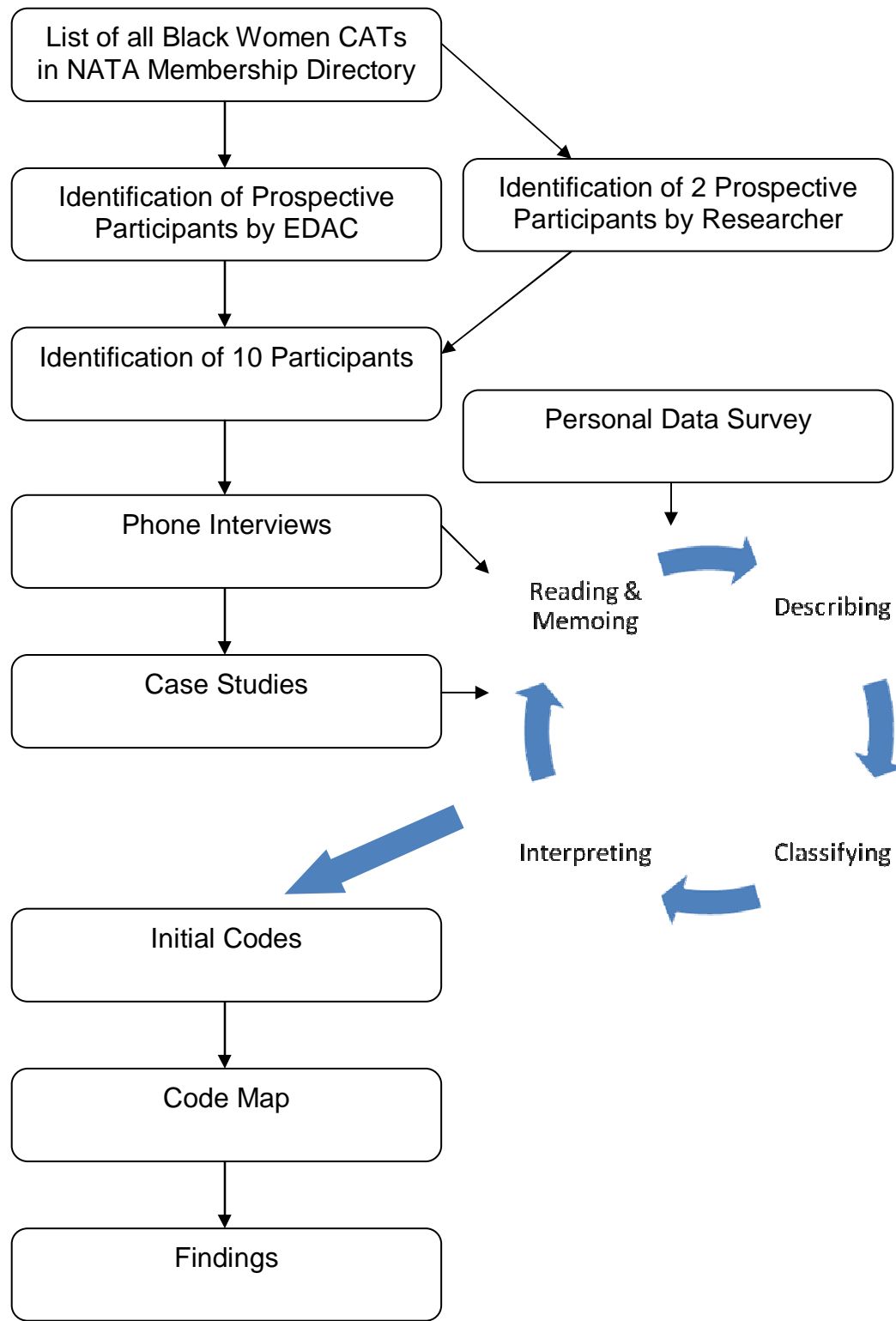
The process of conducting the initial ten phone interviews enabled me to identify three participants who met the necessary criteria for participation in the case study portion of this dissertation study. I had the opportunity to conduct two of the case study interviews in person and the third case study via telephone. The case studies afforded me the opportunity to pose new questions, follow up on the initial codes and themes revealed in the phone interview process, pursue deeper discussions about racism, sexism and classism, and validate the initial findings.

I utilized ATLAS.ti to analyze the large volume of data that I have collected from the phone and case study interviews. This was particularly helpful in organizing the data and identifying themes. I then organized these initial themes into findings by creating a Code Map, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. Figure 3.2 summarizes the steps that were followed to collect and analyze the data in this dissertation study.

I thoroughly enjoyed my phone conversations and personal interactions with all the participants and feel that I learned so much from each of them that not only contributed to my dissertation, but also increased my own personal knowledge and understanding about this topic. I have added new colleagues to my own professional network, re-connected with lost acquaintances, found a new dissertation support system, and even established a mentoring relationship with one of the participants.

Figure 3.2

Summary of Methods



# Chapter 4

## Results

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce each participant in the order her interview took place. The introduction of each participant documents how each woman discovered the profession of athletic training and decided to pursue it in college, a brief description of her experiences as an athletic training student, the process of credentialing, and where her career has taken her since passing the BOC examination to the present. Also documented are thoughts about what each participant finds most satisfying about being an athletic trainer. Throughout the process I discovered shared connections with some of the participants, which I described in their introductions. Each participant's introduction is concluded with a description of the details of each woman's individual interview process.

Next, a summary of the participants follows, presenting details regarding the participants' degrees and credentials held, current employment settings, years of college matriculation and BOC certification, accreditation status of their ATEPs, the states they attended college in, the states they are employed in, and the NATA districts they represent.



The data analysis is then presented in detail followed by a presentation of the results of the Personal Data Survey. Finally, the results of the data analysis are detailed, organized against the four research questions posed in this study. A brief chapter summary concludes chapter 4.

## **THE INTERVIEWS**

### **INTRODUCING GRACE**

Grace was a “military brat”, growing up on several different military bases and attending military sponsored schools that were predominantly White. She felt those experiences equipped her to successfully maneuver through White society. Grace knew in high school that wanted to go to college to become a physical therapist. She was in the sciences program at her high school and was preparing to pursue physical therapy school with the long-term goal of applying her physical therapy knowledge and skills with an athletics population. Although she was an athlete in high school, she never had access to an athletic trainer and was unaware that such a profession existed. As a senior, Grace visited several colleges as she was deciding where to go. During one of her college visits, she met the head athletic trainer at the college, who happened to be a White woman. Grace ultimately wanted to work with an athletic population and as she learned more about athletic training, she realized it was a more appealing route to achieve that goal. She also professed to be a quiet, reserved individual, and she felt that she could be successful in an athletic training program at a smaller college and wouldn’t get “lost” in the process. Grace found the head athletic trainer to be a strong mentor for her and enjoyed working with her.

The college Grace attended, a small (800 total students), diverse, Division II, Christian college in North Carolina, sponsored an internship route program. She described the motivation behind her academic success as very self-driven. She felt that her previous high school experiences at different military schools helped prepare her to cope with the challenges she faced in college, such as feeling disadvantaged as a Black woman, and stereotyped and unwelcome by her peers. She had great support from her family, especially her mother, but on campus Grace did not experience great social support from Black student organizations (most organizations were geared toward Native American students), academic support systems or an advisor. There was significant turnover among the two athletic trainers on campus who taught all of the athletic training courses and covered all the athletic teams. Just as Grace established a positive mentoring relationship with the female athletic trainer, she left for another position. During her last year, a White male athletic trainer was hired who did offer her guidance and support as she completed her senior year and began planning her professional future. Grace never had the opportunity for interaction with other Black women in athletic training or in her classes and she identified her Mother as her greatest role model and influence.

Grace graduated from college in the early 2000's and became a certified athletic trainer the following year while enrolled in graduate school to pursue her master's degree. She completed her graduate degree in one year and has since initiated her doctoral degree in health education. Since completing her master's degree she has been working as a faculty member at a Division I university that sponsors an accredited athletic training education program. In addition to teaching, Grace also serves as the clinical coordinator of student clinical education. She does not practice clinically as an

athletic trainer. When she did practice clinically, she found it very rewarding to return her athletes to play and facilitate the rehabilitation process. As an educator, Grace finds satisfaction in facilitating the learning process with her students and helping them realize the “Ah, ha” moment.

### **The Interview**

My phone interview with Grace was my very first one. Grace was one of three participants not identified by the chairs of the EDAC for participation in my study. Grace was a co-worker of a colleague of mine when they both worked together previously at a national organization for women in sports. My colleague recommended that I contact Grace to participate in my study. I cross-referenced Grace’s name against the NATA membership listing and found her contact information available. I invited her to participate in my study, which she agreed to do.

I was very excited and nervous about doing my first interview and initiating this phase of my study when I called Grace in her office the morning we scheduled her phone interview. She had just finished her semester and was available to speak with me from her office that morning. Grace was very soft-spoken and offered very brief, direct responses to my questions, which prompted me to frequently cue her throughout the interview to expand or elaborate on her answers. We concluded at one hour with my asking her about her willingness to participate in a personal interview at the NATA convention. She indicated she would be at the convention and willing to meet with me in person if selected to do an additional interview for my study.

## **INTRODUCING HANNA**

Hanna was a physical education major and collegiate athlete who was injured and spending time in the athletic training room receiving treatments when she learned about the profession of athletic training. Hanna had been preparing to graduate from her undergraduate college on the East Coast and pursue a position teaching health and physical education, but she also thought about pursuing a graduate degree. She was previously unaware of athletic training as she felt it was not well promoted as a profession in the 1970's and certainly not to women. She took a job teaching physical education and health to grades K through 8 before deciding to go ahead and pursue her master's degree. A friend from undergrad, who was going to graduate school for physical therapy, had suggested that Hanna pursue her graduate degree in athletic training. Hanna enrolled at a large, Division I, "Big Ten" university in the Midwest that sponsored a NATA approved graduate program in physical education with an emphasis in athletic training. Hanna remembers her experience as great fun, working closely with the athletes and the other graduate students in athletic training. She recalls that many of her classmates at the time were also from the East coast, so they became very close and supportive of each other. Hanna felt that she never experienced racial discrimination during her time in the athletic training program. Her greatest challenges were financial. Hanna worked two jobs to support herself and paid cash for her out-of-state tuition. She remembers working harder outside of school than in, in order to support herself financially. Although she had access to Black student organizations, she did not seek out participation in, or support from, those organizations as she did not feel she needed to. Hanna remembers feeling great support from her classmates, family, faculty, staff and

especially her advisor, who was a White male. Without his support and guidance, Hanna stated that she likely would not have taken the BOC exam and become an athletic trainer.

Hanna became a certified athletic trainer in the mid-1980s. She worked at the collegiate level as an athletic trainer at several colleges and universities and also served as the program director at three different universities. Additionally, Hanna earned her doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration.

Currently, Hanna teaches health related courses at the university level and is not actively practicing as an athletic trainer. Although she misses working as an athletic trainer, she stated that she doesn't miss the long hours common in athletic training.

During her time as a practicing athletic trainer, Hanna enjoyed working in an athletics setting and rehabilitating her athletes to return to play. She found it very satisfying to work with athletes and received very positive and altruistic feedback from them. Hanna also enjoyed the opportunity to study anatomy and biomechanics through her professional pursuits.

### **The Interview**

Hanna's interview was my second phone interview. Although I had never previously met Hanna, I was familiar with her through her reputation in the field and we also shared several connections. I was very honored that this well respected colleague had agreed so readily to participate in my study. I had to prepare more quickly for her interview than anticipated as she was promptly leaving town for vacation for several weeks. I took advantage of the brief window of opportunity she afforded me to do her interview one afternoon.

I initiated the interview according to the procedures outlined in chapter 3. Hanna had completed the online survey and forewarned me at the onset of our interview that she wasn't sure she had much to offer my study as her college experience was "pretty uneventful". I reassured her that anything she was willing to share with me about her experiences as an undergraduate athletic training student were valuable to me and the purposes of my study.

Hanna spoke in an assertive and confident manner. She was very direct with her responses and needed very little prompting to encourage her responses or keep her on task. She seemed to have very specific experiences that she wanted to be sure to share with me about her time as an athletic training student. Hanna's experiences as an athletic training student were at the graduate level. One of the reasons for my familiarity with Hanna was that we were alumna of the same graduate program. As she spoke of her mentor in graduate school, a White male, she described the same qualities in him that I so appreciated since he was my mentor as well. At the end of our interview I invited her to participate in a personal interview if selected. She consented to further participation and indicated that whether or not she was selected for the personal interview she would like to meet me in person, which I agreed to. Additionally, Hanna invited me to participate in an electronic list-serve that she had started to support athletic trainers working on their doctoral degrees.

## **INTRODUCING BERNICE**

Bernice first decided to pursue athletic training as a career when she was a junior in high school. She discovered the profession of athletic training from the certified athletic trainer who covered the sports at the high school she attended. As an athlete

herself who wanted to stay involved in athletics, her guidance counselor in high school also recommended that she pursue athletic training as a career. Bernice earned a scholarship to attend college at her chosen university, a rural PWI, which offered an accredited program in athletic training. This further assisted her in deciding to pursue athletic training. Bernice felt that her high school experience at a predominantly White high school in the suburbs prepared her well for majoring in athletic training and navigating through a PWI of higher education.

On her first day of class as a freshman, the professor in her Introduction to Athletic Training class made a lasting, positive impression on Bernice. That professor, a White woman, also became one of Bernice's key mentors in college. She also considered two professors in the physical education department, both Black women with their doctorates, to be strong mentors and role models for her during her time in the ATEP. However, she felt that the athletic training professor, who also served as her academic advisor, was her strongest mentor. Bernice recalls that she experienced a strong bond with her classmates and that they were a tight-knit group who were well supervised and mentored by the other certified athletic trainers. Bernice felt that she never experienced racial discrimination and was very well supported by the university, classmates, professors, her advisor and her family. She also enjoyed participation in Black student organizations and was a member of the gospel choir.

Bernice graduated from college in the early 1990's within four years to become the first Black woman to successfully complete the athletic training program at her alma mater and pass the certification examination. She eventually enrolled in graduate school

to pursue her Master's degree, which she completed six years after completing her undergraduate program.

Bernice has been certified since 1994 and is the certified athletic trainer employed full time at a private high school outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bernice is responsible for providing athletic training care for athletes participating in a plethora of various sports with the exception of ice hockey. Although she enjoys her current job as an athletic trainer, she professes that she does not feel challenged and is frustrated that after twelve years in the profession, she still has to educate the public about who athletic trainers are and what athletic trainers do. When she first passed her certification examination she was very excited and proud to be the first Black woman from her institution to graduate from the ATEP and become certified.

Bernice finds it very satisfying as an athletic trainer to return her athletes to full athletic participation, especially in the wake of a severe injury. She enjoys the challenge of rehabilitating an athlete to the point of returning him or her to play.

### **The Interview**

Bernice was one of three participants not identified by the chairs of the EDAC from the list provided to me by the NATA membership data. I selected Bernice from the list myself. Bernice was a former classmate and student of mine. She was a sophomore in the same undergraduate ATEP I graduated from as a senior. When I returned to my alma mater as an assistant athletic trainer, Bernice was a fifth year senior on target to graduate in December of that academic year. I hadn't known Bernice well in undergrad since the freshmen and sophomores didn't interact with the seniors very much and I had spent a semester overseas as a foreign exchange student. When I returned to my alma



mater to work, I remembered Bernice and had the opportunity to briefly interact with her during that one semester before she graduated. We fell out of touch for many years until I was sitting at an EDAC town hall meeting at the NATA convention in 2004 and Bernice sat right next to me. I leaned over, touched her on the arm and asked, “How are you?” Bernice almost fell off her chair when she recognized me. After the meeting we sat and talked for almost an hour about each other’s careers and aspirations. I shared with her that I was working on my doctoral degree and preparing to initiate my dissertation. When I told her the area of research I was pursuing she was excited about the topic, encouraged me to follow it through and adamantly offered her help and support in any way. Over the years after that meeting we remained in contact and I kept her informed of my dissertation progress. When I began working with Dr. Revis-Shingles and Ms. Ampey to identify my participants I decided to include Bernice and asked to take her up on her offer of help by serving as a participant, which she was happy to do.

Bernice was the third participant that I interviewed and the third of four interviews that I did on the same day. We started her interview at 2:00 in the afternoon on a Wednesday afternoon. I called Bernice at the school where she is currently employed and we did her interview during her downtime before the athletes reported to the athletic training room for treatments. Bernice is employed full-time as the head athletic trainer at a private high just outside of the city of Philadelphia. The school is a coeducational boarding and day school with an enrollment of approximately 540 students in grades nine through twelve. As the head athletic trainer she is responsible for the health care of the athletes who participate in 18 different sports that include almost every high school level sport except ice hockey.

After completing the introductory procedures for the phone interviews I began asking my outline of questions, recording Bernice's responses and writing notes throughout. Quickly I recognized the steady inflection of Bernice's voice that has remained unchanged from when I knew her as a student. The direct, even sound of her voice as she spoke reinforced the perception that I had previously formed of Bernice. She had always struck me as being very straight forward, focused and serious. Bernice was very open and forthcoming as she shared her experiences as an athletic training student with me. We both shared laughs when I posed questions to her that we both knew I already knew the answers to, having gone to the same alma mater and having been mentored by the same woman. It was interesting for me personally to hear her perspective of such a familiar environment.

I was especially intrigued by the story she shared with me of her first day in the Introduction to Athletic Training course, an introductory level athletic training major course for freshmen. She sat in that class of over 100 freshmen, all hoping to win one of 15 seats in the program a year from then. As Bernice looked around the classroom where she only saw White faces, she raised her hand to ask a question of the professor, the same woman who mentored me through undergrad and beyond. When called upon, Bernice stood in front of all those students and asked, "Is there a place for me in athletic training?" The room grew silent and all eyes fell on her and then on the professor. The professor asked for clarification, to which Bernice responded, "Is there opportunity for minorities in athletic training?" As all eyes focused back on the professor, she asked to speak with Bernice after class. Bernice shared with me in the phone interview that she and the professor spoke for half an hour after class that day. The professor told Bernice

that there was indeed a place and a need for her in athletic training. After that, Bernice never doubted that athletic training was the profession for her. Just short of an hour, our interview concluded just before I heard the class bell ring in the background. After I thanked Bernice for her participation and got her consent to potentially participate in a future personal interview, we hung up I felt very proud of my alma mater and mentor for providing such a positive and supportive environment for Bernice to matriculate through. The same camaraderie that I experienced as a student was also Bernice's experience.

### **INTRODUCING THEODORA**

Theodora was one of the very first Black women to become a certified athletic trainer. Theodora was a very active, multisport athlete in her predominantly White high school with no access to an athletic trainer (or knowledge of the profession of athletic training) during the early 1970's. Her high school physical education teacher (a White woman) served as a mentor to Theodora, encouraging her to attend college as did her basketball and track coaches. Despite being academically unprepared in high school for the rigors of college, Theodora found success as a college student and student-athlete. She successfully worked her way through the physical education major in college and enjoyed a successful collegiate basketball career until her senior year. As a senior, a new head women's basketball coach was hired who did not get along with Theodora, resulting in Theodora being cut from the team. Having been an athlete her whole life, Theodora felt lost not having sports in her life. The certified athletic trainer who covered women's basketball and had treated Theodora for a previous injury recognized her depression and loss of direction and encouraged her to remain active in athletics by becoming an athletic trainer herself. Theodora had become very familiar with athletic training as an athlete

and took the advice of her ATC and applied to the ATEP. The program at the time was NATA approved. As a senior Theodora was accepted into the program and began her educational preparation in athletic training. She was the only Black student in the program (and one of very few Black students at the university). Theodora only remembers feeling very supported by the athletic training students, staff and faculty, who all seemed very interested in seeing her succeed in athletic training. In fact, she did not recall experiencing racism within the university at all with the rare exception of perceived discomfort on the part of some physical education faculty, whom she felt did not know how to work with Black students.

Theodora remembers that all of her mentors through all phases of her education were White men or White women, and predominantly White men during her athletic training education. She always felt very supported by her mentors and attributes her success in becoming an athletic trainer to their guidance and encouragement.

Theodora graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree in physical education in 1975 and completed her athletic training education as a post-baccalaureate becoming a certified athletic trainer in 1976, one year after the first Black woman, Marcia Grant, became a certified athletic trainer. Theodora spent one year teaching physical education at the junior high level and serving as the athletic trainer for the same school district. She realized that she did not enjoy teaching as much as she enjoyed being an athletic trainer, and applied for a job as the head women's athletic trainer at a junior college in southern California. She was offered the position and has served as that college's athletic trainer ever since, completing her 30<sup>th</sup> year at the time of this writing.

### **The Interview**

Theodora was the fourth participant that I interviewed for my study. I followed the procedures established in chapter 3 to initiate the interview. I have to admit to being thrilled to interview Theodora. Her interview was the longest one at just under two hours. During her interview I thought, “Someone needs to do a single subject case study about this woman so that her story is not lost. Her story needs to be told and recorded”. Hopefully my study will serve as a preface to that story (and maybe I’ll just do it myself someday). I couldn’t help but think about how this woman serves as such a remarkable role model for not only Black women in athletic training, but for ALL women in athletic training. It was amazing to hear the enthusiasm she has for her work after nearly 30 years in the profession. Theodora had so much to share with me and told it in such great storytelling mode that I found myself forgetting to take notes and just listening to her speak. She has a warm, deep, resonating voice that exudes tangible enthusiasm. You can picture her smiling as she speaks with you. By the end of the conversation I felt as though she was an old friend reminiscing with me. Theodora was most open to sharing her experiences with me. Most interesting to me was how humble she was when we talked about her being one of the first Black women in athletic training. She indicated that she didn’t even realize until a few years ago that she was one of the first.

At the end of the interview I thanked her for her participation and inquired about her availability for a follow-up interview in person at the NATA convention. Unfortunately, she was not going to be in attendance and due to vacation and various other trips over the summer would not be readily available for further interviews.

## **INTRODUCING PHOEBE**

Phoebe “fell” into athletic training. She was an active athlete in high school with the goal of pursuing physical therapy as a profession. When she graduated from high school in the early 1980’s Phoebe initially majored in physical therapy in college. She volunteered at a children’s physical therapy clinic to accumulate volunteer hours required for the physical therapy major, but found it to be very depressing. Ultimately, Phoebe wanted to work in a more positive and dynamic setting in health care. A friend suggested that she look into athletic training. Upon learning more about the profession of athletic training she realized it offered exactly what she wanted to do, so she changed her major. The university she was attending, a large, Division I, PWI institution, happened to have an accredited athletic training program. Despite being a PWI, her university did have a rich, multicultural environment. Although she did not feel that her high school experiences prepared her for college, Phoebe self-directed herself to academic success and remembers her collegiate athletic training experience as having been fun. She recalls that she had few peers in the ATEP. As such, they were a small, tight group that was closely supervised and mentored by the staff and faculty of ATCs. Phoebe did not remember experiencing racial or gender discrimination on the part of the university, faculty, staff, or athletes while enrolled in the ATEP, however she did recall experiencing occasional stereotyping by her peers. She did not feel she had access to other Black students or Black social organizations, but did experience support from her advisor, friends, significant other and family and felt she had sufficient financial assistance to pursue her collegiate goals. Phoebe remembers experiencing a very positive mentoring

relationship with the White, male head athletic trainer, which lasted beyond her graduation and through her career pursuit of becoming a physician assistant.

Phoebe became a certified athletic trainer in the summer of 1986 and wanted to break into professional sports. She felt that goal was “squashed” due to the lack of opportunity for women in the professional sports arenas at the time, so she focused on collegiate athletics and pursued her master’s degree. Upon completion of her graduate degree she enjoyed a career working as an athletic trainer at several universities covering different levels of collegiate sports including both men’s and women’s sports. After working several years in the collegiate environment, Phoebe made the decision to go back to school to become a physician assistant.

Since 1995, Phoebe has worked as a physician assistant and athletic trainer at a children’s hospital specializing in orthopedic medicine. She continues to volunteer her services as an athletic trainer with track and field and the United States Olympic Committee. Phoebe enjoys utilizing both her athletic training and physician assistant backgrounds to better serve her patient population. She feels that her current work setting allows her to earn a better salary, work better hours, and enjoy a more fulfilling social life than when she was working as an athletic trainer in the traditional setting. The physicians Phoebe works with acknowledge her expertise as an athletic trainer and offer her significant autonomy as a physician assistant, which she enjoys and values.

### **The Interview**

Phoebe was the fifth participant that I conducted a phone interview with. Since Phoebe lived on the west coast I did her interview late in the evening for me, while it was early evening for her. I called Phoebe on her cell phone while she was relaxing in the

park at the end of her day. I followed the procedures as outlined in chapter 3. Phoebe sounded very enthusiastic and energetic on the phone throughout the interview until our conversation took us to the topic of what could be done to recruit and encourage more diverse women to pursue athletic training. She grew increasingly frustrated and irritated over how she was treated by the EDAC as member of the original task force charged with the EDAC's duties and the current disorganization of the council. We ended the interview in just under one hour on a positive note about her experiences in athletic training. I also invite her to participate in a personal interview if selected, which she consented to do at the NATA convention.

## **INTRODUCING ELISHA**

In high school, Elisha was very involved in her high school's health professions magnet program that encouraged students to explore the various health professions as future careers. Elisha was also an athlete in high school with access to her high school's athletic trainer and she became an athletic training student during her junior and senior years. This "intense" experience and her athletic trainer, a White male, inspired and prepared her well to pursue athletic training as a major in college.

The university she attended, a large, Division I, PWI with a diverse student population in Florida, sponsored an internship athletic training program that was granted CAAHEP accreditation during her senior year. The students enrolled in the ATEP were predominantly White, however, Elisha recalls there being three other Black women, two Hispanic-American women, and one Hispanic-American man in a program of approximately 30 students. Elisha remembers spending two seasons working with the university football team, which had a very strong reputation for success. As an athletic



training student working with a sport of such notoriety, visibility and success, she had a very intense, time consuming experience that allowed her to bond with her athletic training peers. It also created a significant obstacle to her ability to work and earn money for college. One of the professors in athletic training, a White woman, who is now the director of sportsmedicine, tried to alleviate some of Elisha's concerns by offering her work study hours and working with her to find alternative funding and scholarships. Another strong person of influence on Elisha's college career was the dean of the college, a Black woman, who organized a mentoring program for Black students enrolled in her college. Elisha met with or had contact with the dean throughout her undergraduate years as a result of participating in this program. These contacts were helpful in supporting Elisha as she dealt with discrimination from college instructors and supervisors and even resentment directed at her by other ethnically diverse female students. Other support systems she remembers were the Black student organizations on campus, her advisor, friends, and family. Elisha graduated with her undergraduate degree in the early 2000's and passed her BOC examination within a year.

Elisha received her master's degree in 2006 while filling a graduate assistantship as the athletic trainer at a local public high school. Upon completion of her graduate degree, Elisha was hired by the same high school where she served as a graduate assistant to fill the full time position for athletic trainer.

As the athletic trainer at a high school, Elisha feels that working with high school athletes is the most satisfying thing about being an athletic trainer. She feels like she makes a positive impact on both their athletic careers and their academic careers. Elisha

finds that she not only treats her student-athletes' injuries, she spends a lot of time counseling and mentoring them.

### **The Interview**

Elisha was the sixth participant that I interviewed. She was also one of three participants not identified by the chairs of the EDAC from the membership list that I invited to participate in this study. Elisha was a graduate school classmate of Deborah, another participant in my study. When I initiated contact with Deborah via telephone and secured her participation in my study, Deborah gave me the name and contact information for Elisha and recommended that I contact her to participate in my study as well. Deborah felt Elisha had experiences she would enjoy sharing with me for my study. I cross-referenced Elisha's information against the NATA membership list of Black women who were certified athletic trainers and found her name. I contacted Elisha and invited her to participate in my study, which she agreed to do. Elisha's participation was secured according to the sampling method called Snowball Sampling. This involves selecting participants who are identified by other participants of the same study (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Elisha also met the same criteria for participation established according to the Criterion Sampling methods used to identify the other participants of this study.

I conducted the phone interview with Elisha early one morning before the start of her school day. She was able to speak freely with me during her prep period that occurred first thing in the morning. Elisha spoke with me in a soft, even tone with a deep resonance in her voice. Although she was soft spoken, I could hear the passion for her chosen profession come through the phone. We spoke over the phone for just under an hour. She agreed to participate in the personal interview at the NATA convention if

selected. We ended our conversation with Elisha asking me several questions about my study and my own personal opinions about the possibilities and opportunities for Black women in athletic training.

## **INTRODUCING DEBORAH**

Deborah wanted to be a pediatrician since she was a little girl. She first heard of athletic training as an athlete her senior year of high school, but didn't know how one became an athletic trainer. She enrolled in her undergraduate college in the state of Michigan, close to home, to pursue a major in biology as a route to medical school. Randomly, a friend in a general studies class, who was an athletic training student, told her about the ATEP he was participating in at the same institution. She changed her major from biology to exercise science her sophomore year of college in order to participate in the ATEP. The program at her undergraduate college sponsored an internship route program to certification in which she was the only Black woman. Her friend who introduced her to the athletic training program was the only Black man in the program, although other Black students had participated in the program previously without success.

During her time in the ATEP, Deborah did not interact very much with the other athletic training students, primarily because there were so few students in the program and their paths rarely crossed. She did feel that she was occasionally the minority spokesperson in class or stereotyped by her peers. She did come to be good friends with the student who introduced her to the program and considered him a "peer mentor" who offered her much advice about "what to do and what not to do" during her time in the program. Although Deborah did not get along with the head athletic trainer, she did

enjoy a very strong, positive mentoring relationship with one of the White women athletic trainers who eventually became the program director while Deborah was there. She remembers the female ATC offering her guidance and even protecting her, helping her to make good decisions that set her up for success. Despite attending a PWI, it was located in a diverse city. Deborah recalled having access to Black student organizations and she felt supported by the university, her advisor, professors, supervisors, friends and family while enrolled in college.

Deborah felt that her high school education did not adequately prepare her for college. Despite that, she successfully graduated from her undergraduate program and passed her board of certification examination in 2002. Deborah considers these two accomplishments to be two of the top three things she has accomplished in her life so far. At the time of the interview, Deborah was pursuing her master's degree at a Florida university and is a graduate assistant athletic trainer. She felt that moving to Florida is her third greatest accomplishment.

As a certified athletic trainer, Deborah considers it especially satisfying to have been able to take advantage of the opportunities presented to her as an athletic training student to gain experiences at different universities in different regions of the country. She also enjoys helping people and helping athletes return to play following an illness or injury and values the appreciation shown to her by the athletes she helps.

### **The Interview**

My phone interview with Deborah, the seventh of ten, was initiated according to the procedures outlined in chapter 3. I called her on her cell phone at home at 10:00 AM on a Friday morning. Deborah is a graduate assistant working with rowing and tennis,

however, the spring semester had just finished and she was enjoying some down time before the start of her summer classes at the time of our phone interview. Deborah was very energetic during our phone interview and had a lot to share from her experiences to her opinions about Black women in the athletic training profession. She would go from a loud, excited intonation during something she was excited about to a hushed inflection when she shared something that frustrated her. It was easy to envision Deborah being very animated and gesturing emphatically with her hands as she spoke throughout our phone conversation and told her story. With each question she stayed on the topic despite having so much to share about each topic. I felt as if Deborah was excited to share her stories and perspective with me. I was thankful for the recording of our conversation as I would never have been able to write fast enough to keep up with her. She was very passionate about sharing her experiences.

I discovered that I had a connection to Deborah as we talked about her mentor. The woman she identified as her mentor during her undergraduate experience was a fellow alumna of mine from undergraduate school. It was helpful to know who Deborah was referring to when she spoke about her mentor who guided and advised her through her clinical experience. Deborah shared with me how her mentor also protected her from the negative experiences with sexual harassment that other Black female students had experienced before her during their clinical experiences with the men's basketball team at her undergraduate institution.

Our phone interview concluded with me thanking Deborah for her participation and gaining her consent to potentially participate in a personal follow-up interview. The interview with Deborah barely made it under 60 minutes.

## **INTRODUCING DAMARA**

Damara had never been exposed to an athletic trainer or the profession of athletic training in high school because her high school did not sponsor athletics programs. She participated in gymnastics and ran in a track during program her few years at a prep school, but never met an athletic trainer. Damara started out her undergraduate experience as a physical therapy major at a large Division I university in Florida. She had prepared to major in physical therapy all through her high school years and felt well prepared for college. As an undergraduate college student, Damara volunteered as a track official for university track meets. It was during those track meets that Damara met her first certified athletic trainers. As she learned more about the profession of athletic training and what athletic trainers do, she found it to be a great way to combine her interests in sports with rehabilitation so she changed her major. It just so happened that the university she was attending sponsored an accredited athletic training program. Damara was the only Black student in the ATEP at the time. Additionally, she minored in exercise physiology. Damara remembers not enjoying her general studies courses while enrolled in her undergraduate college, citing negative experiences with her peers including alienation, stereotyping, and feeling unwelcome. She also experienced what she perceived as racial discrimination directed at her by faculty in her general studies courses. However, Damara did remember receiving support from the Black student organizations on campus, as well as from other Black friends in her social circle, church, and her family. She also felt supported by the athletic training faculty, supervisors and her advisor. Damara was very close to her athletic training peers, all of whom were White, who all studied and socialized together outside of class and clinical rotations.

Damara's academic advisor, a White woman, was also the program director at the time and was very supportive and influential in guiding her academic career.

After graduating with her undergraduate degree in the early 1990's, Damara did not take her BOC examination right away, selecting instead to first go on to graduate school to earn her master's degree and initiate her doctoral work with the intent of pursuing her interests in exercise science. Eventually, she realized that exercise science was not what she wanted to do and resumed her goal of becoming an athletic trainer. During her years in graduate school when she refocused on athletic training, Damara was mentored and supported by two other women she worked with; the White woman who served as director of sportsmedicine and the Black woman who coached the women's track team. In 1997 she passed the BOC examination and became a certified athletic trainer.

Damara is currently an assistant athletic trainer for a Division I athletics program at a large university in the Southwest. She has primary coverage for women's track and field year round in addition to other administrative duties. Although she wants her athletes to be successful individually and as a team, she most values the relationships she has established with her athletes and colleagues. Damara appreciates those relationships and finds happiness knowing she has positively contributed to the success her athletes experience as a direct result of the care she provides for them.

### **The Interview**

I had the most difficulty connecting with and arranging a date and time to do an interview with Damara for reasons most common in athletic training. Her women's track and field team was very active in the championships late into the spring, keeping Damara

on the road and unavailable until the end of the championship season. She was gracious enough to sit down and speak with me on the phone during one of her first days off.

Damara's interview was the second to last one to be completed.

I called Damara on her cell phone at home at 10:45 in the morning. After completing the introductory procedures Damara shared with me that she was concerned that she wouldn't be able to remember enough about her athletic training education experiences to sufficiently help me with my study since her experiences had occurred over 15 years prior. I reassured her that anything she remembered about her experiences and could share would be very valuable to me and my study.

Damara was a very soft spoken woman and seemed very laid-back as she responded to my questions. She was very direct in answering my questions and often required verbal cues in order to encourage her to expand and offer greater detail about the examples and experiences she started to share. Our interview was one of the shorter ones I did, lasting just short of 45 minutes. I concluded the interview by thanking Damara for her participation and asking for her consent to potentially participate in a personal follow-up interview at the NATA convention. She stated that whether or not she was selected for additional interviews she would like to meet me at the convention in order to put a name with a face, which I indicated I would like to do as well.

## **INTRODUCING GABRIELLA**

As a senior in high school Gabriella knew that she wanted to work with athletes. She thought a career as a physical therapist (PT) might be the best route to do that. Then Gabriella met a man who worked as an athletic trainer for the local college football team and thought what he did looked fascinating, so she asked him if she could help him



during fall football camp. That experience inspired her to pursue athletic training. When she chose a college, Gabriella knew she needed a school that would allow her to pursue both athletic training and physical therapy. She moved from South Carolina to a university in Florida that would allow her to pursue both programs. That university was a large, Division I, PWI that allowed students to pursue an internship route to BOC certification. Gabriella began her clinical experiences as a freshman under the supervision of the assistant athletic trainer. Her clinical education was smooth and productive until she ran into time conflicts with the sports she was working with and the afternoon laboratory classes she needed as prerequisites for physical therapy. The head athletic trainer at the time didn't believe that Gabriella would return to athletic training after missing her clinicals for a semester and discouraged her from continuing to pursue physical therapy. With the help of the assistant athletic trainer, Gabriella was able to successfully complete her classes and return to her clinical experiences in athletic training. Gabriella almost never experienced racism from her instructors, supervisors or other students and felt that it was a greater disadvantage to be a woman in athletic training. She had great support from the Black student organizations on campus, as well as from her family and friends. The two assistant athletic trainers she had the opportunity to work with, who were both White women, also mentored her.

Gabriella graduated from college in the early 1980's and became a licensed physical therapist before passing her BOC certification exam the next year. She was the first Black woman in her NATA district to become a certified athletic trainer. She has been working as a PT, ATC since.

Gabriella has worked as a PT, ATC in several settings including the private outpatient clinical setting, at the collegiate level, and with U.S. Olympic teams at the 1988, 1996, and 2000 Olympic Games. She still enjoys helping people and being involved in the excitement of athletics. Gabriella feels that she has made an impact on her athletes no matter what level of participation they pursued.

### **The Interview**

Gabriella was the ninth participant that I phone interviewed. I followed all the procedures outlined in chapter 3 at the initiation of the phone call. Gabriella had a higher pitched voice with a hint of a southern drawl. She spoke fast and enthusiastically and I wrote my notes fast, thankful that I was recording the conversation. Since Gabriella is dual credentialed as a certified athletic trainer and physical therapist (and always has been) I had to remember to pose my questions with a focus on athletic training without forgetting that her experiences include the perspective of a physical therapist as well. Gabriella's undergraduate experience was very unique in that she pursued athletic training at the internship level while she was pursuing physical therapy at the same time. I concluded our phone interview within an hour and requested her permission to contact her for participation in a personal interview is selected. Gabriella consented but indicated she would only be available at the NATA convention for two days.

### **INTRODUCING MORIAH**

Moriah was in the ninth grade when her high school hired its first certified athletic trainer. The football coach suggested that Moriah work with the athletic trainer as her student assistant. Moriah felt that she needed something to do so she pursued it. The athletic trainer made her experience as a high school athletic training student fun. She

gave Moriah responsibilities, made her feel important, and became a mentor and advisor to her. Though athletic training was fun she also enjoyed working hard. The athletic trainer, a White woman, also exposed her to athletic training camps that were popular in the 1980's. She felt that her high school experiences prepared her well for college and to pursue athletic training as a profession.

Moriah pursued athletic training at two different colleges, both of which sponsored an internship route program. At the first college, Moriah was not only the only Black student in the program she was also the only woman. Moriah did not have a positive educational experience at either college. During her time as an athletic training student at the first college, there were only four students in the program, each in a different class and assigned to work with different sports. As a result, they never interacted. Moriah remembers feeling very alone and alienated. She also experienced severe sexual harassment and racial discrimination in her clinical assignments and in the classroom. Moriah felt very intimidated by the football coaches who verbally and sexually harassed not only her but all of the other female students working in the athletic department. None of the supervising athletic trainers or athletic directors did anything to protect or assist the female students. Moriah experienced such overt and covert racism at this college that she transferred to another institution.

Her experiences there were only slightly improved. Moriah remembers the head athletic trainer being very uncomfortable working with her and being racially discriminated against. Here, she was the only Black student in the program but she wasn't the only female. She remembers both institutions, located in the Midwest, as being very unwelcoming to Black students. Moriah even considered transferring from

the second institution, when one of the older, White male students convinced her to stay for fear of jeopardizing her ability to successfully graduate from undergrad in less than six years. She did stay and while doing an off campus internship, she met her first Black athletic trainer, a man who worked in a local outpatient rehabilitation clinic. He had a significant impact on her completing her undergraduate degree, serving as a strong mentor for her. Another strong mentor for Moriah was a new assistant athletic trainer, a White woman, who came to work at her undergraduate college. This woman worked closely with Moriah during her last year and offered the mentoring, support and guidance that had not been offered to Moriah previously. Moriah graduated in the early 1990's.

Moriah pursued her master's degree in health education. While in graduate school she passed her BOC examination and became a certified athletic trainer. After completing her graduate degree Moriah continued to work on receiving her teaching certificate in health. Moriah currently teaches at the high school level and works as the school's athletic trainer.

### **The Interview**

Moriah was the last participant that I interviewed. She was not in the first ten list of names initially identified by the chairs of the EDAC and appeared twelfth on my list. As I had difficulty confirming one of the potential participants from the initial list of ten, I went to my list to identify the tenth participant. Hanna had actually recommended during her interview that I contact Moriah because she felt that Moriah had many experiences as an athletic training student that needed to be included in my study; she had a story that needed to be told. Hanna was familiar with Moriah's story because she took over as program director at one of the institutions that Moriah had attended and had

a bad experience at. It was very profound to me how different Moriah's experience could have been as an athletic training student if Hanna had been the program director for Moriah's program while she was a student. Moriah even noted during her interview that she was jealous of the experiences students had after she graduated and Hanna came to the program at Moriah's alma mater.

The phone interview with Moriah lasted well over one hour. Unfortunately, Moriah indicated that she would not be attending the NATA convention to participate in a personal interview; however, she indicated that she would be happy to do a follow up interview by phone if it would be helpful to my study.

## **PARTICIPANT SUMMARY**

Over the course of seven weeks I conducted the phone interviews of ten participants and the case study interviews of three participants. Using the stories from those interviews and the Personal Data Survey, I have accumulated a summary of the participants. Table 4.1 highlights some of these summary points.

- All ten women were active members of the NATA.
- All ten women were in good standing with the BOC.
- All ten women were actively practicing as certified athletic trainers.
- Four of the women held Bachelor's degrees.
- Five of the women held Master's degrees.
- One woman earned her doctorate.
- One woman was also a licensed physical therapist.
- One woman was also a certified Physician Assistant.
- One woman was also a certified health teacher at the secondary school level.
- Three of the women worked at the secondary school level, two of which were public schools and one was a private day school.
- Five of the women worked at the collegiate level; one as a graduate assistant, one as an assistant athletic trainer, one as the head athletic trainer, and two as instructors.
  - Three of the colleges were NCAA Division I.
  - One college was NCAA Division II.
  - One college was NCAA Division III.
- One woman graduated from her undergraduate institution and became certified in the mid-1970's.
- Three women graduated from their undergraduate institutions and became certified in the 1980's.
- Three women graduated from their undergraduate institutions and became certified in the 1990's.
- Three women graduated from their undergraduate institutions and became certified in the 2000's.
- Five women graduated from ATEPs that were accredited or approved.
- Two women attended undergraduate school in Pennsylvania.
- One woman attended undergraduate school in Michigan.
- Three women attended undergraduate school in Florida.
- One woman attended undergraduate school in Vermont.
- One woman attended undergraduate school in Ohio.
- One woman attended undergraduate school in Nevada.
- One woman attended undergraduate school in North Carolina.
- Two women worked in Pennsylvania.
- Two women worked in Florida.
- One woman worked in Texas.
- One woman worked in Illinois.
- One woman worked in Tennessee.
- One woman worked in Ohio.
- One woman worked in Washington.
- One woman worked in California.
- Based on residential location, the women represented six of the ten NATA Districts including Districts 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10.

Table 4.1

Participant Summary Table

	<b>Grace</b>	<b>Hanna</b>	<b>Bernice</b>	<b>Theodora</b>	<b>Phoebe</b>	<b>Elisha</b>	<b>Deborah</b>	<b>Damara</b>	<b>Gabriella</b>	<b>Moriah</b>
<i>Accredited or Internship</i>	Internship	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited	Internship	Internship	Accredited	Internship	Internship
<i>Highest Degree Held</i>	MS	PhD	MS	BS	BS	MS	BS	MS	BS	MS
<i>Additional Credential</i>					PA				PT	Teacher
<i>Current Work Setting</i>	College Instructor/ Clin Coor	College Professor	Private Day School	College Head ATC	Hospital	Secondary School	College/ Graduate Assistant	College/ Asst. ATC	Clinic	Secondary School
<i>State Currently Working</i>	IL	PA	PA	CA	WA	FL	FL	TX	TN	OH
<i>Date Certified ATEP</i>	2002	1987	1994	1976	1986	2004	2004	1997	1982	1994
<i>State Attended College</i>	NC	VT	PA	PA	NV	FL	MI	FL	FL	OH

## DATA ANALYSIS

In order to identify similar or consistent themes among the participants' responses to the questions, I followed the cyclical analysis methods outlined by Gay and Airasian (2000): reading/memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting. First, I reviewed the notes I wrote during the phone interviews both immediately upon completion of the phone call and several times thereafter as the audio recordings were being transcribed. As I reviewed those notes I looked for and documented initial impressions, themes and data that became consistent between participant responses. I then reviewed each of the transcripts for the participant phone interviews as they were completed by the transcriptionist. As I read each transcript, I listened to the accompanying audio recording, checking for accuracy of the transcript, but also making notes/memos about the consistent themes I saw emerging from the raw data. I began to identify preliminary codes, important insights, common themes and unexpected issues in the material. Some of the preliminary themes were:

1. Almost all of the participants had a mentor during their athletic training education program.
2. Almost all of the participants' mentors were women and were White. If not White women, their mentors were White men.
3. Almost all of the participants agreed that mentoring was important in their athletic training educational and career success.
4. Almost all of the participants agreed that their mentors helped them to more efficiently matriculate through their educational experiences.



5. Almost all of the participants agreed that access to a Black mentor would be preferred but was not necessary.
6. Almost all of the participants agreed that a female mentor was preferred.
7. Almost all of the participants graduating from an accredited ATEP indicated that they experienced a “close-knit”, “tight-knit” relationship with their athletic training major peers or described a “family” feel in the program between their peers.
8. Almost all of the participants shared more experiences with sexism than racism.
9. Almost none of the participants shared incidents of overt or covert racism in their experiences in athletic training education.
10. Many of the participants felt that having prior experience navigating in predominantly White environments was helpful in being successful in matriculating through their athletic training education.

Next, I uploaded the transcripts, which were compiled in Microsoft Word® files, into the computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) software program ATLAS.ti 5.0, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (2004). I elected to utilize a CAQDA program in order to better organize the volume of the data and to assist me in pursuing a more in-depth examination of that data. CAQDAs have been used since the early 1980s to assist researchers in the analysis of qualitative data (Weitzman, 2000). However, great caution has been emphasized by expert qualitative researchers to novice qualitative researchers such as I to not lose sight of the data and my place in the research scheme as the primary instrument of analysis based

on my intimate familiarity of the raw data (Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson, 1996; Kelle, 1995; Kelle & Laurie, 1995; Seidel, 1991; and Weitzman, 2000). With that information in mind, I recognized that a carefully selected CAQDA could help promote an accurate and transparent data analysis process during the analysis of my data. CAQDAs have been most beneficial in the following tasks: Taking notes, transcribing notes, editing notes, coding text, storing text, organizing text, searching for relevant segments of text, connecting relevant text segments to each other, memoing, counting frequencies of text, drawing conclusions, building theories, mapping connections to those theories, and report writing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There are a multitude of CAQDAs available to assist in the analysis of qualitative data. Some of these programs include: ATLAS.ti, HyperRESEARCH, MAXqda, N6, NVivo, QDA miner, and Transana. Two programs that appear to be most popular within the qualitative research population are NVivo 2.0 and ATLAS.ti 5.0 (Barry, 1998; and Sage Publications, 2004). These two programs also happened to be readily available to me between the campus where I work and the campus where I'm earning my doctoral degree. After reviewing the pros and cons of both programs with my dissertation chair, we agreed it would best serve my purposes to utilize ATLAS.ti. Other advantages ATLAS.ti offered me were its ease of use, online tutorials, ability to import Microsoft Word® files, and unlimited coding (which is easy to do and organize).

Once I imported the transcripts into ATLAS.ti, I began to further analyze the text. The initially emergent themes were used when applicable to code and organize the narratives (data) and new themes were added when necessary. Every thought, topic, issue, experience or idea was coded liberally throughout, utilizing sentence-length

descriptors to preserve the meaning and context. This process resulted in a significant list of initial codes. These initial codes were refined through the process of focused coding by combining infrequently used codes and dividing up the more frequently used codes into subcodes or focused codes. The focused codes that emerged from the ten participant interviews and three case studies were categorized into three families as follows as shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2

Focused Codes

Mentoring	Support Factors	Barriers Faced
Mentor actions Mentor Access Mentor Race Mentor Gender Role Models	Internal Factors Character Traits Experience with White Culture	Racism Sexism Classism Financial Challenges Academic Challenges Family Support Time Constraints
Mentoring Effectiveness Results WITH mentoring Results WITHOUT mentoring Desirable	External Factors Faculty Peers Friends Clinical Supervisors Family	

The focused codes were organized against the research questions to form a First Iteration of codes according to Anfara's Code Mapping method (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). With the guidance of the research questions, the First Iteration of focused codes were grouped into themes (Second Iteration). Through constant comparative analysis, relationships were identified between the themes to create the qualitative findings of the study. Table 4.3 outlines the Code Map.

Table 4.3

## Code Map

RQ1:	RQ2:	RQ3:	RQ4:
What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?	What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women ATSSs?	What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?	What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?
First Iteration			
1A. Mentoring: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is Desirable</li> <li>2. Promotes Efficient Matriculation</li> <li>3. Encourages Confidence, Independence &amp; Validation</li> <li>4. Is Welcoming &amp; Safe</li> </ol> 1B. The Absence of Mentoring Allows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distraction</li> <li>2. Quitting</li> <li>3. Transferring</li> <li>4. Not Taking the BOC Exam</li> <li>5. Not Practicing in the AT Profession</li> </ol>	2A. Race is Irrelevant 2A. Gender is Irrelevant 2A. Black Female Mentors are Preferable 2A. Female Mentors are Preferable  2B. Effective Mentors Are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accessible</li> <li>2. Welcoming</li> <li>3. Supportive</li> <li>4. Interested</li> </ol>	3A. Internal Factors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal Character</li> <li>2. Experience with White Culture</li> </ol> 3B. External Factors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faculty &amp; Staff Support</li> <li>2. Clinical Education</li> <li>3. Relationships:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Peers</li> <li>b) Family</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	4A. Lack of Support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family</li> <li>2. Financial</li> <li>3. Academic</li> <li>4. Time</li> </ol> 4B. Sexism

1C. Mentoring Activities Include: 1. Advisement & Guidance 2. Career Planning & Placement 3. Introduction to Professional Network			4C. Racism
Second Iteration			
1A. Mentoring is effective, desirable and valuable  1B. The absence of mentoring has the potential to contribute to discontinuation  1C. The activities associated with mentoring contribute to successful matriculation, professional advancement & credentialing	2A. Mentor race and gender are less relevant criteria for effective mentors  2B. Qualities of effective mentors are most important	3A. Internal Factors contribute to successful matriculation of Black women ATSs  3B. External Factors contribute to successful matriculation of Black women through ATEPs	4A. The lack of institutional support challenges success  4B. Sexism is a constant barrier  4C. Racism is a constant barrier
Third Iteration			

<p>Mentoring is desirable, promotes efficient matriculation, and contributes to successful college completion and credentialing of Black women ATs.</p> <p>Not only does mentoring promote Black women ATs, it also serves as protection against racism, sexism and classism.</p>	<p>Although shared race and gender are favorable mentor characteristics, accessible and approachable mentors are more essential traits.</p>	<p>In addition to strong personal student attributes, several characteristics inherent to AT education contribute to successful college completion and credentialing</p>	<p>Racism, sexism and classism persist as barriers to success</p>
Theory			
Mentoring is a critical and efficient method that contributes to the retention, promotion and protection of Black women athletic training students.			

## **RESULTS OF THE PERSONAL DATA SURVEY**

Half of the participants decided upon a career in athletic training during high school, while the other half decided while already enrolled in college. Four of the five women from the internship route decided to pursue athletic training in high school while only one of the women from an accredited/approved program decided in high school. Eight of the ten women, equally between internship route and accredited/approved program, would choose athletic training as her career again, with one woman choosing physician assistant and one choosing either physician assistant or nursing if she had it to do all over again. Half of the participants felt that their high school education prepared them well to pursue a college degree while two of the women, each from internship route and accredited/approved program, did not feel adequately prepared at all. Six of the ten participants occasionally experienced discrimination by a college instructor, four of whom were from the internship route. Four of the ten women occasionally experience discrimination by a supervisor, three of whom were from the internship route. Only three of the ten participants occasionally experienced White female peer resentment and they were all from the internship route. One participant from the internship route occasionally experienced ethnically diverse female peer resentment. Two of the ten participants, both from the internship route, experienced White male peer resentment. None of the participants felt they experienced ethnically diverse male peer resentment. Two of the participants, each from the internship route and accredited/approved programs, felt disadvantaged because she was Black. Six of the ten participants felt disadvantaged because they were women; all five from the internship route, but only one from an accredited/approved program. Three of the ten participants felt they were disadvantaged

because they were Black women, two of whom were from the internship route. Two of the ten participants felt they were alienated by their peers, equally between the internship route and the accredited/approved program. Six of the ten participants felt stereotyped by their peers, again, equally between the internship route and the accredited/approved program. Four of the ten participants felt unwelcome among their peers, equally between the internship route and the accredited/approved program. Four of the ten participants felt they served as the minority spokesperson in classes, three of whom were from the internship route. Eight of the ten participants felt they had access to cultural support, with accredited/approved participants feeling they had better access. Eight of the ten had access to social support, nine of the ten had access to academic support, eight of the ten had access to an academic advisor and nine of the ten felt their significant other was supportive of their academic pursuits, with participants from accredited/approved programs feeling great support in all four categories. All participants felt that their friends and families were supportive of their academic pursuits and that they had sufficient financial support to complete college.

Eight of the ten participants indicated that they had both a personal and a professional mentor, although the internship route participants felt they had more experience with a professional mentor than the accredited/approved program participants. Nine of the ten participants felt they had both a personal and a professional role model with internship route participants having greater experience than accredited/approved program participants.

This was a great contrast to the results of Abney's (1988) study that found mentors and role models were not available to most of the Black women coaches and



athletic administrators. The participants in her study turned to family members, friends and colleagues to fill the role of mentor and role model.

The ten most highly ranked attributes for success indicated by the ten participants were:

1. Having a strong drive and determination
2. Being competent
3. Having a good personality
4. Believing in God
5. Being confident
6. Being assertive
7. Having a mentor
8. Feeling emotionally supported by family
9. Being patient
10. Having a role model

The top three attributes indicated by internship route participants were:

1. Being competent
2. Having strong drive and determination
3. Having a good personality  
Feeling emotionally supported by family

The top three attributes indicated by accredited/approved program participants were:

1. Having a good personality
2. Being confident  
Being competent
3. Having strong drive and determination  
Being assertive

These results are consistent with results in Abney's (1988) study. The participants in her study of Black women coaches and athletic administrators listed the following attributes as most helpful in their career development:

1. Having strong drive and determination
2. Being confident
3. Being competent
4. Believing in God
5. Having family support

Finally, the ten participants were asked to identify the individuals who had the greatest influence on their lives during their athletic training education. The most frequently cited individuals of influence on the participants while matriculating through their athletic training education experience were the instructors, professors and program directors who guided their educational experiences in and out of the classroom, ranking their level of influence at 4.2 out of a high score of 5. Head and assistant athletic trainers who supervised the participants during the clinical education experiences were the second most cited individuals of influence, ranking their level of influence at 3.3 out of 5. Half of the influential individuals served as both mentors and role models to the participants, while the other half served equally as either mentor or role model. Interestingly, more participants from the internship route identified mentors as most influential, while more participants from accredited/approved programs identified role models as most influential. Most of the participants who attended an accredited/approved program considered the instructors and professors to be the most influential individuals to them, while the participants from the internship route considered the head and assistant athletic trainers most influential.

Of the individuals cited to be of greatest influence to the participants, more than 70% were White and 66% were female. Almost all (85%) held graduate degrees.

## **THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

***What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women athletic training students?***

Based upon the experiences of the participants, most believed that having a mentor was definitely an advantage that Black female students needed access to and to

take advantage of. The benefits of having a mentor that the participants experienced were valuable to them as students and influenced their academic and professional success.

### **MENTORING IS POSSIBLE, DESIRABLE AND VALUABLE**

Hanna moved away from home in order to pursue athletic training. Having a mentor available to her that she trusted helped her to successfully complete the program.

Well, I think it's important for everyone, but sometimes you feel, you feel lost depending on what part of the country you're enrolled in your program. I mean, if you don't see a lot of you, you know, in the crowd, um you feel, you feel kind of alone. So it's really, really important just to touch base with somebody. To bounce stuff off of. It's like, "That's okay to do that" or "It's not okay to be in that kind of situation." So it's very important.

Gabriella agreed.

I think it's desirable. I don't think it's a must-do. I actually think it's a perspective that you could surely do it without having seen someone before you, but I think it's always good to be able to have someone you can share with, or bounce things off of, or, and to realize you know, when you come to different points, am I, is what I'm thinking okay, or should I do, you know, go forward with this or should I re-think this, or is it fine for, you know, this track that I'm on, this direction that I'm trying to go in, this track and you know, that kind of thing. And essentially just trying to make it along the way, I think it's helpful to have someone that you can bounce things off of, whether it's in close contact or

not. You know, someone you, that you just need to, could just call or e-mail every now and then I think is desirable.

Bernice added,

I think it's, it's a challenge but I think it's very important because they need somebody who's been through the process to help them know the steps and to guide them when necessary if they go astray or feel they can't do it or they fail to see it, just to give them that extra boost along the way.

Damara found access to a mentor who was also Black to be helpful as well.

I think it's vital. I don't think that it's impossible for them to do what they have without a mentor, but I think it definitely makes them aware of things that they may encounter, how to deal with it, they wouldn't if it were not for a Black female telling them.

In addition to helping students matriculate successfully from point A to point B, Deborah thought that a mentor would be helpful in preventing Black women from quitting athletic training before they gave it a chance.

I think that it's mandatory, to put it like that. I think that a mentor encourages you, because a lot of times you're just going to be like "I quit! I hate this. I don't want to do it anymore." And I think that that's one of the problems with African-Americans pursuing athletic training, is because there's a lot of times where you run into situations where you, you don't want to do it anymore. Just, I mean, just maybe for a split second, but I think that in inner-city schools and things of that nature, they're allowed to give up. They're allowed to quit something. You know what I mean?

### **Mentoring is effective**

Several of the participants shared examples of the positive effects of mentoring that contributed to their educational success. One way that mentoring was effective was specific to the efficient college matriculation some of the participants felt they experienced with the help of their mentor. Another way that mentoring was effective for the participants was in how it helped them to gain confidence in their knowledge and skills and become independent practitioners. Additionally, mentoring was effective in how it created a fun learning environment for the participants and a sense of belonging in a predominantly White environment. Finally, mentoring was effective for many of the participants in that it created a sense of safety in that learning environment that allowed them the freedom to learn and practice their new skills.

### **Mentoring promotes efficient matriculation**

Mentoring may have helped some of the participants to navigate through college with greater efficiency and opportunities and with fewer problems. Elisha stated,

I think that guidance was very helpful in preparing me for things, specifically what I wanted to do or what goals I wanted to achieve. I'd probably still be an undergrad somewhere now, trying to decide what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. But I think for that it's helpful.

The efficient matriculation was not isolated to just the classroom, but to their clinical experiences as noted by Grace.

She just gave us opportunities to do whatever we wanted to do. She never stifled us, she just said if you want to do something, get in there, jump in, get involved. You can't just sit back and wait for things to happen-you have to make sure

you're there, you have to make sure you know what you're supposed to do, so that you can act appropriately when the time comes.

Deborah felt her mentor helped her stay on track with her plan to graduate on time.

... basically, to get from A to B, I think that without a mentor, you're gonna go all over. You're gonna go to C, you're gonna go to D, you're gonna go to F. And then maybe eventually you'll get to B, but you're just gonna do a whole bunch of unnecessary things before getting there.

Deborah felt that her mentor helped push her past the obstacles that might have otherwise impeded her progress.

And I think that's one of the issues I think that the mentor can be there to, you know, kind of grab you by your butt and push you over the hill so you get past the obstacles and stuff. I think without a mentor, you're gonna roll back down the hill without getting to the top so I think that mentoring is necessary. Absolutely.

### **Mentoring encourages student confidence, independence and validation**

Many of the participants felt that mentoring was instrumental in helping to build their confidence in athletic training and their independence as a future practitioner.

Hanna's mentor helped her to become a confident professional.

He just really led by example on how to be organized and on to, to think before you speak. His actions spoke, I think, in the way he conducted class, it was organized, how he disseminated information to us, and when you came in with problems he showed you how to get through it for yourself. He was a great leader. So, he just showed me how to grow up, basically. To, you know, take responsibilities for my own actions.

Gabriella's mentor began to help her develop her confidence early on.

I think for the role model or mentor, her job was just, uh, instilling the confidence of "Yeah, you can do this," you know, "Yeah, you should be able to do this," and "Yeah, you've already done that." And so she was more of a confidence-builder and instiller along the, the whole process, particularly too with you know, when you're getting later towards your, your training, with thinking about internships, and preparing for certification, and you know, so she was kind of like "Alright, you're ready to go on out."

Grace echoed those ideas when speaking about her mentor in the clinical education setting.

I was like okay, I know I've seen this or I know I've done this already, so I can just go ahead and do it. So, I think, if nothing else I got more confidence out of my program than some people do.

Moriah appreciated her mentor and clinical supervisor allowing her to practice her skills and build her confidence.

She gave us a lot of responsibility if she knew we could handle it. And, she gave us a lot of, not so much as a lot of leeway, but the thing I liked the most about her was she gave us a lot of responsibility. She made us feel important. And I really, really liked that, how she made us feel important.

Moriah felt that a mentor's influence was important external validation within the profession.

Oh my God, it's very important, because we all need that support system. We all need to know that we're not crazy. As a woman, we all need to feel validated. I

don't know why, but we do. We look for outside validation. Instead of looking at validation within ourselves, we look at it from the outside. And as a young Black woman, we definitely look at our validation from the outside. We look at it from other people. And we look to it from other people, which we don't understand that that's actually wrong, until we figure it out when we get older. But when we're young, we're not as confident. We look for the validation from outside of ourselves. And oh my, and it is just so important to have that mentor there to just tell you when you're messing up, tell you when you're doing a good job, and to really give you a lot of, just advice but also to listen. Especially in handling certain situations.

### **Mentoring creates a sense of safety, welcoming and belonging**

Moriah's mentor created an environment where her students had fun while they learned in the clinical environment.

Oh my goodness, she was awesome, I mean, we had a lot of fun with her. She made athletic training fun. And, on top of it, she just, we did a lot of activities together, and as an adult and kids would do, and she just made, she just made it so much fun. I mean we, we had a great time.

Gabriella's first experience entering the athletic training room as a freshman made her feel welcome because of her mentor's welcoming attitude.

I think the very first thing I would have to say was just the, as a student, my coming in as a freshman and you know, not having a very great skill yet, but being very excited and wanting to work, was that she was welcoming, and she was encouraging, and she would just teach me whatever she could teach me along



the way. So, first day I walk in, and I express my interest in being a student trainer, she was welcoming from day one, so that was, you know, it doesn't seem like that could that make such a difference, [laughs] but, uh, and as a Black freshman in, in a different area and a new environment that was, that was key.

As the only Black student in a class of 80 White freshmen athletic training majors, Bernice asked the professor on the first day of class if there was a place for her in athletic training.

It was good. I mean at first, when I first went to one of Dr. H's classes I stood up and asked her was there a place for me, 'cause I looked around and obviously I was like, I feel out of place. And once she talked to me I felt fine. I mean I went to a, a school that had very few minorities involved in it as far as high school so I felt comfortable at [the institution], but I wanted to make sure that there was a place for minorities in athletic training. And she told me there was very much of a need for us to get involved. So after that I felt comfortable. Just knowing that there was a place.

Bernice spoke with her mentor after class that day.

And then it was good that I, you know, we talked for probably about a half hour, and it was good. Because she just told me, how you know, minority athletes would probably prefer, or feel more comfortable talking to a minority. Being that we're from the same background. And to talk to someone of any other race as far as any kind of challenges that they may have as an athlete. So I thought that was very important. And I never thought of it that way.

Deborah's mentor knew that several Black women had struggled with sexism while assigned to work with the men's basketball team at her institution, resulting in their failure to complete the ATEP. Her mentor tried to protect Deborah from the same fate.

Now, she straight came out and told me, she was like "I'm not putting you in men's basketball for that fact." Simple. Plain. Flat out. That's it. And at first I was upset because I really wanted to work with basketball. But then I got to thinking, I'm like, well wait a minute-she's not trying to be mean, she's just, she's seen it before. And she doesn't want that to happen to me. You know? And so things like that, she kinda guided me and protected me in that kind of way.

#### **THE ABSENCE OF MENTORING CONTRIBUTES TO DISCONTINUATION**

Many of the women were able to describe what they felt could have happened to their future in athletic training had they not experienced the benefits of mentoring as athletic training students. Without the benefits of positive mentoring many of the participants in this study felt they would have:

1. Been distracted from matriculating through the program in a reasonable amount of time.
2. Quit their athletic training program/major.
3. Transferred to another institution.
4. Not taken the BOC examination, thus not becoming a certified athletic trainer.
5. Not practiced as an ATC despite earning the credential.

Without the benefit of a mentor, Deborah felt she would have made it through athletic training, but she wouldn't be where she is today.

I probably would still be an athletic trainer, I mean I definitely would be. But I just probably would have made a lot of bad decisions. I definitely would still be one, but I probably wouldn't be here at [current institution], I probably would have made some really stupid decisions. That would probably be it. Just bad decisions.

Elisha is not sure she would have remained in athletic training without the guidance of her mentor.

Truly I don't know. I think that she was very influential in terms of guiding me towards what specifically my career goals were. And for me, I was very undecided. I wasn't sure if I, I even wanted to truthfully go on working in the field at that time. I thought I wanted to go to medical school, and things of that nature. And I think that she was very influential in letting me know that it was important to weigh my options, and, and give each option an adequate weight in terms of its importance or its viability and how it would affect me career-wise, and then evaluating those options that I had, and basically saying, you know, this would be the best option for me at this time.

Moriah's mentor guided her through a situation involving sexual harassment by a coach. Without that mentor's guidance and support, she was not sure she would have remained at her school or even in athletic training.

Believe it or not, I probably would have left the school. Would I have stayed in athletic training? I don't know. Had it been a different person dealing with me at the time [sexual harassment scenario], with that one coach, I probably would have

gotten out of [institution]. And I probably would not have stayed in athletic training.

Theodora was cut from the women's basketball team by the new coach at the start of her senior year. Although she was on target to graduate with a degree in Physical Education, she was lost without basketball. The head athletic trainer, who had taken care of her as an athlete, became her professional mentor, introducing her to the ATEP, helping her find direction, and initiating a future in the athletic training profession (that has lasted over 30 years).

I wouldn't be an athletic trainer. I would have, I believe, I been successful in whatever field I had chosen, because that's my personality, to go get what I think I should have, and to work really hard because that was instilled in me from my mom, but without him I would definitely not be in athletic training.

Hanna became ill at the end of her academic career. During that time, she lost her confidence and focus, feeling that she would not be able to take the BOC examination. Her mentor encouraged her to not give up and finish the process to become a certified athletic trainer.

I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have started to take the exam. A lot of times we don't, we don't want to pursue something 'cause we're afraid of failing, so if we don't pursue it we won't fail. So, I mean, I was ill at the, at the end of my getting my degree, and I was just, I was just tired, you know? And he said, "Well, you can do this," and we developed a strategy. But I don't think I would have done it if I didn't have his support at that particular time. Not saying that someone else's support wouldn't have worked, but that's all I know is that experience. I really

don't think I would have even become an athletic trainer. I had to be hospitalized.

He was very supportive. So every time I see him at convention I always thank him but, just, not, not in detail but just a professional thank-you, so . . . .

Damara's mentor and network opened doors of opportunity for her that she would not have had access to without her mentor.

I don't know had she not been there if I would have gone through the master's program at [institution]. She helped me play up my pros and cons. Had I not gone to the master's program at the [institution], then, you know, a chain of events would not have happened. I would have been elsewhere. So had she not been there I probably would be in a different place right now. I don't know if it would be good or bad, but just different.

Without the influence of a mentoring, many of the participants would not have become certified athletic trainers or they feel they would have had a much more difficult time achieving that end goal. Many of the participants stated they might have quit the ATEP, transferred to another institution, not taken the BOC examination, or elected to pursue a different field after completing the ATEP. Their mentors played a critical role in retaining these women, not only in college and the pursuit of the ATEP, but in the profession as well. Even the two participants who elected to become a physical therapist and a physician assistant have remained practicing certified athletic trainers.

### **MENTORING ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT SUCCESS**

Many of the participants cited activities specific to mentoring that they found particularly helpful. Even though most college students are assigned an academic advisor, the participants' assigned advisors may or may not have been effective. Some of

the participants felt that the advisement and guidance provided to them by their mentors was especially helpful in the successful matriculation through college. Beyond advisement, many of the participants benefited from career planning, job placement and employment assistance offered by their mentors. Some of the participants felt that their mentors helped create opportunities for them and introduced them to the tenants of professionalism and professional networking, which empowered the participants to guide their own future careers.

### **Advisement and guidance**

Deborah remembered being more comfortable going to her mentor than her assigned academic advisor for advisement and guidance in undergrad.

Pretty much, after I got into the program like my, I would say like around my junior year I pretty much stopped going to the regular advisor's office, and I would, just have her help me with what I should take and stuff. Help with classes, letters of recommendation, whether or not I should try to apply at this school, or what, and she's also, she also introduced me to the head athletic trainer who got me the position, the graduate assistantship position here."

Deborah's mentor also assisted her with problems she faced in her daily life as a student.

D was my mentor, and every time I would have some sort of mini-crisis, I would always go into her office and she would be glad to help me and chat with me and help me out. Do this, or make phone calls or whatever.

### **Career planning and job placement**

At the end of Theodora's time in the ATEP, her mentor aided her in securing her first job even though the school wanted a male athletic trainer.

Well, he assisted me after I finished the program that summer, he got me a job at the local high school. He recommended me, they kept looking, they were looking for a male to be their trainer for football, and, uh, he recommended me, and I know he was instrumental in me getting that position.

### **Professionalism and networking**

Elisha's mentor, a dean, was instrumental in acculturating her to the ideals of professionalism and networking.

She actually enrolled me in a program called MENS and it was Mentoring Minorities in Nutrition and Exercise Science. And just being a part of that program, it taught me a lot of the fundamentals of things that I guess I should have gained early on or perhaps I should have known in high school or in the early stages of college. We learned things like how to interview well, how to network, how to write an effective resume, how to introduce yourself to certain people, how to land a job, and how to speak to people the right way to get what you want. We would go places and go to, you know, the dean's dinner at a university, and you know, we essentially would be introduced to these influential and important people within the university. And not necessarily so that we could gain access and network, but just so we could understand the culture, and the dynamic of how to speak to the right people, and who you need to go to about this problem. So I think in, that particular case, she did an excellent job of doing things like that for me. This is what you need to do, this is the place that you need to be. These are the people that you need to speak to, these are the circles that you need to have yourself in. It was more so the guidance from a professional

standpoint, than even an academic standpoint. It was preparedness for the future that I think she was giving me.

Moriah's mentor exposed her to educational opportunities beyond campus.

You could go to her and talk to her about anything, and, and she gave you good advice back. Plus she got us exposed to a lot of athletic training camps, so she, she put us in camps, and we had a chance to be around other kids, be around other trainers."

Additionally, Moriah's mentor encouraged her to have a back-up plan to athletic training to ensure her future job security.

He told me I needed to be more than just an athletic trainer. And I didn't believe him at the time, I kind of cried when he said that to me, but, later on I understood why he said it. So that's one of the reasons why I wanted to be a teacher-athletic trainer at the high school and I didn't want to be any place else.

Many of the participants received assistance and guidance from their mentors that helped them to achieve success as athletic training students and young professionals entering the field. That assistance was not limited to the textbook knowledge or skills specific to athletic training, but as important, their assistance including professional acculturation and introduction to a professional network to help secure employment as a certified athletic trainer.

***What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women athletic training students?***

The majority of participants felt that, based on their experiences as athletic training students, having female mentors, especially Black female mentors was



preferable. However, most of the participants felt that it was more important that Black female athletic training students have access to effective mentors who could help advance their careers as students and professionals. In the long run, effective mentors were more important than mentors who shared race and gender with their students.

### **MENTOR RACE AND GENDER ARE LESS RELEVANT CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORS...**

Many of the participants felt that mentor race and gender were less important than mentor effectiveness. Hanna, who has worked as a program director herself, and currently works as a college professor within an accredited ATEP, felt that shared race between students and mentors was not a critical factor. Her professional mentor was a White male.

I think anybody could be a mentor. I mean, I think you, you need to mentor. You know once you become involved it should be somebody who you, you want to emulate their qualities, and their professionalism. And I don't think it has anything to do with race. Just because they look like you doesn't mean they're a good role model or a mentor.

Theodora's first mentor in athletic training was a White man who later was inducted into the NATA Hall of Fame. She felt that his care and attention to her as a student was valuable to her future and career as an athletic trainer, and that his being White did not affect his ability to be an effective mentor to her.

Anyone who has the ability to be positive and be constructive, and who is willing to respect and listen to you. I don't think it's necessary-obviously for me it didn't

have to be another Black person. It just has to be somebody who cares, who is willing to help. You know, most of my mentors have not been Black.

Phoebe's mentors were all White males. "I think you do need a mentor, I don't know that that mentor has to be any specific race or gender." Gabriella agreed that race was not a primary criterion for an effective mentor. Both of her mentors were White women.

I would say any individual that individual feels close and confident with, I don't, I really don't think it had to be another Black woman by any means. But I-I do think it's important to have a mentor, and I've had other mentors along the way too, you know, like particularly in physical therapy that were White males, but that I always felt very close and confident with and who were very good people, and wanted to always help, were encouraging, and you know, that kind of thing.

Grace's mentor was a White woman. "You shouldn't just choose a mentor because they look like you, I don't think. I think you should choose someone because you work well with them, and because they can give you appropriate guidance, and help you along your path."

**... but, Black female mentors would be nice**

Elisha's mentors were a White woman and a Black woman. She felt that it would be been nice for Black female students to have a Black female mentor, but didn't think it was a necessity.

I think that in terms of mentors for Black women, it may not necessarily encompass the characteristics of ethnicity, but more so personality traits. Someone who is sympathetic to the issues and concerns that we face culturally and socially, professionally. Someone that understands specifically what

challenges we might face. It should be someone that's willing to push us to achieve the goals that we should have set for ourselves that we sometimes don't necessarily know about because we don't feel that we can achieve them. So, I think that it's good if we can have a minority as a mentor, but I don't think it's a necessity.

Although Gabriella didn't think it was necessary to have a Black female mentor, she recognized that it would be an advantage to a young Black woman.

I think-again, it's desirable and it's nice, 'cause it's nice to see, uh, that someone either has done it or is doing it, you know, and they're kind of like you, or they experienced maybe some of the things that you have experienced or, you know, have felt some of the same feelings along the way with different, you know, situations. But I definitely don't think it's a necessity.

Damara felt that Black female students would relate better to a Black female mentor and benefit from her experiences, however, shared race and gender shouldn't be the only criteria for a mentor. Her professional mentors were a White woman and a Black woman.

I think obviously other Black women are going to be able to relate a little bit more to some of the situations that Black women face, but anybody that takes an interest, a pride in their profession, and just a genuine concern that they care about other individuals can mentor Black females. It doesn't have to be only us that mentor each other. But like I said, I think that other Black females are going to bring more to the table that they can relate with. Because there's some things that, you know, as Black women, other people don't experience and never will,

and I think Black females going through the program should be exposed to that and learn to deal with that, but it doesn't have to be solely Black females.

Deborah, whose mentor was a White woman, agreed that a Black female mentor in the profession would be in a better position to appreciate a Black female student's experiences.

I think other African-American athletic trainers, regardless White or Black, I think they should be in the field. I mean, they don't have to be, but I think it would help if they were in the field, because they've been there, they've done that, so they know what to tell you, they know what to expect. I mean, it doesn't have to be another person in the field, and I don't mean to do a race thing, I mean I think you should-I don't think it matters what color that your mentor is.

However, Black mentors have probably gone through what you will go through.

### **Female mentors are preferable**

Despite the majority of the participants feeling that mentor race and gender were less important criteria for their mentors than effectiveness, some of the participants did state a preference for their mentors being a woman. Bernice was the most emphatic participant who felt the mentors for Black female students should only be women.

It's a male-dominated profession to begin with so I don't think that they would have the nurturing spirit that I would need in order to get through because they're not nurturers, nurturers by design. It's really important to have someone who has a nurturing instinct. I pretty much-I think any, any woman really should be a mentor. I mean, you know, any array of color-it doesn't really matter. Just it has to be a woman because we all are minorities here compared to men, so I would

just think that pretty much the, the rainbow needs to be represented-Latina, African-American, whatever we have-Caucasian, Indian-whatever, whoever's involved. So I think, I think it was definitely vital that they be there, really just to show, you know, that women are productive in our profession. Because if they weren't there we'd just have gentlemen available to us and I don't think I would have been able to-to build a, a solid rapport with a, with a man versus a woman. Phoebe agreed that mentors for Black female students should be women, despite her mentors being all men.

I think it should be a woman. Because they are best gonna be able to relate and understand, some of the feelings and obstacles that could get in your way, and how that's, how you dealt with them. And you can also talk about alternatives on how to deal with it.

Moriah's mentor was a White woman and she felt that women were better able to mentor young Black women through the challenges of being a woman in the profession better than men.

Gender-wise, he may not understand all the aspects that I will be faced with, so that's why I say yes and no as far as gender. Because men can go out and get married, leave their wives home while they're traveling, and there's no problem with that, whereas a woman trying to be a college trainer and trying to be pregnant, trying to get married-oh, let, hold on, let me back up-trying to find a boyfriend and a husband, and, that doesn't, that doesn't, that don't fly-it doesn't fly. Oh, honey, you've got to be here to raise these kids. No honey, I-I've got to travel on the road. That becomes conflict. Being a woman in itself is just way

different. You need to see a woman mentor. You need to see that woman being a college trainer working with women's basketball and being pregnant, and being married. Because that lets you know if she can do it, then you can do it. And also maintaining a home and maintaining that family. Now, I'm still waiting to see that one. I don't think I've seen that yet.

Most of the participants agreed that mentor race and gender did not have to be shared characteristics with Black female students to allow for a positive mentoring relationship to occur. However, some of the participants felt that a Black female mentor would be beneficial and that a woman would be even more beneficial. The participants were able to identify characteristics that made a mentor effective regardless of race and gender, which they placed great value on.

### **QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE MENTORS ARE MOST IMPORTANT**

Many of the participants valued the accessibility of their mentors. Hanna saw her mentor, "...on a weekly basis, if not more than that. Whether it was just in class, or going to a, the meeting in his office, or just passing by in the athletic training room." Gabriella saw her mentors everyday. "They both were immediately accessible. I mean, I was in the training room every day. They were very, very accessible." Bernice, Moriah, Phoebe and Theodora had daily access to their mentors as well.

"Well, I had her for class most of the time. At least on a regular basis, at minimum twice a week." – Bernice

"Oh Lord, I saw that woman every day." – Moriah

"Oh, daily. Daily." – Phoebe

"Every, every day. Every day." – Theodora

Bernice agreed that accessibility was helpful in forming her mentoring relationship with her mentors. “Other than being there and being willing, just access, access to them was very important.” Damara’s mentor was very accessible to her in several ways.

She was very available. She put a lot of time into that program, and it wasn’t just for me; she was available for everybody. Dr. S was one of my professors, so we would see her, you know, in the classroom, and then, office hours, she made herself available even if she, if she was, off time from office hours. So she was definitely accessible.

Elisha’s mentor, despite being a dean, was accessible to her quite frequently through the MENS program. “During the semester that I actually took the course, we met once a week. After that I think we probably corresponded by e-mail once a week or once every two weeks. Clear until I graduated from college.”

Even though Deborah’s mentor changed positions within the program, making her less accessible in the clinical setting, she remained accessible to Deborah.

Anytime pretty much. My sophomore and junior year she was the men’s basketball athletic trainer, and so she was always in the training room, regardless, you know. And then, I think my senior year, she got the program director position, and so she, even though she wasn’t in the training room she still was just across, across the way in a different building so I just went over to her office.

Gabriella valued her mentor’s ability to make her feel welcome. Her mentor met her with a welcoming approach the first day they met.

She was welcoming from day one, so that was, you know, it doesn't seem like that-how could that make such a difference, and as a Black freshman in, in a different area and a new environment that was, that was key." She added, "I think if anything the first thing that drew me into the training room at [institution] is just welcoming. You know, if something isn't welcoming to you, then it may not even give you initial draw, you know?"

Theodora valued her mentor's support. Her mentor was very supportive when it felt like everyone else had given up on her. "And he's just always been supportive-he was always very supportive."

Moriah's mentor provided not only academic support, but financial and emotional support following the death of Moriah's mother during her final year of college.

She helped me out with clothes. Sometimes I just didn't have enough money to buy certain things, so she would, you know, for instance if they, if the program said that you need to be in a college shirt, well she knew I couldn't afford some of those college shirts that they wanted the kids to buy, so she would just give it to me as a Christmas gift, or birthday gift. Winter clothes; sometimes there was just some winter stuff I just couldn't afford, and again she would give it to me as a Christmas gift, or a birthday gift, so that way people wouldn't really know what she was doing. Oh my God, it's very important, because we all need that support system. And oh my, and it is just so important to have that mentor there to just tell you when you're messing up, tell you when you're doing a good job, and to really give you a lot of, just advice but also to listen. Especially in handling certain situations.



Hanna also felt supported by her mentor when facing a personal challenge with her health.

My mentor. He was my advisor, and he, he just, just gave me his time, his door was always open. I think that was really helpful right toward the end of my degree. I was very sick towards the end and he helped me out. So, I don't know, I think that was the biggest thing. Because I was a long ways from home too, so, my mentor, my advisor and mentor was there for me.

Elisha felt supported by her mentor as she dealt with various problems that she faced as a student.

Yeah, it-it was, and she helped me out a lot, even when I was having problems with the university as far as you know, getting my financial aid and making sure everything was right as far as my program was concerned, you know, she was always going to bat for me. She would write letters, to you know, my athletic trainers that were over my sports; everything. Anything that she could possibly do, she did.

Phoebe appreciated that her mentor was not only accessible to her, but valued that he listened to her and took the time to advise her, even after she graduated.

J was a great listener. And, uh, family man and uh, like I said, because our group was so small, and he was vested in each and every one of us. I remember him confiding in me and saying how glad he was because he only had X amount of students and X amount of staff. And I'll never forget the day that we got to increase everything, and going in his office, saying "I bet you wish things were smaller." [Laughs.] He did. You know, and just had a nice talk about it. Every

time that I, like when I went for my master's degree I went and talked to J. When I talked about each time I changed in jobs, I went to J. When I thought about being a physician assistant, I went to J. And he always had really great, sound advice and good things to say and encouraging words.

Damara's valued her mentor's guidance as she prepared to graduate.

Um, it was mostly, mostly guidance or direction, like should I go into the master's program, things about my internship. I was debating what to do with my internship, so she guided me with that, if I wanted to do a thesis and that kind of thing. It was those types of questions with my progression through the program. It was more of what to do next, um, career-wise and education-wise; that kind of guidance.

Grace valued the fact that her mentor was interested in mentoring her and skilled at serving as a mentor.

Whoever can, whoever's capable of mentoring you appropriately. I think you should choose someone because you work well with them, and because they can give you appropriate guidance, and help you along your path."

She added, even for students who don't think they need a mentor, they offer valuable assistance.

I think some people may need guidance, and I think some people don't. Some people go into any situation and succeed, and some people need to have a person they can fall back on and talk to in order to get where they need to go. Sometimes you need that person who's there to talk to and kind of keep you in line and kick you in the butt when you're not doing what you're supposed to do.

Bernice valued that two of her mentors, Black women professors in another department, were also role models for her.

I mean, I wanted to emulate them-they were strong and organized individuals, so just concentrating on organization and just a good work ethic got me through. So just to emulate what they were doing pretty much at the school, and then just their help and guidance.

For many of the women, even the little things that their mentors did were valued. Grace felt supported by a new staff member.

Maybe my last semester a new assistant came in-he was pretty, he was pretty good. He kept an eye on us and helped us when we were trying to get into grad schools and things like that. Letters of recommendation . . . . And I keep in contact with him every now and then too, but . . . .

Many of the participants were able to identify qualities of effective mentoring demonstrated by their own mentors that they believed contributed to their own success as athletic training students. Some of these qualities included; mentor accessibility, a welcoming attitude, a sense of caring, interest and support, and the skill to be a mentor.

***What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women athletic training students?***

Many of the participants were able to identify many of the things they felt helped them to attain college success leading to their credentialing as certified athletic trainers. Those things were both internal factors, as well as external factors, that they recognized in themselves, in other Black female athletic training students, and in their environments.

## **THE INTERNAL FACTORS**

Some of the factors that contributed to the successful matriculation of the participants were things they identified within themselves or within their fellow Black female athletic training students. These factors have been classified under 1) a wide variety of personal character traits, and 2) their experience navigating within the dominant White culture.

### **Personal character**

Damara felt that her even-keeled temperament contributed to her ability to successfully matriculate through her ATEP.

I think that I had a relatively uneventful college life as far as, you know, problems or issues. I'm the type of person who, I'm very even-keel and I don't take a lot of things personally, so a lot of things that may bother others didn't bother me...

Damara also found that her self-determination and self-motivation kept her on track with her goal of becoming an ATC.

Once I learned of the profession and decided that's what I wanted to be it wasn't that-there wasn't anything to really deter me from continuing that focus on that field. I guess that to keep me motivated, I mean it was just something that I knew I had to do, high school, everything from high school was geared toward college, college education was really important in my household, among my friends that I went through high school with, it was just something that was expected. I don't know that I ever thought any other kind of way that, you know, I wouldn't finish college. And so once I decided what I wanted to do with my career, it was just autopilot. You know, this is, this is, these are the steps that I have to follow,

okay, so I do that. This is what's needed for me to actually have a career as far as the licenses and certification, okay, so whatever I have to do to prepare for that, that's what I did. Like I said friends and classmates I guess would help with the learning part of it, but I don't know that I ever thought any other way. There was never another option.

Bernice agreed that self-determination was a critical factor in her success.

I just say that because I had my mind set when I left high school, so I was just determined. Like I said, sacrificed, committed myself, and just you know, planned with the end in mind, because you have to do that. Some people don't plan with the end in mind, they just plan as they go.

Grace called her self- determination being stubborn. "I'm just stubborn so I don't like failing at anything so part of it was just me. It doesn't really matter what's going on around me. If I have things to get done I just do them, so . . . ."

Phoebe shared in the self-determination theme contributing to her successful matriculation.

And I think that your own assertiveness come in. To be determined. I don't believe that the whole world has to hand you things. I think you, I think you need to work at it. And that's, I guess that's one of the things I have decided. So I think a lot of it is self-determining.

### **Experience with White culture**

Some of the participants found that their previous experiences navigating within a predominantly White culture and environment were helpful in successfully matriculating through college at a PWI. Hanna went through her athletic training experience at a PWI

in the mid-west. She found that her experience growing up in a multicultural environment aided her in being successful in college. “I grew up on the east coast, and I grew up in a multi-racial family-I grew up around a lot of diverse individuals, and so I think we seek out diverse people in support systems.”

Bernice attended high school a predominantly White high school and felt prepared by her experiences interacting with White culture to attend a PWI for her athletic training education. She offered a strong opinion about college students being prepared to navigate through White culture if you are an ethnically diverse student.

Well, the thing is too is I think that people have to be prepared. Like for example, if I’m coming from a Philadelphia school, and I think that I’m going to flourish at [institution], there’s something wrong with me. You know what I mean? That’s just, just a total cultural difference. I mean, kids have to sort of put some of that responsibility on themselves-go visit these schools. If you’ve never flourished in a predominantly, you know, white population, then you’re not going to do that fresh out of one of these public high schools in Philadelphia. Maybe you need to look at South Carolina State or Tennessee University-you have these sports medicine programs, but they’re predominantly Black. [Laughs.] I mean, you have to look at your surroundings and the area you grew up in. I mean, some people are like “Oh, I just want to take a leap of faith,” but you, you can’t do that unless you’ve been in a workplace, you know, if you’re coming as a non-traditional student or something of that nature.

Grace grew up on military bases that were predominantly White. She also felt that her experience interacting with more diverse people helped her prepare to attend a PWI.

I grew up on a military base, so I was used to kind of a varied population, but I was also not, I don't know, I was never really surrounded by a lot of people who looked like me, so to speak, so it was never a big deal for me and I was used to that.”

Damara summed up well how she thought internal factors contributed to successful matriculation in an ATEP.

I think it's important to note that a lot of success depends on the individual, regardless of the path you choose to follow, if you have help along the way, if you have mentors, or what type of mentors, if you have you know, people that look like you, in the long run, it doesn't matter, because the only thing that matters is if you're able to persevere, and if you're able to do what it is you want to do, and that comes from within. That comes from your own pride, your own willingness to sacrifice, and your own self-worth.

## **THE EXTERNAL FACTORS**

The participants were able to identify several external factors that they felt helped contribute to their success in pursuing athletic training as a student in college. These factors focused on their personal and professional relationships and their clinical education components.

### **Faculty and staff support**

Many of the participants felt support from role models who were Black women on faculty or staff at the institution but not involved in the athletic training program or were ATCs. Bernice enjoyed a positive mentoring experience with two Black women on faculty in the physical education department. “Dr. R was a very influential woman. And

Dr. A. But I was closer to Dr. R. I know she was in charge of physical education, and she did a lot of the physical fitness and aerobics.” She added that she also felt supported by the faculty, staff and her peers in her ATEP. “I can’t say anyone in particular, it was just everyone as a, as a whole. Dr. H, Dr. M, you know, some of our peers, you. Some of the staff who were closer to our age than our faculty.”

Elisha’s mentor was also a role model to her. She was a Black woman who was the Dean of her college and not an athletic trainer.

Uh, well, I can only think of one, and it was the dean of the college, and she wasn’t even an athletic trainer at all. She was the only African-American female that I considered or that I even knew, or considered a role model or, or a mentor of any sort.

Moriah identified a Black woman who taught the chemistry lab as a role model. She was a role model for Moriah, not only because she was a Black woman, but because she was a teacher, which Moriah also wanted to do in addition to athletic training.

I know there was one chemistry teacher-she taught chem lab, and I really liked the way that she taught chem lab. That woman knew her stuff. And I, and I tried to emulate her, knowing her stuff, and it would just be little things that she would tell you, and then she would wink her eye at you because she knew, because she wanted you to know that she said that specifically for you. And then she’d get like this little smile on the side of her mouth to let you know that she said that specifically for you, and to let you also know that she was helping you out.

Theodora remembers being very supported by the faculty and staff athletic trainers in the ATEP.



The support I had, of uh, I-I, you know, I-I, I had the feeling that, those people, those trainers, wanted me to succeed, and they worked really hard to help me succeed. And I did everything that I was asked to do. But I think, I got most of, most of my help from the trainers at the school. They thought it was something that I could do.

Hanna felt that her mentors supported her as an athletic training student. “I had great, great, great mentors there.” Phoebe remembers her mentor and staff members supporting her through her educational experience.

I would say if anything, it was J our head athletic trainer. He acted as a mentor for me-so it was great. It wasn’t the university, it wasn’t-at that time I didn’t know any others, I didn’t know of any other Black athletic trainers-women, for that matter. So, I’m just kind of out there and doing it and had great support from staff throughout the whole thing.

### **Clinical education**

Grace remembers that the small program cultivated a sense of familiarity among the faculty, staff and students.

It was small. There were only about 800 students at my school, so it was super small, so I knew all the athletes and I knew all the athletic trainers and I know, like, there were only two people in the program who taught, so, you kind of had the same classes with everybody, in terms of specific athletic training courses. And then, the rest of the physical education department obviously taught a few things. So, I don’t know-intimate, I guess would be the way to describe the university.

Many of the participants remembered that the clinical education experiences kept them interested and involved in the ATEP. For Bernice, she relished working with the football team.

The most challenging was football. Fall football season, I think that's where you got most of the bulk of your experience. So that was real memorable, 'cause then you felt like you were challenged all the time to step up a notch and start utilizing your skills.

Damara enjoyed working with her supervisors and athletes at a high school clinical rotation.

The most enjoyable memories I have are at the high school where I worked, I got a chance to work with some really good supervising athletic trainers. They were GAs in the master's program at [institution], but they were farmed out to the high schools, so getting to learn from them was really good. They were women, both of my supervisors were women so they were just really good people to be with. The athletes there, I still have contact with some of them, that part was the best part."

With regard to her clinical education experiences at the collegiate level, Damara added,

I mean it was just different opportunities to be involved in athletics even at the university being, being a part of the behind the scenes thing, so just being part of a unique group of people in athletics. Everybody, you know, [institution] was huge on athletics, so everybody wanted to be in the know, and in the crowd-I think being a trainer there allowed me that.

Grace enjoyed the hands-on aspect of the clinical education experience.

I remember putting in a lot of hours. [Laughs.] And I remember working a lot of football. I don't know, it was nice, it was interesting-it was an internship. So my experience obviously is much different than students nowadays, because I, my first, I don't know, I think I'd been in classes for about a week and I was already taping things and helping with rehabs, and everything that they're not really supposed to do initially. So I think my experience was very hands-on, and it was very interactive. And it was-I liked it-so-I stayed in it so I guess I had to like it."

Deborah enjoyed the challenge of the clinical education component, especially in the down eliminated internship route to certification, where students became independent learners very quickly.

Let's see. Being a student from the get-go, I traveled by myself. And I think that that was extremely helpful in developing me, you know, developing me, career-wise, basically getting thrown into the fire, as scared as I was, you're forced to do, do it. Like, you're forced to do something-you're forced to handle an injury even though you're really really scared and you think you don't know what you're doing, but that's not really the case 'cause a lot of times you do know what you're doing. But you're not gonna know that until you get forced to do something. So I'm very very grateful for that.

### **Peers & Friends**

Elisha remembers how important her shared bond was with her classmates.

Uh, football. I spent two years with Division One football at [institution], so, it was working the long hours, getting up at four o'clock in the morning for mat drills and things like that, but most importantly it was being able to have a group

of friends that understood what I was going through in college, because we all had the same career. So it wasn't like, "Oh, you take these hard sciences, I can't relate," because they take music history. It was we all had to take organic, we all had to get up at four o'clock in the morning anyway after we studied, so I think being able to go through that is that you're with a particular group of people that can relate and that could understand exactly what I was going through."

Elisha added that the supportive relationship she enjoyed with her athletic training peers crossed the racial divide.

It is, 'cause we all have to go through it together, so it was, it was funny because the football trainer, we were always looked up to because we got the uniforms, because we got to travel with the football team, and we got to eat with the football players, and then, you know, trainers that trained for softball were wonderful because they always had softball, like there was always a competition but we always knew, okay, the first-years are the cool ones, the seniors, those are the people you look up to and you ask them questions about, you know, what teachers do I take classes with. So, we're all friends. So like we all hung out together. We all hung together on Thursday night 'cause, not necessarily because we had to, but because we spent so much time, you know, and working in class that we generally, we truthfully became a family. Because it was funny for me, as an African-American you know in college, my mom used to ask "Why you have so many white friends?" And I'd say, you know, it's not necessarily an issue of, I like White people more than Black people, but those were my peers, you know, and those were the people that I got along with.

Hanna remembers the bond that she shared with her classmates.

And there were a bunch of us from the east coast that were going to school there, and we were kind of, we kind of hung together, and so we, we kind of pushed each other academically, so, it was, no, I had a good time.

Theodora remembers feeling supported by her peers and the faculty.

And, so they were very, very-very, very helpful, the students who were part of the program were, were very helpful, Linda T, I don't know if you know her. She was our grad assistant at the time, and so it was a very supportive program, and you know, in your survey I saw you were asking about racism and things like that, and at [institution] I never, never experienced that, not in the athletic training arena.

Phoebe felt she enjoyed a close-knit circle in the program.

They were fun. We were a, a small, tight group. We had only a few students and a few, staff-very tight. Because we were very tight as a small group they really mentored us, made sure that they, we were capable of doing the job that they required of us. We always had nice supervision, and I just remember feeling more like family. You, you never got tossed by the wayside.

Bernice remembers that close-knit feeling with her peers, faculty and staff.

I don't think there was anything really particular, I just think that we had a, not only a close-knit peer group, but also a close-knit faculty who really wanted all of us to succeed. So I think that was very important in any challenges that we had that we were, you know, it was an open-door policy-anybody that you felt comfortable and you need to talk to you just did it."

She added that she really enjoyed, "...the camaraderie with my fellow peers." Damara found that her peers helped sustain her.

The students that I was around or hung out with were good friends-a lot of study groups, you know, hanging out, doing dinner, that kind of thing, so it allowed me a chance to be in a close-knit group of people, outside of the classroom.

## **Family**

Deborah recalls how important it was for her Mother to support her through her college education.

Let's see, my mom. Knowing that if I didn't pass the exam she would be really disappointed in me. And so I think that that was a huge deal. So I think that's definitely the main thing right there-is trying to make her proud. So I think, yeah, 'cause I mean the further I go the prouder she gets. And I love it.

Moriah's mother was a role model to her and a great supporter of her decision to pursue athletic training.

I'm going to go ahead and say somebody outside of that was my mother, because she was just a hard working woman. She was a very hard working woman.

Supportive, and hard working. She really supported me in a lot of my decisions.

Grace also found that her mother was a tremendous motivator for her to be success as a college student. "Probably my mother. [Laughs.] She always gets more excited about my new degrees than I do. I'm not allowed to quit anything, because she gets mad.

Damara found a lot of support in her family, church and friends.

I just think I had some really nice people in my circle of people that looked after me, you know, friends and church and you know, all that kind of thing. So I

don't, I didn't really have problems-I-I didn't have, I had a supportive family so, you know, I could talk about things if I was struggling with a particular class or one of my friends would help me if I couldn't understand something, so it wasn't any real major issues.

Most of the participants identified some key external factors that they found to be significant in contributing to their success as athletic training students. The major and non-major faculty and staff provided guidance, mentoring and support during their college matriculation that helped ensure their success in college. The clinical education component was another significant motivator for encouraging persistence in the ATEP. The participants also indicated that the relationships they experienced as students were critical contributors to their success in becoming certified athletic trainers. Family, especially Mothers, were key individuals for some of the participants. Especially significant was the close-knit or tight-knit, familial relationships that some of the participants shared with their athletic training peers.

***What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women athletic training students?***

The participants identified a few barriers that they had to face and overcome as Black women in pursuit of the ATC credential at the collegiate level. Some of the participants identified factors that limited the support they received ranging from a lack of family support to financial support. The participants struggled with significant demands on their time that created challenges to their success. The women also had to overcome the barriers of sexism and racism.

## **LACK OF SUPPORT**

Even though some of the participants felt supported by their families to pursue athletic training as a career choice, not all of the participants enjoyed that support. One participant found the lack of support by her family to be a barrier she had to overcome as a college student. Phoebe remembered that her parents were not supportive of her major in athletic training, mostly because they really didn't understand what athletic training was.

I, you know honestly I don't think so, 'cause my parents didn't understand what I was doing. They didn't get it until after I had been in the career for a while. But my family didn't understand what I was doing, so they weren't, they weren't against it, but they just weren't all that supportive [laughs]. Because they didn't know what in the world I was doing.

Other participants faced a lack of financial support. Because athletic training students participate in their clinical education component at the same time they take classes, the demands on their time limit their ability to hold employment, even on a part-time basis. Deborah remembered struggling as a college student to support herself financially. "Money, was, money was an issue. I mean, but that's like a normal thing for college students, you know? But, money basically."

Elisha remembered having a hard time working outside of her class and clinical requirements. Although money was a barrier, she did find some support from the university, but not until she struggled first.

I think for me the biggest problem-which actually the school helped me work out a little bit-was financially being able to be an athletic trainer because it required so many hours it was hard for me to have a job, and pay for college and



everything all at the same time. So having to work as an athletic trainer in the training room, and then having to go to a real job, and then having to take real classes-like basically being able to balance, support myself was a huge challenge. Hanna overcame the financial barrier she faced by paying her own way through college without financial aid.

It was just mostly uh, I guess not being, uh, informed enough about different kinds of financial aid and stuff, because I-I-I worked, I paid in cash for my uh, for my degree. So, and that was, that was a hardship. The hardest thing was I had to have uh, two part-time jobs because I was paying out-of-state tuition. So I worked, I worked a lot more outside of school than I did in school.

When Moriah went through her internship route program, she received work study monies during her clinical rotations, which is a violation against the CAATE accreditation standards today. However, she questioned why there were so many scholarships available from colleges and universities to the other health and science majors, yet almost none available to students majoring in athletic training. (The NATA and most NATA district and state athletic training organizations offer scholarships, but not until the students are upperclassmen).

Another issue is scholarships. There are no athletic training-real athletic training academic scholarships. And, like for instance there's some for engineering, there's some for biology, but as far as athletic training itself there's hardly any. And the institution itself doesn't give any academic athletic training scholarships. And that would be nice if they'd do that too. When I was in school, my athletic training hours, I got paid for those, because that was part of my work study. But

now the kids can't even get paid. You're expected to travel and put in all these hours, but how are you supposed to maintain a living when you can't work?

Some of the participants did not feel supported by various challenges of their academic institutions. Hanna struggled with an unidentified learning disability that became a barrier to her success, which she overcame on her own. "Back in the day, I personally, was not prepared from way back, because they didn't realize that I had a learning disability."

Gabriella had to overcome the barrier of pursuing athletic training through the internship route. Since her institution did not sponsor an accredited ATEP, her matriculation through an internship program was disorganized.

I wouldn't say they were problems, because everything was kind of worked out, but early on they didn't know what to do with me. The summer of my freshman year, again realizing that there wasn't an athletic training major, they were trying to kind of develop an independent-type study or independent major, so it was kind of set in the college of health, recreation, and performance, and also non-teaching track.

Moriah did not enjoy the support of her peers in athletic training. Many of the participants did enjoy the close-knit bond of their peers and considered it a huge supporting factor in their successful matriculation. Moriah was an exception to this. She went through an internship program that only had a total of five athletic training students, including her. Because it was so small, and they were assigned to work with different supervisors at different sports, they rarely interacted together. Moriah felt she missed out

on working with the others, especially when she hears other athletic trainers talk now about the bond they shared with their peers in different programs.

Well, you've got to understand that at the time I was coming through my program there were only four boys and myself. Each of us never really had a time to really, I mean, you think about it, okay, there's five people, that would mean that come fall, we have, one guy was out doing football, I was with soccer-women's, one guy was with soccer girls, one guy was with volleyball, and the other guy he was helping out with basketball. So we never had a chance to interact, because it was so little of us there.

Theodora remembered going through her program so quickly that she did not feel prepared to enter the workforce after graduation and considered her lack of experience to be a barrier. As she started her first job, she did not feel supported by anyone.

I honestly feel that at one point I felt unprepared, because I didn't, I don't think I spent enough time being supervised early on, because, you know, I became certified in a year, I-I went through the pro-, I went through everything so quickly and, and passed everything the first time and so, I-I got through it so quickly so I felt out there on my own a little bit. I felt that I was out on my own a little bit too soon.

Many of the women remembered struggling with various time conflicts and challenged their overall success as athletic training students. At the time most of the participants matriculated through their athletic training experiences, the accreditation route required 800 clinical hours and the internship route required 1500 clinical hours, all while taking a full academic load of coursework.

Theodora felt that the clinical education component of athletic training created a huge barrier in terms of time conflict. As an athlete, she was unable to pursue athletic training until she was cut from the basketball team her senior year, causing her to initiate athletic training very late in her college career.

But I think here, in that, I don't know why and, and sometimes I think that a lot of times Black females that would be interested, interested in athletic training are athletes. And because they're athletes they don't get involved in the athletic training aspect. And, that has, that has been my experience at the junior college level. You know, it takes up so, the athletic, the athletic portion takes up so much time they don't have time to spend between the academics and the practices.

There is no time.

Gabriella was a dual major in physical therapy and athletic training (internship route). Most of the laboratory classes she needed to take for physical therapy were scheduled in the afternoons, conflicting with her clinical education requirements. She was forced to take a semester off from her clinicals in order to take the science classes she needed, creating conflict with her supervising athletic trainer.

Maybe one little stumbling block along the way was probably, sophomore or junior year when I was working still full-time in the training room and realized, to get all my sciences in and labs, would have thought my sciences were prerequisites to physical therapy, I was gonna have to take either, you know, take a quarter off from the training room-from working in the training room-because of the times that the chemistry and physics labs were scheduled and that kind of thing, so I had to actually take some time out of the training room, which at the

time wasn't very favorable, by the head athletic trainer that I also worked with, I mean, she didn't, well, I won't say-she didn't discourage it, but it wasn't encouraging, so that was hard, you know. But I always knew from the beginning I wanted to work both together, so I mean, I was gonna do what I needed to do. And I knew I was coming back to the training room. Her thought was, "Well, you're gonna be away, you're gonna not have experience with this sport, you know, that you're assigned to, and you know, we're kind of moving on without you," and I would just do that, but I would just like to, I had to, you know, for this semester be a full-time student, you know, to be able to get the courses and get the labs in that I needed to. So, you know, some things I just kind of had to work around.

Moriah considered it a barrier that she was unable to participate in more activities on campus.

Yeah, you know what, yeah, and that's one thing I do regret when I was in college that I didn't do more, but it's so hard to do that and do your clinical. It was just so hard traveling, on the road every other weekend, trying to keep up in classes, plus, I mean, minoring in biology, I carried a lot more science classes than other kids who just majored in PE. It was, you know, the academics that I, that I chose, you know, was more academically demanding on me and my time and I just really wish I had more time to be, to, to have been socially involved with the school. And, and I do, and I do believe I did miss out on a lot. At the time, I believe that I missed out on a lot, but nowadays, I did miss out on something-yes, I will say that. I did miss out on a lot. And, just because, just because of the clinicals and

the time. Because you know back then, you had to get your 1500 hours in. The workload didn't bother me because I already was exposed to the work load in high school. So the work load wasn't a problem, because I already know what I was getting into from high school. I think the difference was, was now I'm actually traveling more, whereas in high school yeah, you went to Friday night football game, and you were home that night. Well, traveling was one of the things-I mean, I enjoyed the traveling, but it did make me behind in a lot of the classes."

## **SEXISM**

Moriah and Deborah in particular shared experiences with sexism. They struggled with disturbing experiences with sexual harassment that, in Moriah's case, contributed to her decision to transfer from her first college. When I asked Moriah about the biggest obstacles she faced as an athletic training student, the first story she shared was her experience with sexual harassment from the head coach of the sport she was covering.

Alright, let's start on the bad stuff first. A lot of it was coaching staff. I had a very bad coach that just did not respect me as a student. I think, too, he didn't respect me as a woman and as an African-American. And he would be bullying the girls, I think it was some other stuff going on there too, that I, that I really didn't respect. Oh, he would cuss at us, and okay, there's one thing in, in a coach saying, "Move your ass," but a coach saying "Move your fat ass, bitch," no, no, no, no-you don't do that. You know, fondling the girls, and touching them, and one of the girls had mentioned to me that she, that she felt intimidated by the

coach, that he was even asking her for sexual favors. And I think at the time that also sparked an investigation too that I was a part of. I didn't really appreciate being a part of it.

Unfortunately, the athletic training staff that should have protected Moriah from those sexually harassing incidents did not.

The one head trainer, I don't, he didn't feel comfortable working around minorities period, and, and let alone women. So he had, then me coming in, oh, Lord, that was just two things combined. You know, he would have other people sitting in a room with him when he would talk to me. And I don't know whether or not they were witnesses to what was being said or how it was being said, but the other people would kind of cut in and say to me, "Well, he's trying to say this."

Deborah was protected by her mentor from being sexually harassed by the men's basketball team by not assigning her to work with them. The team had a history of sexually harassing the Black female athletic training students previously assigned to them, causing the young women to discontinue in the program for various, and related reason. Deborah remembered her fellow Black female peers' experiences. "But when they see that it's not what they've conjured this picture up to be, that's when they get a shock, and they're like, 'Okay, I don't want to do this anymore.'"

Deborah also felt that there was more Black-on-Black sexual harassment to deal with as a Black female athletic training student.

And also, I mean, again, I'm gonna-I can't get away from this, but I think that, I think that it has to do with, with the athletes being African-American. For

example, it's tough, how do I explain this, being an African-American girl, or woman, in athletic training, when you first are introduced to an all-male team, it's very, I mean, it's, it's not as difficult for me now, because I've done it for a little bit, and I know how to handle it, but all the cat calls, and all the "Hey, can I get your number?" or, you know, just, they're trying to talk to you and get your number, because they don't realize that this is your career, this is not some after-school job that you have. And, so, I think that all the extra attention that is given to African-American females who are just entering the field, they're like, "Oh, yeah, they like me now. And I-I can talk to them." And they don't know that, no-that's, you're, setting us back, by doing that. And, it's, it's a race thing. Because, yeah, I've seen it too where they do it to Caucasian girls, but it's way, way worse with African-American girls, because Black guys want to talk to Black girls the majority of the time. And I've seen it. I've seen it firsthand. It happens every single day."

## **RACISM**

In addition to dealing with sexism, Moriah and Deborah dealt with considerable instances of racism. The same coach who sexually harassed Moriah also subjected her to racist behaviors as well. "The one coach actually had his Black coach come and talk to me, because he didn't feel comfortable talking to me." The racism that Moriah dealt with was not limited to her clinical experiences. She also remembers that the racism she experienced in the classroom sealed her decision to transfer to another university.

This is the reason why I didn't finish up my program, my athletic training program at the original undergraduate school I was in. There was an instructor,



an AT instructor, who, whenever I raised my hand to ask questions in class, she would say my answer was wrong, and then the, then someone else White in the class would raise their hand and say the exact same answer and she'd praise them. And then there were a couple tests that I had taken in the class where she marked my answers wrong, the kids in the classroom with the exact same thing I wrote, and theirs was right. I just really felt at the time my existence was not being, being present, or acknowledged, I don't think my existence was being acknowledged.

Moriah's experiences only slightly improved at the second institution she attended.

There were some White people who were like, really cool, and they had no problem having you near them and around them. And then there were others who don't have a problem with you, so long as you keep your distance. And a lot of that was my attitude and my personality just did not click well. And I think because of my attitude and my personality, combined with me being female and Black it just, it just was not a good mix at that place.

Deborah believed that her conflicts with one of the staff athletic trainers were racially motivated.

One of the staff members, we didn't get along very well. I don't know why, but I just felt that he always hated me. Which was weird, because I got along with everyone else in the whole place; students, staff, teaching assistants, everyone. And it was just, except him, like I was deathly scared of this person. And so I think that affected, how I approached issues with him. It was a good learning experience for me, now I know how to handle, you know, problems and issues

with people that I don't get along with. So I think it's good. But back then I think that it did affect, how I handled stuff with him. So, but now, you know, you live and you learn. You look back and learn from it. Was it racism? I mean, to be honest, when I don't get along with someone, I automatically think that. Like that's the first thing that I think, even though it shouldn't be. But, I mean, being Black, you have to.

As one of only five athletic training students in an internship route program, Moriah felt alienated from her peers both logistically and racially.

At the time, it was only four guys and myself, so I was the only girl, and I was the only African-American. We had one person in each grade. There was a freshman, I was a sophomore, a junior, a senior, and a fifth-year senior, and that's how it was. So we never really interacted with each other. And, you know, now, now, you know, our program is accredited. The program's accredited now at my old university, well, now they have a lot more of them, and they all kind of know each other. And I do feel envious of, I'm just gonna go ahead and tell you, I am jealous of, and I wish I had that, because they all came up at the same time in the program. There were like five kids in one grade, five kids in one grade, three in one grade. So they had a lot more chance to interact than I did. I just, it was just me, I felt like I was alone and lonesome.

Moriah remembered that the racism she experienced was not limited to her ATEP, but was an institutional issue as well.

You know what too, being Black on a predominantly White campus, a lot of the campuses were not as open to making African-Americans feel more welcome. I

will just put it that way, that's a nice way of putting it. They were not welcome. They were not very welcoming to African-Americans. So that in itself put a damper on things, where you had kids say to you, you know, "There's no campus life here, but you can make campus life outside of the school." Well, the thing was, was getting outside of school so I can have a campus life and I can have fun, that was the difficult part. And not really knowing a whole lot of students. I mean, I barely knew a whole lot of kids at my school. You know, somebody said "Are you gonna buy a yearbook?" I'm like "Why buy a yearbook when I don't know anybody in it?" And somebody said "Well, are you gonna take a picture?" I'm like "Why take a picture when I don't even know anybody in it?" So, that hurt.

Moriah also experienced instances of being stereotyped as a Black woman in an athletic setting. Despite wearing identification that indicated she was an athletic trainer, it was assumed by others that she was an athlete or a coach.

Other examples were when I traveled on the road, there would be other athletic trainers who didn't, [laughs] even though I have on a shirt that says "athletic trainer" that says "sports medicine" on it, there were other White trainers that just kind of said, "Oh, where's your trainer?" I had a young lady stand next to me for about twenty minutes, we talked back and forth about athletic training information, I had on a shirt that said "sports medicine". I had on a shirt that said "athletic trainer" and she still asked "Where is your trainer?" Other things would be being mistaken for a coach, being mistaken for a player.

Deborah also remembered being subjected to stereotyping.

Unfortunately I think there are a lot of things that can discourage, I mean, discourage me, but I get over it in like five seconds. Just little things that occur. Which reminds you that people still don't understand, still don't realize that I'm just as qualified as anybody else, and a really good example of that is my student who I had was a White male, and we would go out to the tennis courts and watch a match. And we would be dressed exactly alike, and I mean, I look young; I look like I'm nineteen even though I'm twenty-six. I look really young. But we would be dressed in the same exact outfits, we would be sitting on the same bleachers, we would both have fanny-packs on, whatever, I would be sitting closest to whoever, they would go around me and go to the White male, and ask him whatever they needed to ask, and he would automatically say "Well, I-I'm sorry, she would have to answer that for you, she's my supervisor."

Many of the participants identified various factors that became barriers to their success and made matriculation through their ATEP a challenge. Some of the participants were not supported by their families. Others dealt with significant financial challenges. Many of the participants faced varying institutional challenges. A common challenge faced by some of the participants was the demand on their time. Two of the participants dealt with significant incidents of sexism and racism. However, all of the women overcame those obstacles to become certified athletic trainers.

## **SUMMARY**

The results of ten interviews and three case studies with ten Black women who are certified athletic trainers were captured and presented in order to tell the stories of their experiences as Black women who successfully matriculated through an athletic

training program in order to become credentialed and practicing athletic trainers. The methodology for collection of the participants' stories, as approved by the Duquesne IRB and followed, was documented. An introduction of each participant and the details of their interviews were presented as were the details of the follow-up case studies. The details for the data analysis were documented followed by the results of the Personal Data Survey. The details of the participants' experiences with regard to the effects of mentoring, mentor race and gender, and the factors that served as support or barriers to success were documented in response to the research questions of this study and serve as evidence to sustain the findings.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and other factors on the retention and credentialing of Black women athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of those factors on the academic success of Black women ATSS in ATEPs.

Based upon a review of literature focusing on mentoring, a question was raised as to the effectiveness mentoring offered as a method of college retention for Black women ATSS enrolled in ATEPs. Through this research project, it was my hope to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSS?
2. What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women ATSS?
3. What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSS?
4. What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSS?

The information acquired from this study will contribute to, and possibly initiate, the limited literature available to the individuals responsible for the recruitment, retention and successful education of ethnically diverse ATs. Furthermore, this information will assist athletic training educators to understand better how to guide Black female ATs (and perhaps other ethnically diverse students, male and female) to academic and professional success.

The college experiences of ten Black women who are certified athletic trainers were documented in order to tell the stories of their experiences as Black women who successfully matriculated through college in order to become credentialed and practicing athletic trainers. Three of the women were selected for in-depth case study in order to further explore their more extreme experiences and further inform the experiences of their peers. The details of the participants' experiences with regard to the effects of mentoring, mentor race and gender, and the factors that served as support or barriers to success were documented in response to the research questions of this study. In order to identify similar or consistent themes among the participants' responses to the questions, I followed the cyclical analysis methods outlined by Gay and Airasian (2000). I elected to utilize ATLAS.ti 5.0, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, a CAQDA program, in order to better organize the volume of the data and to assist me in pursuing a more in-depth examination of that data. Initial codes were identified and later refined through the process of focused coding by combining infrequently used codes and dividing up the more frequently used codes into subcodes or focused codes. The focused codes that emerged from the ten participant interviews and three case studies were categorized into three families. The focused codes were organized against the research questions to form a First Iteration of codes according

to Anfara's Code Mapping method (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). With the guidance of the research questions, the First Iteration of focused codes was grouped into themes (Second Iteration). Through constant comparative analysis, relationships were identified between the themes to create the qualitative findings of the study.

## **FINDINGS**

In light of the stories shared by the ten participants, and elaborated on by Deborah, Gabriella, and Moriah in their individual case studies, there are several results that reveal answers to the four research questions posed in this study:

1. Mentoring is desirable, promotes efficient matriculation, and contributes to successful college completion and credentialing of Black women ATSs. Not only does mentoring promote Black women ATSs, it also serves as protection against racism, sexism and classism.
2. Although shared race and gender are favorable mentor characteristics, accessible and approachable mentors are more essential traits.
3. In addition to strong personal student attributes, several characteristics inherent to AT education contribute to successful college completion and credentialing.
4. Racism, sexism and classism persist as barriers to success.

The following pages will elaborate on each of the findings of this study. The perspectives and experiences of the participants will be recalled, followed by a review of literature that creates agreement with the findings. Additionally, the lens of BFT will be cast over the findings to seek clearer understanding of the participants' experiences.

### **FINDING 1**



**Mentoring is desirable, promotes efficient matriculation, and contributes to successful college completion and credentialing of Black women ATs**

*Mentoring is Effective, Desirable and Valuable*

Based upon the experiences of Hanna, Gabriella, Bernice, Damara and Deborah, they agreed that mentoring was a desirable and valuable process for promoting academic and professional success. Hanna and Gabriella found mentoring provided them with someone to, "...bounce things off of." Bernice and Deborah found that mentoring provided someone who would offer an "extra boost along the way" or who "encourages you" when you want to quit or don't think you can do it (athletic training).

Additionally, Elisha, Grace, and Deborah believed that having positive mentoring provided them with a more efficient matriculation process through college and the ATEP than if they had not been mentored. Having a mentor available to them to offer guidance, direction, advisement, goal setting, and opportunities helped them to avoid the obstacles that could potentially lead to their academic attrition. Perhaps of even greater criticality, having a mentor also helped to promote their successful and timely progress to the point of graduation and post-graduate appointment. As stated by Deborah, using a point A to point B analogy, "...maybe eventually you'll get to B, but you're just gonna do a whole bunch of unnecessary things before getting there" without the benefit of mentoring.

Several studies examining recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students at both PWIs and HBCUs have recognized the value of mentoring in achieving successful graduation outcomes, which is in agreement with my findings. The implementation of formal mentoring programs has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on the retention and graduation of ethnically diverse students (Astin, Tsui & Avalos, 1996;

Brown, 1998; Evans, 1999; Lee, 1999; Leon, Dougherty, and Maitland, 1997, Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Haring, 1999; Murrell, Crosby & Ely, 1999; Sloan, 1996; Thile & Matt, 1995; Wilson, 2000). In AT, Curtis, Helion, & Domsohn (1998); Malasarn, Bloom & Crumpton (2002); Mensch & Ennis (2002); and Pitney & Ehlers (2004) reported that mentoring was a desired and critical tool for supporting, promoting and acculturating ATS and young CAT professionals.

The participants of this study stand as ATSs who are traditionally positioned at the intersection of oppression driven by racism, sexism and classism. As ATSs who are oppressed by their race, gender and class within the academy, the shared obstacles they commonly faced had the potential to disrupt their progress, interfere with their academic preparation, delay their matriculation and ultimately prevent them from successfully completing their ATEP and professional credentialing. However, the effectiveness of the mentoring process was a strong, positive force that not only sustained the participants, but also helped to protect them from the oppressive barriers encountered along the way and ensured their college matriculation was efficient and successful. Even for Grace and Phoebe who felt that their success was primarily self-driven and inevitable without a mentor, mentoring was still a factor that helped protect them from pitfalls along the way and promote their timely matriculation.

The shared experiences of Hanna, Gabriella, Grace and Moriah revealed that the process of mentoring helped to build their professional confidence and independence as novice ATS, offering a sense of validation in the proficiency of their AT knowledge and skills, thus propelling them into future successes. Gabriella remembered her mentor instilling confidence in her in various situations by always telling her, “Yeah, you can do

this.” In accompaniment with confidence, mentoring also added a sense of validation from an external party. With reference to her mentor, Moriah stated,

...she gave us a lot of responsibility. She made us feel important. And I really, really like that, how she made us feel important... it is just so important to have that mentor there to just tell you when you’re messing up, tell you when you’re doing a good job.

Consistent with this finding, Curtis, Helion, and Domsohn (1998) found that ATs desired confidence building behaviors and a sense of autonomy through mentoring from their supervising athletic trainers. They wrote, “Acknowledgement and validation from their supervisors of their knowledge and skills set a positive tone for a productive clinical experience” (p.252). Pitney and Ehlers (2004) found similar results from their study that revealed how mentoring in ATEPs encouraged confidence in ATs. A study by Mensch and Ennis (2002) revealed that purposeful teaching and mentoring offered by clinical instructors created a greater sense of independence that enhanced confidence in ATs.

For the participants who had to overcome the barriers of racism, sexism and classism in order to attain academic success, the nurturing, guidance and validation inherent in the mentoring process were factors capable of creating a sense of independence and confidence in the AT related knowledge and skills of the participants. This autonomy empowered Hanna, Grace, Grabiella and Moriah to overcome the oppressions that may have given them reason to question their abilities to successfully complete the ATEP and become a CAT.

The perspectives of Moriah, Gabriella, Deborah and Bernice revealed the finding that the process of mentoring could create a safe, welcoming environment and sense of belonging. Gabriella remembered that her first day in the athletic training room as a Black female student and freshmen her future mentor was, "... welcoming from day one... it doesn't seem like that could make such a difference... that was key." When Bernice asked her future mentor if there was a place for minorities in athletic training, she remembered her mentor sharing with her, "And she told me there was very much a need for us to get involved. So after that I felt comfortable. Just knowing that there was a place." Deborah's mentor felt that she needed to protect her from the risk of sexual harassment from a men's team that had previously contributed to the attrition of other Black female ATs. So Deborah was not assigned to work with the team. At first, Deborah was upset with the decision, but then she realized, "... she kinda guided me and protected me in that kind of way."

This finding is consistent with literature that cites mentoring as an effective method of support for ethnically diverse students (Astin, Tsui & Avalos, 1996; Brown, 1998; Evans, 1999; Lee, 1999; Leon, Dougherty, and Maitland, 1997, Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Haring, 1999; Murrell, Crosby & Ely, 1999; Sloan, 1996; Thile & Matt, 1995; Wilson, 2000). Several researchers in the field of AT have also cited the benefits of mentoring on the success of ATs (Curtis, Helion, & Domsohn, 1998; Malasarn, Bloom & Crumpton, 2002; and Pitney & Ehlers, 2004. Mensch and Ennis (2002) found that it was important for the faculty and clinical instructors to create a positive educational environment within the ATEP for ATs. This was accomplished by establishing positive mentoring relationships.

Racism, sexism and classism individually have the potential to create unsafe and unwelcoming environments. Racism, sexism and classism are even used directly to create an atmosphere that clearly indicates that targeted groups are not welcome in selective environments. The methods used to create those unwelcome atmospheres usually equates to unsafe practices and acts of violence. For example, there were several incidents in 2007 in which the hanging of a noose, symbolic of racialized lynchings, on school grounds or places of employment were used to indicate that targeted individuals (Black male students and Black female employees) are not welcome in those environments (NAACP, 2007).

Black women simultaneously stand in the face of all three forms of oppression where racism, sexism and classism intersect. All three forms of oppression are used exclusively and collectively to exclude Black women from the academy and other institutions. The process of mentoring can create a positive, welcoming and safe environment that builds a sense of belonging and security for Black women and has the potential to diminish or interfere with the exclusion of oppression.

*The Absence of Mentoring Has the Potential to Contribute to Discontinuation*

The perspectives described by Deborah, Elisha, Moriah, Theodora, Hanna and Damara lead to the finding that an absence of mentoring has the potential to result in college and professional discontinuation. These participants were able to place such value on the benefits of the mentoring process that they believed the absence of mentoring could have resulted in significant detrimental effects on their successful college matriculation and entry into the athletic training profession. Deborah recognized that mentoring helped her to avoid making, "... a lot of bad decisions." She added, "... I

probably wouldn't be here at [current institution for graduate school]." Without the guidance and support of mentoring following a negative experience, Moriah believed, "... I would have left school." Both Theodora and Hanna believed that without mentoring at a critical juncture in their college careers they would not have gone on to become CATs.

In Abney's 1988 study of mentoring with Black women coaches and athletics administrators, her participants who did not experience the guidance of a mentor during their career development felt that had they benefited from the guidance of a mentor, their career development would have been better.

These findings are consistent with those of Astin, Tsui & Avalos (1996), Lee (1999), Leon, Dougherty & Maitland (1997) and Sloan (1996) who found that mentoring had a positive effect on graduation outcomes. Aiken, et.al. (2001) found that a lack of mentoring among nurse participants lead to significant frustration, alienation and difficulty successfully completing the nursing program. In the field of athletic training, Malasarn, Bloom & Crumpton (2002) and Pitney, Ilsley and Rintala (2002) found that mentoring contributed to the successful support, socialization and acculturation of young CATs entering the profession.

The danger of academic discontinuation that hovered over the participants in this study came in many different forms, yet spawned from the point of convergence of the triple threat of racism, sexism and classism common to Black women. The forms of discontinuation included distraction, institution withdrawal, college transfer, and failure to sit for the BOC examination, all of which were created or amplified by racism, sexism and classism. The participants who benefited from mentoring recognized the positive

impact it had in helping them to overcome or avoid falling victim to the dangers of academic discontinuation that threatened them because of their unique loci as Black women.

*The Activities Associated with Mentoring Contribute to Successful Matriculation,  
Professional Advancement and Credentialing*

Another finding of this study was the participants' identification of specific mentoring activities that contributed to their successful completion of an ATEP and entry into the AT profession. Deborah received advisement and guidance through the mentoring process that aided her in overcoming not only the big obstacles but also the daily challenges of being a college student. "I would always go into her office and she would be glad to help me..." Her mentor also gave her graduate school and career advice, helping her to set post-graduation goals and introducing her to a professional network.

Mentoring was an effective tool for Theodora upon graduation when her mentor helped her acquire her first job at a high school. "... he recommended me and I know he was instrumental in me getting that position." The mentoring program Elisha participated in helped instill in her the need for professionalism, professional interactions and networking. "It was preparedness for the future that I think she was giving me."

These findings are consistent with several pieces of literature that cite evidence which indicates that successful mentoring has a positive effect on ethnically diverse students' college retention and professional success (Brown, 1998; Campbell, 2000; Lee, 1999; Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Thile & Matt, 1995).

The participants were positioned to experience college from the standpoint of Black women who are historically oppressed by the convergence of race, gender and class. As such, they were at risk for not completing college and becoming CATs. However, not only did the positive influence of mentoring protect them from the barriers of racism, sexism and classism, mentoring also afforded them the basic advantages that all college students should have access to; sound academic and professional advisement, guidance, planning and placement within a professional network. The process of mentoring was an effective method of protection AND promotion for several of the participants, serving as great assistance in helping the participants attain academic and professional success early in their careers.

## **FINDING 2**

**Although shared race and gender are favorable mentor characteristics, accessible and approachable mentors are more essential traits**

### **Mentor Race and Gender are Less Relevant Criteria for Effective Mentors**

The findings revealed, from the participants perspective and based upon their lived experiences as Black women ATSS enrolled in ATEPs, although shared race and shared gender are preferable mentor characteristics the participants believed that having accessible and approachable mentors are more important. Elisha, Gabriella, Damara and Deborah all noted that it would be preferable to have Black women CATs serve as mentors for Black women ATSS. Elisha believed that a Black woman CAT would be better able to understand the challenges that face Black women ATSS. Gabriella felt it would be nice as a Black woman to see another Black woman in the profession you aspire to participate in. Damara felt that Black female students would relate better to a



Black woman mentor because the experiences of Black women are unique. Deborah thought that, “Black mentors have probably gone through what you will go through.”

Bernice, Phoebe and Moriah believed that Black women ATS would benefit more from having a woman as a mentor. Bernice was very adamant that Black female students should only be mentored by women because she did not feel that men had the nurturing ability to successfully mentor female students. “It’s really important to have someone who has a nurturing instinct.” Phoebe felt that regardless of race, women were better mentors for female students, “Because they are best gonna be able to relate and understand...” Moriah believed that women would serve as better mentors for female students because men do not face the same challenges that women in AT do, thus men would not understand all of the issues or offer advice for overcoming those challenges and issues.

#### *Qualities of Effective Mentors are Most Important*

Ultimately, almost all of the participants believed that although shared race and shared gender with a mentor were preferable, these shared characteristics were less relevant criteria for effective mentors. Hanna, Theodora, Phoebe, Grace, Elisha, Gabriella, Damara and Deborah all agreed that it was more important that Black woman ATSs 1) have a mentor and 2) have a mentor who brought several other characteristics and benefits to their students. Table 5.1 lists some of these characteristics and benefits as noted by the participants.

Table 5.1

Beneficial Characteristics of Successful Mentors

Accessible	Respectful	Confident
Approachable	Attentive	Encouraging
Supportive	Caring	Sympathetic
Interested	Helpful	Culturally Sensitive
Professional	Engaged	Welcoming
Constructive	Nurturing	Appreciative of Mentoring
Trustworthy	Knowledgeable	Networked/Connected

These findings from the qualitative portion of the study are consistent with information provided by the same participants from the Personal Data Survey. Seventy-one percent of the participants' mentors and role models who influenced their educational experiences were White and 66% were women. Fifty-two percent of the key individuals were White women and only 14% were Black women, however none were CATs. The participants in this study did not have the opportunity to be mentored by Black woman CAT because none of the participants had access to a Black woman CAT during their athletic training educational experience. As such, the participants only had the opportunity to be mentored professionally by a certified athletic trainer who was White. These positive experiences with White mentors helped to form the perception that race and gender were not critical criteria for successful mentors.

These findings are consistent with a qualitative study conducted by Lee (1999) who concluded that shared race between students and faculty was less important than the

quality of the faculty interaction, and ethnically diverse students preferred mentor relationships matched by academic career paths.

The findings of my study are also consistent with several other studies of ethnically diverse college student participants that found that same-raced mentoring was welcomed when the opportunity presented, but was not as critical as benefiting from quality, networked mentoring (Campbell, 2000; Enomoto, Gardiner & Grogan, 2000; Gibbons, 1993; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Haring, 1999; Harris, 1999; and Wilson, 2000).

In the field of AT, several studies agree with my findings that ATS perceive it to be important and desirable to develop a positive, meaningful mentoring relationship with a CATs and that their mentor should be accessible, approachable, nurturing, and competent with the students best interest (academic and professional) at heart (Curtis, Helion, & Domsohn (1998); Mensch & Ennis (2002); and Pitney & Ehlers (2004).

This finding in my study may appear to diverge somewhat from the tenets of BFT, however, I would suggest that further examination of this finding through the BFT lens clearly exposes the principles of BFT. BFT is a standpoint epistemology that recognizes and gives voice to Black women who are marginalized by their unique and shared experiences at the intersection of race, gender and class (Collins, 1990). As such, it seems logical to assume that novice Black women students would prefer to be mentored by experienced Black women faculty members/professionals; afterall, who better to guide a young Black woman through the maze of racism, sexism and classism unique to Black women in U.S. society and the academy than another Black woman who has successfully navigated that same maze? I submit several factors that inform this finding:

1. The participants stated a *preference* to be mentored by a mentor who shares their race and gender. However, the participants themselves stated that shared race and gender were not the pivotal criteria to consider when selecting the most effective mentor. Through their own experiences, the participants came to recognize that the factors identified in Table 5 were more valuable and desired characteristics of the best mentor.
2. There are not enough Black women CATs available to serve as mentors for all of the Black women ATs matriculating through ATEPs. In addition to the lack of Black women who have historically entered the profession of athletic training, the lack of experienced Black women CATs has been compounded by the early exit from the profession of AT by the most experienced Black women CATs (Abney, 1988 and Grant-Ford, 1997).
3. As Black women who were successful in gaining admission into college, many of the participants recognized, from their unique perspective as Black women experiencing the world from the point where race, gender and class collaborate to work against them, that as marginalized women, “outsiders within” according to Collins (1990), they would benefit from mentoring provided by an experienced member of the profession in the majority (White), who could increase her skill at navigating in the predominantly White profession (Lee, 1999 and Campbell, 2000).
4. Consistent with Abney’s (1988) findings, the participants felt that they had the support and guidance of Black women and men role models outside of the

profession of AT and the academy who would help them navigate the maze of racism, sexism and classism.

### **FINDING 3**

**In addition to strong personal student attributes, several characteristics inherent to AT education contribute to successful college completion and credentialing**

#### **Internal Factors Contribute to Successful Matriculation of Black Women ATs**

Based on their experiences as Black women enrolled in ATEPs, Damara, Bernice, Grace and Phoebe all identified internal factors or personal characteristics within themselves that they believed helped them to overcome the challenges they faced in college and contributed to their successful attainment of the BOC credential. Damara felt that she possessed a strong ability to tolerate the racism and sexism in her environment and not let negative things deter her from personal success as an ATS. Damara, Bernice and Grace all believed themselves to be self-determined individuals who had made up their minds about pursuing the profession of athletic training, set goals to become athletic trainers, and committed themselves to those goals no matter what challenges were laid down in front of them. Phoebe believed that self-determination and assertiveness contributed to her success. The most consistent term used to describe themselves was “self-determination”.

This qualitative finding is consistent with the information provided by the participants from the Personal Data Survey. The participants ranked the following attributes as contributing to their academic success:

1. Having a strong drive and determination
2. Being competent
3. Having a good personality
4. Believing in God

5. Being confident
6. Being assertive
7. Having a mentor
8. Feeling emotionally supported by family
9. Being patient
10. Having a role model

This finding is consistent with a similar finding by Aiken et al. (2001) who identified that interpersonal factors such as determination and self-motivation encouraged subjects (Black women) to complete their program in nursing. The Black women participants in Abney's 1988 study also identified the internal factors of having strong drive and determination, being confident, and being competent as personal characteristics that contributed to their success in coaching and athletics administration.

As Black women oppressed within a maze of intersecting barriers constructed from racism, sexism and classism, the participants of this study had to avoid these barriers in order to secure success (college matriculation and credentialing) with tools they possessed within themselves; determination, self-motivation, knowledge, skill, and competence.

Another internal factor that some of the participants identified in themselves as ATSS was the acquired skill of navigating in a predominantly White culture. Hanna, Bernice, and Grace believed that their previous experiences with White culture provided them with the skills and knowledge to successfully matriculate through ATEPs at PWIs. Hanna grew up in a multiracial family, had familial experience with White culture and felt comfortable and confident attending college at a PWI and interacting with predominantly White people. Bernice attended a predominantly White high school and felt prepared and comfortable to navigate her way through college at a PWI. Grace grew

up on military bases that were predominantly White, attending schools that were diverse. She believed that this prepared her to successfully matriculate through college at a PWI.

This finding was consistent with previous studies that investigated the role of student background and previous interracial experiences of Black college students on their perceived ethnic fit, adjustment, and retention at PWIs. These studies found that previous experience and interaction with students and friends from the dominant culture (predominantly White) prior to enrollment at a PWI increased the participants' comfort, perception of fit, successful retention, academic satisfaction and academic performance (Chavous, Rivas, Green, & Helaire, 2002; Graham, Baker & Wapner, 1985; and Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998).

As “outsiders within” the dominant culture, Black women must navigate their way around the oppressive barriers of racism, sexism and classism in order to successfully attain their personal and professional goals. Hanna, Bernice and Grace had the advantage of experience navigating within the majority culture before attending college. They had the benefit of developing personal tools within a predominantly White environment before college. As such, they brought experiences to college with them that helped them to not only successfully deal with incidents of racism, sexism or classism, but to establish a level of comfort and fit within a PWI that supported their successful educational endeavors. By acknowledging their position within the margins, recognizing that they would face oppressive barriers, and knowing how to tolerate and resolve the issues brought by those barriers allowed them to secure their own successful matriculation through college at a PWI.

*External Factors Contribute to Successful Matriculation of Black Women ATSS*

The participants of this study were able to identify specific external factors that contributed to their successful completion of an ATEP and entry into the AT profession. In addition to the didactic component required in accredited ATEPs, there is an equally important and requisite clinical education component that ATSS participate in. Similar to most health care provider preparation programs, athletic training includes a supervised clinical practice requirement. What makes athletic training education different from the other professions is that the clinical component transpires while the athletic training student is taking associated coursework. Other health care provider programs include a supervised clinical practice, such as an internship or residency, after the coursework has been completed. ATSS are required to be assigned to a CAT who provides athletic training services to varied athletic teams at the high school, college and professional levels or to patients in outpatient rehabilitation settings as well as many other approved environments. This co-requisite clinical education experience affords the athletic training student with the unique opportunity to interact with and learn from clinical supervisors (usually other CATs approved by the program) during their formative collegiate years. Many of the faculty members who teach the athletic training courses and provide academic advisement are the same individuals who service the athletic teams and supervise the ATS in the clinical setting. One of the unique findings of this study was the support that comes from the clinical education component itself.

One of the most commonly identified external factors was the support that many of the participants enjoyed from faculty and athletic training staff members while enrolled in their collegiate studies. Whether those faculty and staff members were mentors, role models or supervisors, they were important contributors to the success of



these participants as ATs. Bernice identified one of the most influential persons on her college career as the White woman who served as the program director and her academic advisor. Theodora felt supported by not only the ATEP faculty member who served as her mentor, but also by the rest of the ATEP faculty and staff, all of whom were White. Hanna and Phoebe recalled the support provided to them by their mentors and the ATEP faculty and staff at their respective universities, again, all of whom were White. This finding is confirmed by the participants who identified head or assistant athletic trainers, instructors, professors and program directors (90%) associated with the ATEP as key individuals who positively contributed to their experiences at ATs. Since ATs are typically assigned to work with several CATs during the clinical education portion of the ATEP, they have the opportunity to interact with, and learn from, many athletic trainers, each of whom represents another person to potentially serve as a mentor and/or role model.

This qualitative finding is consistent with the information provided by the participants in the Personal Data Survey. The most frequently cited (47%) individuals of influence on the participants while enrolled in the ATEP were the instructors, professors, and programs directors who guided the participants' educational experiences in and out of the classroom. Head and assistant athletic trainers who supervised the participants as clinical instructors during the clinical education experience were the second most cited individuals of influence (43%). Half of all these influential individuals served as both mentors and role models to the participants, while the other half served equally as either a mentor or a role model.

This finding is consistent with several studies in the field of athletic training that indicate the importance of the clinical instructor to the successful matriculation and program satisfaction of ATSs, especially during the clinical education component. In a 2004 study by Pitney and Ehlers, they found that a significant number of participants identified their clinical instructor as their mentor. Mensch and Ennis (2002) found that ATSs desired “authentic experiences” and a positive learning environment from their athletic training educators and clinical instructors in the classroom and the clinical setting. Additionally, they found that developing strong instructor-student relationships enhanced the ATS educational experience and was viewed as valuable by both students and instructors. Curtis et al. (1998) found that the supervising athletic trainer (clinical instructor) was identified by ATSs as a critical component to their development and growth. Participants in this study also identified common mentoring characteristics such as explanation, demonstration, constructive feedback, nurturing, accessibility, confidence building and role modeling as desirable traits from their clinical instructors, thus fostering a positive, enjoyable and challenging experience that the ATSs wish to continue to participate in (retention).

Grace, Bernice, Damara and Deborah all recalled how much they enjoyed practicing their knowledge and skills in their clinical rotations. Many of their most favorable memories centered around the experiences they had working with athletes. Practicing their knowledge and skills in the clinical setting kept these women interested, involved, challenged, appreciated, and feeling like part of the team. Grace considered herself a hands-on learner, so practicing her skills helped reinforce her confidence and provided her with an enjoyable learning experience.

Coinciding with the positive experiences afforded by the clinical education component was the bond that the participants remembered sharing with their fellow athletic training students. Most accredited ATEPs maintain a limited enrollment based on a required standard ratio of students to CATs (8:1). As such, program enrollment is small allowing the ATSs to form close mentoring relationships with program faculty and staff and with their athletic training peers. These historically small programs typically allow for programs to cultivate a sense of familiarity and appropriate intimacy among the students, faculty and staff. The students spend a considerable amount of time with their peers in class as well as practicing the application of their knowledge and skills together in shared clinical rotations.

Elisha, Hanna, Theodora, Phoebe, Bernice and Damara all vividly remembered the support they enjoyed among their peers. A very common term described by these participants in reference to their relationships with their classmates was “tight-knit” or “close-knit”. Because ATSs experience college different than students in other majors, Elisha recalled that it was her peers in athletic training who related better to her than her Black friends. Elisha’s mother even asked her why she did not hang out with other Black students. Elisha explained to her mother that she shared more in common with her athletic training peers, spent significantly more time with them in class and in their clinicals and did not purposely exclude Black students from her circle.

Revis-Shingles (2001) found similar descriptions in her study. Most of the participants in her study indicated that they also formed “tight knit” group relationships with classmates and instructors. Additionally, participants in a study by Mensch and Ennis (2002) identified a “family-type atmosphere” as valuable within the ATEP. Their

participants also identified the creation of positive peer relationships as important in enhancing ATS learning experiences and success. Henning, Weidner and Jones (2006) investigated a more formal method of peer relationship (Peer Assisted Learning) and found that 66% of ATS participants practiced their clinical skills with other ATS peers and experienced less anxiety when practicing those skills in front of their peers. This concept of peer collaboration promotes the theory that trust, interdependence and teamwork shared by ATSs contributes to their individual success, perceived fit and program completion.

Another important external support factor recalled by the participants was the support they received from their families to complete college and become CATs. Deborah, Moriah, Grace and Damara all agreed that the support of their families was a critical factor to help sustain them in the quest for collegiate success. Deborah and Grace were significantly motivated by their mothers' pride in their college accomplishments. Moriah was inspired by her mother's work ethic and identified her as a role model for her own success.

Levey, Blanco and Jones (1998) cite the importance of family support in assisting ethnically diverse students' success in college. Consistently, Abney's (1988) study of Black women coaches and athletics administrators found that her participants perceived family encouragement, specifically by their mothers, to be instrumental to their success in college and as young professionals. Many of the participants in Abney's study also considered their mothers and other family members to be supportive role models, further encouraging their college completion.

**Racism, sexism and classism persist as barriers to success**

### *The Lack of Institutional Support Challenges Success*

Based on the experiences share by the participants on this study, several barriers were identified as obstacles that they had to overcome in order to secure their college success and professional credentialing. Even as some of the participants enjoyed support from their families, others did not feel supported by their families. Similarly, many of the participants received scholarships to attend college or received sufficient financial assistance to offset the stress of paying for college. However, some of the participants were burdened by a lack of financial aid or the need to work on top of their regular course load and clinical rotations. Several of the participants who matriculated through an internship route program and were encumbered by institutional barriers such as the lack of standards, organization, consistency and policy. Additionally, many of the participants from internship routes did not enjoy camaraderie and peer support due to the very low number of fellow ATS (often as few as 4-5 total students). One of the biggest institutional barriers stemmed from the time conflicts inherent in the clinical education component.

Phoebe was the only participant to indicate that she did not feel supported by her family to pursue athletic training, but only because they did not understand what athletic training was while she was in college. She was able to overcome that obstacle on her own and with the support of her peers and faculty members and eventually educated her family about athletic training and garnered their support.

Deborah, Elisha, Hanna, and Moriah all remembered not feeling financially supported to attend college. Elisha, Hanna and Moriah all worked as much as they could around their class schedules and clinical rotations, which created a significant burden on

their time and energy. Moriah felt that many other academic programs, especially in the health professions and sciences, offered greater numbers of scholarships. She felt that many ATs would pursue and qualify for scholarships if they were available.

Hanna, Gabriella, Moriah and Theodora felt oppressed on an institutional level. Hanna had to overcome a learning disability on her own in order to complete college, remaining undiagnosed throughout. Gabriella, Moriah and Theodora had to overcome the less structured academic pathway of the internship route to credentialing, which no longer exists. Many ATs who pursued the internship route did so independently of an organized process on an individualized basis. This created inconsistency and challenges that the women typically had to work out on their own. Additionally, as in the case of Moriah, she did not enjoy a collegial relationship with her peers because they were so few in number. In Gabriella's case, she was taking pre-requisite courses for physical therapy, which conflicted with her clinical experience. She remembered feeling very little support from her athletic training supervisors to accomplish her requirements. The Personal Data Survey revealed that two of the participants did not feel that their high school education adequately prepared them for the rigors of college.

Unfortunately, there is abundant literature that agrees with this finding that ethnically diverse college students must face and overcome many institutional barriers to their success ranging from overt and covert racism and sexism to the many discriminating facets of classism that may include socioeconomic status, language/dialect/accent, geography, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, parental education, parental presence, education, culture, physical size (weight/height) and politics (Aiken, et al., 2001; Amaury & Cabrera, 1996; Chavous, 2000; Douglas, 1998; Fitz & Mitchell,

2002; Freeman, 1997; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Greer, 1995; Griffiths & Tagliareni, 1999; Hill-Hogan, 1990; Lee, 1992; Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Rowser, 1997; and Thomson, Denk, Miller, Ochoa-Shargey & Jibaja-Rusth, 1992).

Most of the barriers described by the participants in the aforementioned paragraphs focused primarily on the facets of classism, which is one of the three tenets of BFT. Perhaps that lack of understanding of AT by Phoebe's family stemmed from their lack of education. The socioeconomic status of the community in which her family lived may not have provided opportunity for the involvement and presence of CATs at local high schools, hospitals and clinics. For Deborah, Elisha, Hanna, and Moriah, their economic/financial situations created a significant obstacle for them to overcome. Their families did not have the ability to offer financial assistance, their previous educational experiences did not prepare them well enough to qualify for scholarships, or they did not have an understanding of the financial aid system of the U.S. educational system. Any of these disadvantages created a financial burden under the umbrella of classism that the participants had to overcome on their own to ensure their academic success.

Additionally, Hanna was oppressed by a learning disability, another facet of classism, which no one detected during her college matriculation. Most of these barriers are difficult enough to overcome independently and are faced by many college students regardless of race. However, compound these class related barriers with the added disadvantages of being Black and a woman, and these participants experienced the oppressive convergence of racism, sexism and classism.

*Sexism is a Barrier*

As ATs, Deborah and Moriah had to overcome the barrier of sexism in the form of sexual harassment. Moriah was significantly affected by the sexual harassment she was witness to, and subjected to, by a coach she worked with during her clinical rotations. The head athletic trainer, who should have protected her and other female ATs from this coach and his actions, and who was in the position to correct the problem, only compounded the problem with his own sexist actions toward the female students and his sexist and racist actions toward Moriah. The situation became so damaging to Moriah that she transferred to another university, placing her academic success and progress toward becoming a CAT in jeopardy.

Deborah did witness and experience sexual harassment; however, her mentor went to the extreme to protect her from being placed in a high-risk situation. The men's basketball team at Deborah's university had a history of sexually harassing previous Black female ATs, creating such situations that either caused the young women to quit or be dismissed from the program. Deborah's mentor did not want her to fall victim to the same problems, but as a non-tenured staff member, her mentor did not have the power to oppose the men's basketball coach. As such, she did not assign Deborah to the CAT who worked with the men's basketball team, preventing her from being exposed to the men's basketball team. On one hand, Deborah resented not being able to have the clinical experience of working with the men's basketball team. However, having been witness to the sexual harassment that the other Black women in the program experienced with the team, and recognizing the negative effects on her peers, Deborah eventually realized that her mentor was trying to protect her from the same negative experience and repercussions and that the lack of clinical experience was the cost of preserving her academic success.



Of particular interest, Deborah noted that the sexual harassment that created the demise of the other Black female ATs was inflicted by the Black members of the men's basketball team. Deborah clarified that White female ATs were also sexually harassed by White and Black athletes on the men's basketball team, but that the Black athletes were significantly more aggressive in their harassment toward the Black female ATs. She also indicated that she had witnessed this Black-on-Black sexual harassment in several other sporting venues, including her graduate school experiences.

This qualitative finding is consistent with information in the Personal Data Survey. Six of the ten participants felt disadvantaged in college because there were women. Three of the ten participants felt disadvantaged because they were Black women.

This finding is consistent with other literature that presents evidence of sexism in sports, athletics, AT and other health professions (Abney, 1988; Abney & Richey, 1991; Acosta & Carpenter, 2002; Lopiano, 2002; Revis-Shingles, 2001; Velasquez, 1997; Velasquez, 1998; Velasquez & Drummond, 2003; Velasquez & MacBeth, 1997). In the field of AT, Gatens, Cleary, Doherty, Morcillo and Eberman (2006) conducted a quantitative study examining the prevalence and effects of sexual harassment of female ATs by male athletes and patients. Twenty-five closed-ended Likert scale and multiple choice questions were posed to 144 participants from 20 accredited ATEPs recruited through the program directors. The researchers found that 43% of participants (no racial demographic specified) reported experiencing sexual harassment during their clinical education rotation. Twelve percent of the participants reported that they experienced being sexually leered or stared at by a male athlete/patient that made them feel

uncomfortable. Fourteen percent of the participants felt offended by a male athlete/patient asking them out on a date. The researchers confirmed that sexual harassment is a significant problem facing female ATS in the clinical education environment.

The participants of this study experienced the barrier of sexism, to include sexual harassment, in addition to the racism and classism simultaneously faced by Black women in U.S. society and the academy. Most of the examples shared by the participants focused on sexual harassment. In addition to the sexual harassment Deborah faced, she was also denied an equal learning opportunity (assignment to the men's basketball team) consistent with the clinical assignments of her male peers. Although denial of assignment to the men's basketball team was done to protect her from the negative outcomes of sexual harassment, it still resulted in discrimination based on her gender. Ultimately, the example was a part of a vicious cycle of sexism and classism; persons in a higher position of authority over the offending coaching staff (all White men) should have and could have intervened on behalf of the Black women ATSs to prevent the issues of sexual harassment that were occurring with detrimental effect on the students. The institutionalized sexism was allowed to persist within that system. Additionally, the one person who did try to intervene on behalf of the Deborah was a non-tenured White woman who was also oppressed by her position (classism) and gender (sexism) in this scenario, rendering her powerless to do more than the lesser of two evils by her actions; she could only deny Deborah an equal learning opportunity in order to prevent overt sexual harassment from threatening her student's future and success.

*Racism is a Constant Barrier*

Deborah and Moriah also shared their experiences facing significant barriers involving racism. The same coach who sexually harassed Moriah demonstrated racist behaviors toward her as well, going so far as to send his Black assistant coach to communicate with her. Moriah also dealt with racism in other areas of her undergraduate experience. The head athletic trainer never spoke with her alone; he always had a second individual present during his meetings and conversations with her. She felt that he did not feel comfortable “working around minorities period, let alone women”. Moriah also experienced racism in the classroom, with one instructor in particular who treated her differently than she did White students in the same class. Moriah participated in a Black student organization on campus that hosted a symposium for Black student organization from other campuses. She remembered the hostility and racism that was directed toward them by the White students on campus during the symposium activities. Moriah shared experiences of feeling isolated and alienated in her ATEP and in other classes on campus. On one hand, she was the only woman in the program and she was the only Black student in a group of five ATs. She felt alienated by logistics, race and gender. Outside of the ATEP, she did not feel the campus was welcoming to diversity and there were limited opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, especially ones that were welcoming to ethnically diverse students. Additionally, as an AT, she experienced stereotyping by being mistaken for an athlete instead of an athletic trainer. The summation of these racist events caused Moriah to leave her first undergraduate institution in search of another, less racist college environment.

Deborah experienced conflicts with the head athletic trainer that she believed were racially motivated. She could not identify specific examples that confirmed that her

conflicts with the head athletic trainer were racially motivated, but she never was comfortable interacting with him primary because he never seemed comfortable interacting with her, an observation she did not see with White students. Deborah also experienced stereotyping by athletes who would routinely seek out White ATs, going so far as to walk past her when she was conveniently available or to wait in line for the attention of a busy White student.

These qualitative findings are consistent with information provided by the participants in the Personal Data Survey. Even though only a few of the participants shared stories or experiences with racism during the interview process, more of the participants indicated that they were subjected to racial discrimination in the Personal Data Survey. Six of the ten participants experienced racial discrimination by a college instructor. Four of the ten participants experienced racial discrimination by a supervisor. Three of the ten participants experienced White female peer resentment that they believed was racially motivated, while only two of the ten participants experienced White male peer resentment. Interestingly, all of these examples were cited by participants who went through the internship route to certification. The three participants who felt they were disadvantaged because they were Black women were also from the internship route.

Also according to the Personal Data Survey, two of the ten participants felt they were alienated by their peers, six felt stereotyped by their peers and four felt unwelcome among their peers. Unfortunately, the Personal Data Survey did not allow for differentiation between athletic training peers and peers from all other non-major courses. Based on the interviews, the participants did not indicate that they perceived significant alienation, stereotyping or unwelcoming behaviors from their athletic training peers or

athletes, which leads me to believe that the racialized peer behaviors cited in the Personal Data Survey were directed at the participants primarily from classmates outside of the major. In examples cited by Grace and Moriah, the peer alienation they experienced may have been a result of having so few peers in athletic training.

This finding is consistent with the plethora of literature that demonstrates that racism persists as an integral part of U.S. society and its academic institutions (Aiken, et al., 2001; Amaury & Cabrera, 1996; Chavous, 2000; Douglas, 1998; Fitz & Mitchell, 2002; Freeman, 1997; Greenwald & Davis, 2000; Greer, 1995; Griffiths & Tagliareni, 1999; Hill-Hogan, 1990; Lee, 1992; Levey, Blanco & Jones, 1998; Rowser, 1997; and Thomson, Denk, Miller, Ochoa-Shargey & Jibaja-Rusth, 1992).

Interestingly, only Deborah and Moriah shared stories of overt racism from their experiences as ATs in college. Hanna and Grace specifically said to me that they had not experienced racism as ATs, with Hanna even telling me she didn't think I'd get what I wanted (stories about racism) from her. With so much research citing evidence of institutionalized racism in higher education, and so many of the participants citing racism in the Personal Data Survey, why didn't more of the participants in my study share stories or examples of their experiences with racism? Consistent with one of the tenets of CRT that racism persists and is a constant presence in U.S. society, I theorize that the participants of my study did not view racism as a barrier to their success. Since racism is a constant condition, it is not so much a barrier as it is just another part of the participants' daily experience. I believe that the participants of this study are so accustomed to dealing with the daily influence of racism in their lives that they did not view it as an unusual barrier to their college success.

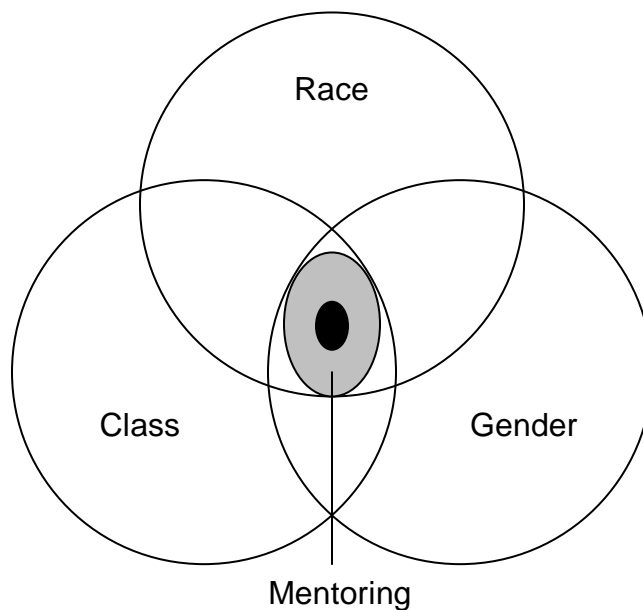
## **BUILDING THEORY**

The data, elicited from the participants' perspectives, lead me to these findings, which prompted me to form the following propositions. Mentoring served two vital purposes. First, mentoring served its traditional role as a mechanism for allowing a more experienced person to guide, teach, acculturate, and promote a less experienced person within the profession. From the perspectives of the participants in this study, the mentoring provided by their mentors, many of whom were athletic training faculty, program directors and clinical supervisors, was an effective and desirable method of supporting their success in completing the ATEP and earning their BOC credentials. This finding is consistent with the literature that identifies the traditional purpose and function of the mentoring process (Franke & Dahlgren, 1996; Hannam, 2000; Haring, 1999; and Jacobi, 1991). Additionally, I submit that mentoring also promoted and augmented the internal and external factors that the participants perceived as contributing to their successful college matriculation and professional credentialing.

The second purpose mentoring served is perhaps the most salient; mentoring offered the participants a protective mechanism against the traditional barriers faced by Black women in the academy: racism, sexism, and classism. Figure 5.1 provides a conceptual model of mentoring as a mechanism that can promote and protect the Black woman ATS who is historically situated in US society and the institution of higher education at the intersection of triple oppression.

Figure 5.1

### Protective Mentoring



These findings lead me to the theory that mentoring is a critical and efficient method that contributes to the retention, promotion and protection of Black women athletic training students

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF ATHLETIC TRAINING**

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and other factors on the college retention and BOC credentialing of Black women certified athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of those factors on the academic success of Black women ATs in ATEPs.

With only one HBCU sponsoring a CAATE accredited ATEP at the time of this writing, Black students have no choice but to pursue a major in athletic training and become eligible for BOC credentialing at a PWI. As such, ATEP directors, faculty and clinical instructors at those PWI need to recognize and acknowledge their responsibility

to not only recruit ethnically diverse students into their ATEPs, but to successfully retain those ethnically diverse students through college graduation and passing of the BOC examination. New research examining the recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse students in ATEPs is important in educating those ATEP personnel.

This research is also important to the same ATEP personnel since the only mechanism to increase the ethnic diversity of the athletic training membership is by increasing the ethnic diversity of the accredited educational programs that produce CATs. Continued failure on the part of ATEPs to successfully matriculate greater numbers of Black women (and other ethnically diverse students) into the profession will result in the continued underrepresentation of Black women CATs in the athletic training profession. This will result in the inability of the athletic training profession to demonstrate reasonable representation of the diversity of the athletes and physically active clients it is dedicated to serving. A more ethnically diverse athletic training profession would allow all athletic trainers to learn more about each other, become better educated in the racial and cultural differences of our diverse athlete and patient population, and become more effective and culturally sensitive in our care of ethnically diverse athletes and physically active individuals. A more ethnically diverse profession would also create greater opportunity for ethnically diverse athletes to seek attention from an athletic trainer who shares the same race.

In order to pursue the purpose of this study, the college experiences of ten Black women certified athletic trainers were documented in order to tell the stories of their personal experiences as Black women who successfully matriculated through college in order to become credentialed and practicing athletic trainers. Three of the women were



selected for in-depth case study in order to further explore their more extreme experiences and further inform the experiences of their peers. The details of the participants' experiences with regard to the effects of mentoring, mentor race and gender, and the factors that served as support or barriers to success were documented in response to the research questions of this study. Those research questions were:

1. What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?
2. What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women ATSSs?
3. What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?
4. What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?

The theoretical framework that guided this dissertation study required an approach that would bring voice to a historically silenced population of women and encourage their journey from the margins to the center. Thus, a Black feminist theoretical framework was my guide through the data collection and analysis. BFT is the study and articulation of the experiences of Black women who are simultaneously situated politically and historically in society at a position based upon their race (Black), their gender (female), and their class (oppressed) (Collins, 1990 and Collins, 1986). By placing Black women CATs at the center of analysis and recognizing the intersection of race, gender and class in their experiences, the participants were brought from the margins to the center so their voices could be heard. By breaking the silence of the

historically marginalized and allowing them to tell their own stories in their own words from their own perspectives, Black women locate their voice, validate their experiences, and construct knowledge about what it means to be a Black woman in a White male dominated society (Forman, 1994 and Smith, 1992).

Specific to this study, bringing voice to the Black women athletic trainers who struggled through the historically White male dominated athletic training educational institution to become CATs will hopefully result in the construction of knowledge about what it means to be a Black woman ATS. Constructing this knowledge and sharing it with program directors, faculty and clinical instructors may initiate a successful shift of the existing social structure of ATEPs. Doing so may generate momentum toward educational transformation that values the Black woman as an equally proficient ATS and professional colleague. Before addressing the implications of this study to the profession of athletic training, it must be stated as a reminder to the reader that this is a qualitative study involving a limited number of participants (n=10). As such, the experiences of these participants may not be representative of all Black women ATSs. Although the findings are elicited from a limited number of participants and may not be generalizable to the total population of Black women ATSs enrolled in ATEPs, the implications offer the perspectives of Black women CATs who were successful in completing their undergraduate process to become CATs. Athletic training educators who share my desire to successfully introduce more ethnically diverse students into the profession of athletic training may learn from the experiences of these women and consider the findings of this dissertation as we move toward the goal of transforming athletic training education.

*Mentoring is desirable, promotes efficient matriculation, and contributes to successful college completion and credentialing of Black women ATSs.* So what? How does that knowledge inform program directors, faculty and clinical instructors about the experiences of the Black women in our ATEPs? How does that knowledge create an institutionalized social shift or transform educational values within athletic training education?

For athletic training educators (program directors, faculty, staff and clinical instructors) with the goals of 1) retaining the ethnically diverse students (specifically Black women) we have worked so hard to recruit into our programs and 2) successfully graduating and endorsing those same ethnically diverse students in a reasonable matriculation time frame (four years), this study has demonstrated that mentoring may be an excellent method we should consider for achieving those goals. By providing or offering either formal or informal mentoring to the Black women enrolled in our ATEPs, we create the opportunity to improve the athletic training education experience, possibly even the college experience as a whole, of Black women ATSs who desire to participate in a mentoring relationship. Through mentoring we may help the Black women ATSs in our programs to matriculate through college efficiently (in four years). By improving the educational experience and college completion success rate of Black women ATSs we may increase the opportunity to endorse more Black women ATS to challenge and pass the BOC credentialing examination. Ultimately, this may introduce more Black women into the athletic training profession and gradually begin to improve the diversity of athletic training for the profession and the patients/athletes we serve.

*Future Research*

Is mentoring a desirable and effective activity for women and men of other races and ethnicities? Do Black men in ATEPs experience positive mentoring relationships with men and women CATS of other races? Do Hispanic American women in ATEPs consider mentoring to be desirable and valuable? Can the process of mentoring contribute to the college retention and credentialing of other ethnically diverse ATs? Can the process of mentoring contribute to the college retention and credentialing of ethnically diverse students in other health care professions and athletics? What are the mentoring experiences of Black women ATs who DO have the opportunity to be mentored by Black women ATCs? Consistent with Dr. Jacky Lumby's work with identity, do Black women ATs assert or repress their racial or gendered identity in specific scenarios to promote their success? In order to answer these questions I submit that more research on the effects of mentoring as a method of retention for ATs of other genders and races/ethnicities/cultures is needed within athletic training education. It is recommended that this study be replicated with Native American ATs who have made up less than one percent of the student membership of the NATA for the last decade. This study and/or Dr. Abney's 1988 study could be replicated with men and women of all ethnicities in the field of athletic training and other White male dominated health care and athletics professions.

In the mean time, athletic training educators should consider formal and/or informal mentoring programs for the Black women ATs enrolled in their programs. Doing so may be desirable on the part of many of our students and has the potential to be an effective method of retention that may increase Black women ATs college completion and BOC credentialing.

*Not only does mentoring promote Black women ATs, it also serves as protection against racism, sexism and classism.* So what? How does that knowledge inform program directors, faculty and clinical instructors about the experiences of the Black women in our ATEPs? How does that knowledge create an institutionalized social shift or transform educational values within athletic training education?

I feel this finding is one of the two most salient findings of this study to the foundation of athletic training education. In order for mentoring to be an effective, desirable, valuable and successful partnership for Black women ATs, athletic training educators should recognize and acknowledge the unique standpoint of the Black women ATs enrolled in our ATEPs. We should recognize that the experiences of many of the Black women ATs enrolled in our ATEPs are unlike those of all the other students whose education we are responsible and accountable for. The Black women ATs enrolled in our ATEPs face each day simultaneously oppressed by their race, gender and class. The experiences of Black women ATs are not the same as the other women in our programs simply because they share gender with the other women. The experiences of Black women ATs are not the same as the Black male students in our programs simply because they share race with Black men. The experiences of Black women ATs are unique because they are women and they are Black at the same time. We should recognize and acknowledge that the Black women ATs in our programs navigate through the simultaneously oppressive barriers of racism, sexism and classism within a predominantly White male culture maze. The barriers of that maze are built by White male privilege that offers a free pass from the oppression of the maze to only those who are White, male and privileged.

The second thing that athletic training educators should recognize and acknowledge is that those of us who are White are privileged. Even as White women we are privileged. As such, our experiences as ATs are not and cannot be shared with the Black women ATs enrolled in our programs. Our experiences and the ways we found success in college are not the experiences and ways that the Black women ATs in our programs will find success.

When athletic training educators recognize and acknowledge the unique experience of the Black women ATs in our programs, then we have the opportunity to offer or provide mentoring that is effective, desirable, valuable and successful to the Black women ATs enrolled in our programs. By recognizing and acknowledging that racism, sexism and classism exist as part of the fabric of U.S. society and are institutionalized within the system of higher education, we are better able to utilize mentoring as a method that may not only promote Black women ATs (efficient matriculation, college completion and BOC credentialing) but possibly protect them as well from the inevitable barriers of the racism, sexism and classism that can threaten their success. Only by recognizing and acknowledging the dangers that threaten can we plan to protect against them.

*Although shared race and gender are favorable mentor characteristics, accessible and approachable mentors are more essential traits.* So what? How does that knowledge inform program directors, faculty and clinical instructors about the experiences of the Black women in our ATEPs? How does that knowledge create an institutionalized social shift or transform educational values within athletic training education?

I feel that this finding answered the more personal aspect of my research questions for me. Could I as a White female program director serve as an effective mentor for the Black women enrolled in my ATEP? I believe the answer is “yes”. The reason that this personal question has translated into my dissertation is my assumption that there may be several other athletic training educators out there, White men and women, who have also posed the same question. I just looked for the answer.

From this study I found that most of the participants, Black women ATs, would prefer to be mentored by a Black woman CAT. From this study I recognize that would be a tremendous benefit to Black women ATs. I can recognize and acknowledge that Black women are simultaneously oppressed by racism, sexism and classism. However, I will never be a Black woman, thus I can never fully understand or appreciate what it means to experience life from that standpoint. Only another Black woman can provide a Black woman ATs with the perspective to face the converging oppression of racism, sexism and classism. Does that mean I should just not mentor the Black women ATs in my program? The findings in this study tell me “no”. Ultimately the participants in this study wanted mentors who were accessible, approachable, nurturing, knowledgeable, welcoming and interested in them as students and people. They wanted mentors who supported and encouraged them, built their self-confidence, educated and acculturated them in the profession and practice of athletic training. Those are all things I can do regardless of my race and gender and the race and gender of my students. Being able to offer all of those things makes me an effective mentor for the Black women ATs enrolled in my program. Being able to offer all of those things as an athletic training educator, regardless of race and gender, can potentially allow all athletic training

educators to be effective mentors for the ethnically diverse ATSs enrolled in our programs. We should not refrain from providing the benefits of mentoring to the Black women ATSs enrolled in our programs just because we do not share race and/or gender with them or because we do not see ourselves in them because of differing race and/or gender. We should persist in providing the benefits of mentoring because it is a potential tool for retaining Black women ATSs in our programs and because Black women ATS who want to be mentored by effective mentors should have the opportunity.

*In addition to strong personal student attributes, several characteristics inherent to athletic training education contribute to successful college completion and credentialing.* So what? How does that knowledge inform program directors, faculty and clinical instructors about the experiences of the Black women in our ATEPs? How does that knowledge create an institutionalized social shift or transform educational values within athletic training education?

I feel this is one of the other more salient findings of this study. The internal factors that contributed to the successful college completion of the participants did not surprise me. However, the external factors specific to the clinical education component of athletic training education was a pleasant surprise.

Based on the participants' positive clinical education experiences, I believe that athletic training education has a built-in but unrecognized tool that can have a significant impact on the retention and college satisfaction of Black women ATSs if properly utilized. So many of the participants cited athlete and patient interactions as an athletic training student as a positive, memorable, and pleasant experience. Many of their best memories were of working with sports, caring for an injured athlete, or returning an



injured athlete to participation. Many of the participants forged strong relationships with their faculty and clinical instructors through the clinical education experience, not the classroom experience. Many of the participants also described the positive experience of the “tight-knit”, “close-knit”, or “family” atmosphere of the program between their peers and the faculty and clinical instructors that was grounded by the clinical experience.

Several researchers included these positive clinical education components in their findings. I shared similar positive experiences from my clinical education as an ATS. As a program director, I find similar outcomes from the exiting senior and alumni surveys I conduct as part of our program assessments. The clinical education experience is a required part of the athletic training education program. If athletic training educators utilize the clinical component as a method to foster positive relationships between Black women ATS and their peers, faculty and clinical instructors, we might be able to create and enhance a welcoming, tight-knit, safe atmosphere that prevents, and perhaps even offsets, the negative occurrences of racism, specifically, alienation, stereotyping and spokesperson. By viewing the clinical education component as an opportunity to create a positive college experience, we may be able to count it as a method of retention of Black women ATSs.

#### *Future Research*

I submit that more research of a qualitative nature needs to be conducted to illuminate the experiences of ATSs specific to the clinical education component. Much of our attention, concern and energy as athletic training educators focus on the accountability and assessment of the educational competencies required of the clinical education component or the pedagogy and clinical instruction provided by clinical

instructors in the practical setting. But how do our students perceive those clinical experiences? How do students' experiences differ by race and gender? Do these experiences encourage or discourage our students from completing the ATEP? These are questions that warrant future examination and research in athletic training education. Qualitative research gathering the stories and experiences of ethnically diverse ATs in the clinical education phase of their athletic training education may begin to answer these questions.

In the mean time, as athletic training educators, we should consider that the clinical education experiences of the Black women ATs enrolled in our programs may have the power to encourage them to persist in our ATEPs. We should view the clinical education experience as a formal method of retention and invest energy into creating a positive, safe, welcoming, nurturing and intellectually stimulating educational environment grounded in a teamwork/family atmosphere.

*Racism, sexism and classism persist as barriers to success.* So what? How does that knowledge inform program directors, faculty and clinical instructors about the experiences of the Black women in our ATEPs? How does that knowledge create an institutionalized social shift or transform educational values within athletic training education?

This finding is linked to the first one regarding the protective mechanism that mentoring may provide against racism, sexism and classism. The first finding is not valid without this one that indicates, from the perspectives of the participants of this study and supported by the literature, that racism, sexism and classism persist as oppressive barriers against the success of many Black women ATs. As athletic training educators, I

emphasize that we should recognize and acknowledge that racism, sexism and classism exist within the social structure of our colleges and universities and our ATEPs. As such, we have a responsibility to protect all of our ATs, especially the Black women ATs who are subjected to the oppression of all three issues simultaneously, from the detrimental outcomes that can result from these barriers.

Specific to sexism, one of Revis-Shingles' (2001) findings in her study of ethnically diverse women CATs was that many of her participants did not consider it unique to be a woman in athletic training. The participants in this study cited very few examples of gender oppression, perhaps because it isn't unusual to be a woman in athletic training anymore. For several recent years, women have made up almost half of the NATA membership. However, there were strong examples of sexual harassment, an oppressive action that falls under the umbrella of sexism, cited by some of the participants that served as powerful detractors for those participants. The literature confirms that sexual harassment is alive and well in athletic training education and the profession. As athletic training educators, we need to be on our guard against sexual harassment, not only for the sake of the Black women ATs enrolled in our programs, but for all ATs of all races and ethnicities AND both genders.

#### *Future Research*

I found Deborah's experiences with sexual harassment to be particularly salient in this study. She was very adamant that Black-on-Black sexual harassment was a particularly offensive issue for not just her, but several of the Black women ATs she has worked with or supervised as a graduate assistant. I could not find literature to support her experiences in athletic training literature or beyond. I would submit that this is a very

important topic for future research in the area of sexual harassment in athletic training and I even encouraged Deborah to pursue it as a thesis topic for her own graduate work. Because of the historically sexualized objectification of Black women in U.S. society, are Black women ATSs at greater risk for sexual harassment than women ATSs of other races/ethnicities? Does the sexualized objectification of Black women currently displayed in the media and entertainment industry by Black men translate to an increased occurrence of Black-on-Black sexual harassment among the Black women ATSs enrolled in our programs? These are questions that warrant future investigation through both qualitative and quantitative investigations.

In the mean time, as athletic training educators, we should be aware and cognizant of the presence and detrimental effects of institutionalized racism, sexism and classism within our colleges and universities and the ATEPs we are directly involved with. Acknowledgement of these barriers may enable us to better serve and mentor the Black women ATSs and other ethnically diverse students enrolled in our programs, promoting their college completion and entry into the profession of athletic training.

#### *Implications for Qualitative Research*

Pitney and Parker (2000 and 2001) and Mensch and Ennis (2002) have called for more qualitative research in the field of athletic training in order to generate deeper discussions about the questions that face athletic trainers in the application of patient care and ATS education. In the last decade, athletic training education has undergone significant reform as has the practice of athletic training. As the educational and practical realms of the profession have transformed, so has the need for scholarship and research also transformed. Athletic training scientific inquiry has gained recognition and respect

in the body of allied health literature and the need for valid, qualitative inquiry has grown and gained value (Delwiche & Hall, 2007; Knight & Ingersoll, 1998; Pitney & Parker, 2000; Pitney & Parker, 2001). As stated by Pitney and Parker (2001), “When both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms are understood, valued and sometimes integrated, the breadth and depth of knowledge in athletic training can expand and positively influence the lives of patients, clinicians, educators and student athletic trainers.” This dissertation adds qualitative research to an existing body of literature that is predominantly quantitative, gives voice to an underrepresented population of the NATA membership and adds the perspective of that underrepresented population to the body of knowledge.

#### *Implications for Black Feminist Theory*

With the exception of a few unpublished dissertations, there are no studies appearing in athletic training literature framed in neither a black feminist theoretical framework nor any other standpoint epistemology such as critical race theory or critical whiteness studies. This dissertation adds to the professional literature where standpoint epistemology is absent. Athletic training educational research tends to focus on research that contributes to accreditation needs and requirements. The quality of education that is delivered by accredited athletic training programs needs to be assessed and evaluated not only from quantitative data, but from the qualitative perspectives of students who experience the educational process from many unique standpoints. The theoretical framework utilized in this dissertation was a standpoint epistemology that viewed the perspectives of the participants through the lens of black feminist theory, offering findings to the limited literature based on the unique experiences of CATs simultaneously

located at the intersection of race, gender and class. This standpoint is unique to the athletic training professional literature.

### *Future Research*

I hope that this dissertation generates discussion about qualitative research and its place in contributing to the body of knowledge in educational research and practice among my colleagues and peers in athletic training education and our sister allied health professions. I also hope that new research questions are formulated that require qualitative research methods to seek answers, knowledge and perspective. Significantly more qualitative research utilizing standpoint epistemology to analyze the experiences and perspectives of ATs and athletic training educators is needed and can enhance the plethora of quantitative research that is on-going.

In summary, there are several implications for the field of athletic training from the findings in this study. Athletic training educators should consider offering or providing the process of mentoring through either formal or informal programs because it may be a desirable, valuable and effective method of retention for many Black women ATs. Additionally, by offering the benefits of mentoring, we may be able to offer protection against the persistent barriers of sexism, racism and classism that threaten the academic and professional success of the Black women ATs that matriculate through our ATEPs. By utilizing the process of mentoring to promote and protect Black women ATs, we might contribute to their successful college completion and BOC credentialing, thus increasing the presence of Black women in the profession of athletic training.

Athletic training educators should not hesitate to serve as a mentor for Black women ATs because we may not share race (or race AND gender). Shared race is not a

requirement of effective mentoring for all Black women in ATEPs; effective mentoring is a requirement of effective mentoring. By offering effective mentoring to Black women ATs, we create the opportunity to increase their college completion and BOC credentialing, thus introducing more Black women CATs to the profession of athletic training.

Athletic training educators should consider the clinical education component to be a contributing factor in the retention of Black women ATs if utilized properly. We should make efforts to ensure that the clinical education component is welcoming, safe, nurturing, educational and enjoyable for Black women ATs in order to encourage a positive experience and perhaps even offsetting some of the negative experiences they may encounter in college outside of the ATEP. Creating a positive clinical experience may encourage college completion and BOC credentialing of more Black women ATs and improving their representation in the profession of athletic training.

Finally, athletic training educators should recognize and acknowledge the persistent presence of racism, sexism and classism within the fabric of U.S. society and the institutions of higher education in which we work. By doing so, we can be proactive in working with the Black women ATs enrolled in our programs to resist the simultaneous oppression of racism, sexism and classism that may threaten their success. Utilizing mentoring to assist Black women ATs to overcome the barriers of racism, sexism and classism may increase their chances of successfully completing college and sitting for the BOC examination to become CATs and practicing clinicians in the profession of athletic training.

Table 5.2 summarizes the implications based on the research questions and analysis. Column one outlines each of the four research questions. Column two specified the findings based on the research questions. Column three outlines the BFT implications. Column four summarizes the dissertation implications to athletic training education.

The participants in this dissertation believed that mentoring IS a critical and efficient method that contributes to the retention, promotion and protection of Black women ATS. As athletic training educators, we have a responsibility to consider mentoring and all of its benefits for the success of the Black women ATSS enrolled in our ATEPs.



Table 5.2

## Summary of Implications

Research Questions	Analysis	Theoretical Frame	Implications to Athletic Training
<b>Interview Questions</b>		Impact of BFT on relationship between RQ and Implications	
<p>1. What is the perceived effect of mentoring on the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATSSs?</p> <div> <p><b>Phone Interview Questions</b></p> <p>13. Please tell me about the individual(s) who directly influenced your career in athletic training?</p> <p>14. What assistance or guidance did you receive from that relationship? Can you give examples of ways in which you were helped?</p> <p>15. How often did you see that individual?</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring is effective, desirable and valuable.</li> <li>• The absence of mentoring has the potential to contribute to discontinuation.</li> <li>• The activities associated with mentoring contribute to successful matriculation, professional advancement and credentialing.</li> </ul>	<p>The effectiveness of the mentoring process was a strong, positive force that not only promoted the participants, but also helped to protect them from the oppressive barriers of racism, sexism and classism.</p> <p>The nurturing, guidance and validation inherent in the mentoring process were factors capable of creating a sense of independence and confidence in the AT related knowledge and skills of the participants.</p> <p>All three forms of oppression are used exclusively and collectively to exclude Black women from the academy and other institutions. The process of mentoring can create a positive, welcoming and safe environment that builds a sense of belonging and security for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletic training educators should offer mentoring through either formal or informal programs because it may be a desirable, valuable and effective method of retention for many Black women ATSSs.</li> <li>• Athletic training educators should recognize the power of mentoring to not only PROMOTE Black women ATSSs, but to PROTECT them as well from racism, sexism and classism.</li> <li>• By utilizing the process of mentoring to promote and protect Black women ATSSs, we might contribute to their successful college completion and BOC</li> </ul>

<p>16. How did this relationship affect your career in athletic training? What do you think would have happened if you hadn't had that person in your life as an ATS?</p> <p>17. Have you ever assisted/mentored someone with his/her career? In what ways have you assisted/mentored him/her?</p> <p><b>Case Study Interview Questions</b></p> <p>9. What do white athletic training educators and clinical instructors need to know about being effective mentors for the Black women enrolled in the program?</p>		<p>Black women and has the potential to diminish or interfere with the exclusion of oppression.</p> <p>The participants who benefited from mentoring <u>recognized</u> the positive impact it had in helping them to overcome or avoid falling victim to the dangers of academic discontinuation that threatened them because of their unique loci as Black women.</p> <p>Mentoring offered the participants the basic advantages that all college students should have access to; sound academic and professional advisement, guidance, planning and placement within a professional network.</p>	<p>credentialing, thus increasing the presence of Black women in the profession of athletic training.</p>
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<p><b>2. What is the perceived effect of mentor race and gender on the successful mentoring of Black women ATs?</b></p> <div> <div> <b>Phone Interview Questions</b> </div> <div> <p>11. How available were Black women to you as role models during your athletic training education?</p> <p>12. How available were Black women to you as mentors during your athletic training education?</p> <p>21. Who do you think should be a mentor for Black women? Why?</p> </div> <div> <b>Case Study Interview Questions</b> </div> <div> <p>8. How important do you think your mentor's race was on his/her ability to be an effective mentor to you? How important do you think your mentor's gender was on his/her ability to be an effective mentor to you?</p> </div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor race and gender are less relevant criteria for effective mentors.</li> <li>• Qualities of effective mentors are most important.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletic training educators should not hesitate to serve as a mentor for Black women ATS because we may not share race (or race AND gender).</li> <li>• By offering effective mentoring to Black women ATs, we create the opportunity to increase their college completion and BOC credentialing, thus introducing more Black women CATs to the profession of athletic training.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>3. What other factors contribute to the successful college retention and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATs?</b></p> <div> <div>Phone Interview Questions</div> <div>2. How does it feel to be a certified athletic trainer? What does it mean to you?</div> <div>3. What has been most satisfying about your career as an athletic trainer?</div> <div>4. How did you select athletic training as your career, i.e. preplanned, accidental?</div> <div>6. Was your athletic training program accredited or an internship route at the time?</div> <div>7. What do you remember about your experiences as an athletic training student?</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal factors contribute to successful matriculation of Black women ATs.</li> <li>• External Factors contribute to successful matriculation of Black women ATs.</li> </ul>	<p>As Black women oppressed within a maze of intersecting barriers constructed from racism, sexism and classism, the participants of this study had to avoid these barriers in order to secure success (college matriculation and credentialing) with tools they possessed within themselves; determination, self-motivation, knowledge, skill, and competence.</p> <p>As “outsiders within” the dominant culture, Black women must navigate their way around the oppressive barriers of racism, sexism and classism in order to successfully attain their personal and professional goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletic training educators should consider the clinical education component to be a strong factor contributing in the retention of Black women ATs.</li> <li>• We should make efforts to ensure that the clinical education component is welcoming, safe, nurturing, educational and enjoyable for Black women ATs in order to encourage a positive experience and perhaps even offsetting some of the negative experiences they may encounter in college outside of the ATEP.</li> <li>• Creating a positive clinical experience may encourage college completion and BOC credentialing of more Black women ATs and improving their representation in the profession of athletic training.</li> </ul>
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<p>9. Was there anything in particular that helped you become a certified athletic trainer?</p>			
<p>10. Was there anyone in particular who helped you become a certified athletic trainer?</p>			
<p><b>Case Study Interview Questions</b></p>			
<p>5. Much of the research on Black student college retention focuses on obstacles and barriers to completion. Could you describe for me instead the factors that led to your academic success and graduation?</p>			
<p>6. Participants used terms like “close knit”, “family” and such. Was this your experience? Can you describe your peer experiences? How did those relationships contribute to your college experience as an athletic training student?</p>			

<p><b>4. What barriers hinder effective college matriculation and attainment of the BOC credential of Black women ATs?</b></p> <div> <div>Phone Interview Questions</div> <div>7. What do you remember about your experiences as an athletic training student?</div> <div>8. What problems or obstacles did you encounter while pursuing your athletic training education?</div> <div>19. Very few black women are athletic trainers. Why is this so?</div> </div> <div> <div>Case Study Interview Questions</div> <div>1. Can you tell me how you decided upon your undergraduate college? What was the university/college like?</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lack of institutional support challenges success.</li> <li>• Sexism is a constant barrier.</li> <li>• Racism is a constant barrier.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletic training educators should recognize and acknowledge the persistent presence of racism, sexism and classism within the fabric of U.S. society and the institutions of higher education in which we work.</li> <li>• Athletic training educators should recognize the unique standpoint of Black women ATs at the intersection of race, gender and class.</li> <li>• Utilizing mentoring to assist Black women ATs to overcome the barriers of racism, sexism and classism may increase their chances of successfully completing college and sitting for the BOC examination to become CATs and practicing clinicians in the profession of athletic training.</li> </ul>
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<p>2. Were you the only Black woman in your athletic training education program? If so, can you describe how that made you feel?</p>			
<p>3. If you could go back and do everything over, is there anything you would do differently in your athletic training educational process? If so, could you describe what you would do differently?</p>			
<p>4. Some of the biggest obstacles faced by Black woman in their athletic training educational experiences were: time conflicts, financial issues and sexism. Only 2 participants indicated racism as an obstacle. Did you experience over racism as an athletic training student?</p>			
<p>7. Despite many participants describing the close-knit peer relationships, two participants indicated feeling alienated, and half felt stereotyped by their peers. How do you interpret that?</p>			

## LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations of this study that warrant discussion. The methodology of this study was predominantly qualitative with significantly low triangulation courtesy of a quantitative survey that served to collect demographic data of the participants, thus offering relatively limited validity to the qualitative section. However, the demographic data does present information that enriches the introduction and familiarity of the participants.

The study is qualitative and the nature of such allows for a relative small number of participants to be selected for in-depth study (n=10). Therefore, the experiences of the participants may not be representative of all Black women ATSs. Additionally, the findings are elicited from a limited number of participants and may not be generalizable to the total population of Black women ATSs enrolled in ATEPs. Athletic training educators should contemplate the findings and determine for themselves how those findings and implications inform their educational policies and practices in the classroom and the clinical setting to the benefit of their programs and students.

The first ten participant interviews were conducted via phone interview. This may have been a limit to the data collection process. A one-on-one interview in person may have allowed for more interpersonal exchanges between the participants and me. The phone interviews did not allow for eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and visual affirmation of the content being exchanged or shared. I cannot help but to wonder what information and stories were not brought up since we could not visually communicate with each other. In one case, I was not clear in my introduction and inadvertently left the participant under the assumption that I was a Black woman, creating



an awkward moment when I had to tactfully inform her that I was actually White. The purpose of qualitative research is to seek deeper, richer, broader experiences in order to reveal the complexity of those experiences and offer counter-stories from the margins. If I had more time, opportunity and resources to actually conduct all interviews and case study interviews in person with the participants in their own environments I may have learned even more from the participants that would have revealed greater complexity in my results.

Another limitation of this study was that half of the participants matriculated through the internship route to BOC certification while the other half were enrolled in an accredited ATEP. The internship route to BOC certification was eliminated, ceasing to allow internship candidates to sit for the BOC examination in 2004. Currently, the only route to certification is enrollment in a CAATE accredited ATEP. As such, some of the experiences of the five internship route participants specific to internship processes, challenges and benefits no longer apply for Black women ATSS enrolled in the current accredited program system.

Finally, I feel that one of the limitations to this study was my lack of experience with qualitative methodology, especially with regard to the interview process. I feel there is a tangible learning curve that came with experience as I conducted more of the interviews. As I became more experienced and comfortable with the logistics of the interview process I became more proficient in progressing through the process, offering the participants better prompts and facilitating better communication. However, as a result of my inexperience with the phone interview process, I feel I made an error that influenced that data and detracted from one of my findings. In attempting to let the

participants' voices be heard and their own stories be told without my influence or bias I avoided asking the participants direct questions about racism, sexism and classism. I limited my questions to ask about "barriers" and "obstacles" without leading the discussion into specifics about racism, sexism or classism unless the participant approached such topics first. I thought this would help me to facilitate the conversation versus leading it. I feel I could have done a better job balancing the conversations to ensure that I gave the participants ample opportunity to include specific experiences with racism, sexism and classism, especially if they were uncomfortable broaching such topics with a White investigator.

## **SUMMARY**

Mentoring as a method of retention of Black women ATSs was the primary focus of this qualitative study. Other factors contributing to the retention of Black women ATSs were also investigated. The purpose of this study was to examine the place of mentoring and other contributing factors that result in the retention of Black women in ATEPs and their subsequent credentialing as certified athletic trainers. Black women CATs are remarkably underrepresented in the profession of athletic training, as are other ethnically diverse men and women. The profession of athletic training is a historically White male dominated health care profession. Despite the significant increase in women in athletic training in the last decade to almost half of the NATA membership, White women dominate the female membership. Failure of CAATE accredited ATEPs to introduce more Black women to the profession of athletic training will result in their continued absence from the profession. This absence of Black women CATs contributes to the overall lack of ethnic diversity of athletic training and the loss of opportunity for

Black athletes and patients to seek care and attention from a CAT who shares their race/ethnicity. The primary research question of this study was to examine the perceived effects of mentoring and mentor race and gender on the successful college completion and BOC credentialing of Black women ATS. A qualitative design was used to document and illuminate the stories and experiences of ten Black women CATs who had successfully matriculated through PWI to become credentialed and practicing athletic trainers. Case studies were conducted with three of the women who overcame more overwhelming barriers to achieve success. A demographic data survey was also administered to the participants to gain additional information about their athletic training educational experiences. A Black feminist theoretical framework was applied to the data in order to draw findings that focused on and honored the unique lived experiences of the Black woman at the center of analysis.

Several findings were generated from the participants' experiences that illuminate answers to the research questions. From the perspective of the participants, mentoring is an effective, desirable and valuable process that encourages efficient matriculation, college completion and BOC credentialing. In addition to promoting the Black woman ATS, mentoring also protects her from the oppressive barriers of racism, sexism and classism that discourage college persistence. The participants also perceived that shared race and gender were preferable, however, accessible and approachable mentors were more important characteristics of a successful mentor. Supportive relationships with ATEP directors, faculty, and clinical instructors, many of whom served the role of mentor, contributed to the participants' academic and professional success, as did the positive experiences, peer relationships and family atmosphere grounded in the clinical

education component. In addition to supportive mentoring, peer and family relationships, participants perceived that strong personal attributes contributed to their academic and professional success. Ultimately, from the perspectives of the participants of this study, I concluded that mentoring is a critical and efficient method that contributes to the retention, promotion and protection of Black women athletic training students.

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## **Appendix 1**

### Interview Schedule

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPANT IN RESEARCH

PROTECTION OF IDENTITY

1. Would you please tell me about your current job?
2. How does it feel to be a certified athletic trainer? What does it mean to you?
3. What has been most satisfying about your career as an athletic trainer?
4. How did you select athletic training as your career, i.e., preplanned, accidental?
5. Was your athletic training education at the undergraduate or graduate level?
6. Was your athletic training program accredited or an internship route at the time?
7. What do you remember about your experiences as an athletic training student?
8. What problems or obstacles did you encounter while pursuing your athletic training education?
9. Was there anything in particular that helped you become a certified athletic trainer?
10. Was there anyone in particular who helped you become a certified athletic trainer?
11. Role Model Definition: Individuals showed specific behaviors, personal styles and specific attributes you tried to emulate.

Mentor Definition: Individuals who gave you special assistance and guidance in reaching your career goals.

How available were Black women to you as role models during your AT education?

12. How available were Black women to you as mentors during your AT education?
13. Please tell me about the individual (s) who directly influenced your career in athletic training?
14. What assistance or guidance did you receive from that relationship? Can you give examples of ways in which you were helped?

15. How often did you see that individual?
16. How did this relationship affect your career in athletic training? What do you think would have happened if you hadn't had that person in your life as an ATS?
17. Have you ever assisted/mentored someone with his or her career? In what ways have you assisted/mentored him/her?
18. How important is it for a young Black woman beginning her career to have a mentor? Why?
19. Very few black women are athletic trainers. Why is this so?
20. What do you think has to happen in order for this to change?
21. Who do you think should be a mentor for black women? Why?
22. What possibility of advancement for black women do you foresee in the future of athletic training?
23. What would you like to add?

WILL YOU BE ATTENDING THE NATA CONVENTION IN ATLANTA?

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ALLOW ME TO FOLLOW UP WITH YOU AS A CASE STUDY PARTICIPANT?

I WILL BE SENDING YOU THE TRANSCRIPTS OF THIS CONVERSATION;  
WOULD YOU REVIEW IT FOR ACCURACY?

THANK YOU.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Cover Letter Requesting Participation in Research**

Date

Dear

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a very important piece of research to the profession of athletic training. I am the undergraduate program director for the Athletic Training Education Program at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania and a doctoral candidate at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. As a White woman and program director at a predominantly White institution of higher education in rural Western Pennsylvania, I am searching for ways to retain the ethnically diverse athletic training students, specifically the young Black women, who enroll in our athletic training major. I have found this to be a frustrating challenge. That frustration has inspired me to turn my energies into researching a solution to this challenge.

In asking myself what I can do to support my ethnically diverse students and advisees, I began to wonder what influence I might have as not only an instructor and advisor to my diverse students, but as a *mentor* as well? Research has demonstrated that mentoring has a positive effect on the retention of college students and ethnically diverse students in particular. But does the fact that I am White interfere with my ability to be a positive mentor and role model to the Black women in our program? Did my colleagues who are Black women have a mentor or role model to support them in becoming certified athletic trainers? If so, did those colleagues share gender and race in common with their mentor? Did gender and race matter? These are all questions that have driven the topic of my dissertation entitled: *Mentoring and other factors contributing to the retention of Black women in athletic training education programs*.

Dr. Rene' Revis-Shingles and Ms. Veronica Ampey have identified you as a colleague who could significantly contribute to this research project. Thus, I would like to extend an invitation to you to actively participate in this research opportunity. As athletic trainers, our time to take on additional tasks is severely limited. But it is my sincere hope that you will find this study important enough to invest your valuable time. Please assist me in this endeavor by completing the enclosed personal data survey and signing the accompanying consent form. After receiving your survey, I will contact you to establish a time for you to participate in a personal interview regarding your experiences with mentoring. Be assured that anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed and honored. A SASE has been enclosed as well to return these two documents to me at your earliest convenience.

It will be a privilege to collaborate with you on this research project. The athletic training profession has historically been a male dominated profession, but women have established themselves as contributing members of the profession in volume. However, the profession remains a historically White profession. It is my hope that research such as this can contribute to increasing the ethnic diversity of our profession for the benefit of the membership, but more importantly, for the talented, gifted and special athletes and physically active individuals we provide care for. If I can answer questions regarding this research project or the survey, interview and consent form, do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience by phone at home (724-450-0879) or at work (724-738-2930) or via

email [bonnie.siple@sru.edu](mailto:bonnie.siple@sru.edu). Thank you in advance for contributing to the knowledge base of my study.

Sincerely,

Bonnie J. Siple, MS, ATC  
Doctoral Candidate

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Informed Consent Form**





# DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

<b>TITLE:</b>	Mentoring as a method of retention of Black women in athletic training education programs.
<b>INVESTIGATOR:</b>	Bonnie J. Siple 604 East Main Street Extension Grove City, PA 16127 724-450-0879 (Home) 724-738-2930 (Office)
<b>ADVISOR: (if applicable:)</b>	Dr. Rodney Hopson Department of Foundations and Leadership 421-396-4034
<b>SOURCE OF SUPPORT:</b>	This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University.
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	<p>You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the perceived effects of mentoring on the retention and credentialing of Black female athletic trainers in order to understand the impact of mentoring on the academic success of Black female athletic training students in athletic training education programs. In addition, you will be asked to allow me to interview you. The interviews will be taped and transcribed.</p> <p>These are the only requests that will be made of you.</p>
<b>RISKS AND BENEFITS:</b>	Participants will benefit from having their experiences documented and their stories told. Ultimately, the results may create social change within the profession. There are no known risks to the participants.

**COMPENSATION:**

There is no financial compensation for participants. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is provided for return of your response to the investigator.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. Your response(s) will only appear in statistical data summaries. All materials will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

## **Appendix 4**

### Personal Data Survey

**PERSONAL DATA SURVEY**  
**(Adapted from Abney Survey)**  
**PART I**

**I. Employment History**

Please complete the table below to reflect all of your work history since you became a Certified Athletic Trainer. This history should include both athletic training and non-athletic training employment. However, please only include those positions for which you received compensation. Please attach additional sheets/lines if necessary.

<u><b>Employment Setting</b></u>	<u><b>Title of Position</b></u>	<u><b>Date Position Held</b></u>
<b>Examples: Retail, Education, Hospital/Clinic</b>	<b>Examples: Assistant Manager, Head Athletic Trainer</b>	<b>Include both month and year of beginning and end of employment. Example: April 2001-August 2003</b>

**II. Athletic Training History**

Please circle the letter of the response that best describes your career path in Athletic Training.

1. I first decided upon a career in athletic training \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Before high school
  - b. During high school
  - c. While an undergraduate
  - d. During time of first job
  - e. While doing graduate work
  - f. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_.

2. If I could begin my career again, I would choose athletic training as my career.

- a. Yes (skip to #4)
- b. No
- c. Unsure

3. If the response to #2 is either “No” or “Unsure”, please provide the name of the profession you would choose today. If you selected “Yes”, then please skip to Question #4.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. I became eligible for BOC certification via \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. internship route to certification
- b. NATA- approved education program (before 1992)
- c. CAAHEA/CAAHEP- accredited education program
- d. Grandfathering of NATA members (before 1971)

5. My highest level of formal education is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. Baccalaureate degree
- b. Baccalaureate degree plus additional college courses
- c. Master’s degree
- d. Master’s degree plus additional college courses
- e. Doctoral degree
- f. Post-doctoral work
- g. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. My high school education \_\_\_\_\_ to pursue a college degree.

- a. Prepared me well
- b. Adequately prepared me
- c. Did not adequately prepare me

### III. Obstacles Experienced in Athletic Training Education

Please read through the following list of possible problems or obstacles you may have encountered during your athletic training education. For each possibility, please indicate with a [X] in the space below the number that corresponds best with the extent to which you experienced each situation.

1 = Never Experienced  
4 = Always Experienced

	Never/ Almost Never Experienced 1	Occasionally Experienced 2	Frequently Experienced 3	Always Experienced 4
1. I experienced discrimination by a college instructor				
2. I experienced discrimination by a supervisor				
3. I experienced White female peer resentment				
4. I experienced ethnically diverse female peer resentment				
5. I experienced White male peer resentment				
6. I experienced ethnically diverse male peer resentment				
7. My AT instructors had low expectations of me				
8. My AT supervisors had low expectations of me				
9. My AT instructors had unrealistic expectations of me				
10. My AT supervisors had unrealistic expectations of me				
11. I was disadvantaged because I am Black				
12. I was disadvantaged because I am a woman				
13. I was disadvantaged because I am a Black woman				

14. I was alienated by my peers				
15. I was stereotyped by my peers				
16. I did not feel welcome among my peers				
	Never/ Almost Never Experienced 1	Occasionally Experienced 2	Frequently Experienced 3	Always Experienced 4
17. I served as the minority spokesperson in classes				
18. I had access to cultural support (e.g. Black student organizations)				
19. I had access to social support (e.g. other Black students, sorority)				
20. I did not have access to academic support (e.g. tutoring services)				
21. I had access to an academic advisor				
<b>Mentor</b> – Individuals who gave me special assistance and guidance in reaching my goals	<b>Role Model</b> – Individual(s) who demonstrated specific behaviors, personal styles and specific attributes I tried to emulate			

22. I had a personal mentor				
23. I had a professional mentor				
24. I had a personal role model				
25. I had a professional role model				
26. My friends were supportive of my academic pursuit				
27. My significant other was supportive of my academic pursuit				
28. My relatives were supportive of my academic pursuit				
29. I had sufficient financial support to complete my athletic training education				



#### IV. Personal Attributes

Please review all twenty-nine of the personal attributes listed below and determine the top five attributes that you found to be most helpful in your pursuit of athletic training education. Please list them in order of importance.

1 = Most Helpful

5 = Least Helpful

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Being Black                                      | 15. Being confident                             |
| 2. Being a woman                                    | 16. Being patient                               |
| 3. Remaining single                                 | 17. Having strong drive and determination       |
| 4. Getting married/partnered                        | 18. Being able to go against societal norms     |
| 5. Being separated/divorced                         | 19. Being competent                             |
| 6. Having children                                  | 20. Having a good personality                   |
| 7. Not having children                              | 21. Luck or fate                                |
| 8. Being a good athlete                             | 22. Willingness to change geographical location |
| 9. Being healthy                                    | 23. Traveling (home or abroad)                  |
| 10. Being assertive                                 | 24. Participating in an organized religion      |
| 11. Peer support                                    | 25. Believing in God                            |
| 12. Family support (emotional)                      | 26. Support from groups/ individuals            |
| 13. Family support (financial)                      | 27. Having a mentor                             |
| 14. Other support from Black or other ethnic groups | 28. Having a role model                         |
|   | 29. Other (please specify _____)                |

Most Helpful number)	1 <sup>st</sup>	_____	(List attribute by
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	_____	
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	_____	
	4 <sup>th</sup>	_____	
Least Helpful	5 <sup>th</sup>	_____	

## PART II

The following terms should be used to assist you in responding appropriately to the remaining questions:

**ROLE MODELS:** *Individuals showed specific behaviors, personal styles and specific attributes I tried to emulate.*

**MENTORS:** *Individuals who gave me special assistance and guidance in reaching my career goals.*

### I. Key Persons

Please take a few moments to reflect on your life to date. In the blanks provided, indicate the following information:

- The **key person(s)** (by category, not name- e.g. father, aunt, administrator, boss, minister, counselor, spouse/partner, friend, coach) who had the greatest influence on your life.
- In the second column, define the key person as a role model, mentor or role model AND mentor.
- In the third column, list each person's race (e.g. African American, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic American, White, other [please specify], or biracial [please specify]).
- Next, delineate each key person's gender (e.g. Male or Female).
- In column five, indicate the amount of influence each person had in your life on a scale of 1 (= least) to 5 (= greatest).
- In the final column, indicate the highest level of education completed by each key person.

	<b>Key Person(s) Category</b>		<b>Role Model or Mentor</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Influence 1 to 5</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>
Junior High School							
Senior High School							
College Years (non-athletic training)							

	<b>Key Person(s) Category</b>		<b>Role Model or Mentor</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Influence 1 to 5</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>
College Years (athletic training education)							

## II. Mentoring and role modeling

Indicate the three persons (by role, not by name e.g., father, aunt, administrator, boss, minister, counselor, spouse/partner, friend, coach, etc) who most directly influenced your career since becoming a certified athletic trainer. Again, please indicate the gender and race of each person under the appropriate heading (role model or mentor) and indicate the degree of influence on a scale of *1 (least) to 5 (greatest)*.

### ROLE MODEL

Person	Race	Gender	Influence 1 to 5	Highest level of education
_____ <i>Most Influential</i>				
_____ <i>Second Most Influential</i>				
_____ <i>Third Most Influential</i>				

### MENTOR

Person	Race	Gender	Influence 1 to 5	Highest level of education
_____ <i>Most Influential</i>				
_____ <i>Second Most Influential</i>				
_____ <i>Third Most Influential</i>				

1. Since becoming a certified athletic trainer I have \_\_\_\_\_:

- a. Not acted as a mentor to another person
- b. Acted as a mentor to one or more persons in their careers

If you selected b, please indicate the race and gender of the individuals you mentored. Please attach additional sheets/lines if necessary

**Race**

**Gender**

Protégé 1

Protégé 2

Protégé 3

Protégé 4

Protégé 5

2. I am committed to acting as a mentor (check all that apply).

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Only if the person is Black
- ☐ Only if the person is Female
- ☐ Only if the person is an Athletic Trainer
- ☐ Only if I believe the person is worthy of my time and attention
- ☐ Only if I believe the person has the ability to be successful

Comments:

## **Appendix 5**

Correspondence check off list

## CORRESPONDENCE CHECK OFF LIST

Last name First name	Cover letter A sent/Initial call	Survey returned	Informed consent	Reminder sent	Personal invitation call	Confirmation call made	Telephone interview	Confirmation call made	Case Study

## **Appendix 6**

### Case Study Topic Outline



## CASE STUDY TOPIC OUTLINE

1. Can you tell me how you decided upon your undergraduate college? What was the university/college like?
2. Were you the only Black woman in your athletic training education program? If so, can you describe how that made you feel?
3. If you could go back and do everything over, is there anything you would do differently in your athletic training educational process? If so, could you describe what you would do differently?
4. Some of the biggest obstacles faced by Black woman in their athletic training educational experiences were: time conflicts, financial issues and sexism. Only 2 participants indicated racism as an obstacle. Did you experience over racism as an athletic training student?

Why do you think racism was not cited more by participants?

Does it surprise you that more participants didn't cite racism as an obstacle?

5. Much of the research on Black student college retention focuses on obstacles and barriers to completion. Could you describe for me instead the factors that led to your academic success and graduation?
6. More than half of the participants in my study indicated that what was most memorable about their athletic training education experience was the camaraderie with their classmates. Participants used terms like "close knit", "family" and such. Was this your experience? Can you describe your peer experiences? How did those relationships contribute to your college experience as an athletic training student?
7. Despite many participants describing the close knit peer relationships, two participants indicated feeling alienated, and half felt stereotyped by their peers. How do you interpret that?
8. How important do you think your mentor's race was on his/her ability to be an effective mentor to you? How important do you think your mentor's gender was on his/her ability to be an effective mentor to you?
9. What do white athletic training educators and clinical instructors need to know about being effective mentors for the Black women enrolled in the program?