The art of passing on knowledge and experience from one generation to the next has been a part of our cultural structure since the beginning of civilization. Whether through verbal or written language, both the informal or formal mentoring processes have been used by faculty to pass knowledge down to the younger generations of students. Mentoring, however, is not an easy process; especially when the faculty mentor and the student mentee are of different races. With the continual increase in diversity of the student body, there is a growing need for White faculty members to become more culturally aware and to possess the competencies to be effective mentors. There currently is a very limited understanding of how these mentoring relationships operate in the discipline of Athletic training, as there are only a handful of studies that have explored the dynamics of mentoring. Further, within the field of Athletic training, there is much work to be done to explore the area of cross-cultural mentoring and the competence needed to appropriately navigate these relationships.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how White faculty members experience a cross-cultural mentoring relationship with a Black student in Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) Undergraduate Athletic Training Programs. Utilizing a phenomenological research design, five White
faculty members at five institutions were interviewed for insight on how each of them understood and experienced a cross-cultural mentoring relationship with a Black student. While each of the participants had their own unique story, four themes emerged that comprised the essence of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring relationships for these White faculty members. Those themes that compose the essence of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring relationships are: mentoring is a journey; a foundation of pre-requisites are needed that include trust, respect, the importance of interpersonal connection, and understanding the mentee’s story; the discomforting awareness of difference; a colorblind approach and the sources of struggle that result.

The findings of this research begin to provide and assist White faculty members with strategies to address the critical factors involved in navigating the cross-cultural mentoring relationship and the insights on what is needed to build trust. The role that racial awareness and White privilege has on these relationships, while uncomfortable to discuss initially, have potential to greatly inform the development of strategies and programming to assist the White faculty members towards the successful evolution of mentoring relationship.