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ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION

New Graduate Entry: Students' Transition to an Adapted Physical Education Graduate Program

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain master of arts students' academic and social experiences during the transition to an adapted physical education (APE) graduate program. In this study, we used the theory of transition, which allowed us to understand students' transition to graduate studies and to assist them in connecting to the academic support needed to cope with their changing circumstances. Seven APE master's students (3 men and 4 women) participated in the study, which had a descriptive-qualitative design. The data sources were a demographic questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, and the program of graduate study (archival record). Interview data were analyzed using a constant comparative method, and results in themes related to (a) difficulty in academic transition to the graduate program, (b) relationships with program faculty, and (c) experiential learning. To better support APE graduate students, we encourage academic de-

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partments, administrators, faculty, and all students to learn how to view themselves as playing various roles, such as academic advisor, graduate student, graduate assistant, and fellowship graduate student.

In today's higher education, all universities are seeking the similar goal of success for their master's degree students (Johnston, 2010). American universities enthusiastically support the transition of master's degree students into their graduate programs. According to Kallio (1995), universities need to help students solve the dilemmas they face in the transition to graduate education. Although many American institutions expend major resources on recruiting new graduate students, many of these students fail in the academic and social transition from undergraduate studies or professional careers (Polson, 2003). Sato and Hodge (2009) studied adapted physical education (APE) doctoral students (focusing specifically on international students and students of color) at major research universities. They found that these students experience academic and social difficulties exacerbated by cultural differences between the culture of their undergraduate program and that of the graduate program. Moreover, students with positions as graduate assistants (GAs) have concerns about balancing their studies and teaching and about their responsibilities as GAs. They are also concerned about time demands (Sato & Hodge, 2009; Sato, Hodge, & Burge-Hall, 2011).

Graduate students in physical education, APE graduate students of color, and international students feel marginalized, alienated, isolated, discriminated against, and even that they have been targets of racism (Samuel, 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Spurling, 2006). Ferrales and Fine (2005) noted that graduate students who have been away from school for a few years or who have traveled or worked at various jobs without building a career face different challenges than other graduate students do. Life stage development can significantly influence student behavior throughout graduate school (Kallio, 1995). Many graduate students arrive on campus feeling intimidated and emotionally fragile. Because of the sensitive nature of this stage in life, emphasis should be placed on investment and retention. Orienting adult students to educational programs is viewed by many as the first step toward retention. Kretchmar and Memory (2010) suggested that a campus visit prior to the first day of school can greatly influence students because of how that experience makes

them feel and because of the images it creates in their minds. Faculty and staff serve a major role in the on-site experiences of incoming students. Impressions and people-to-people interactions are highly influential.

Determining, analyzing, and understanding the transition experiences of APE graduate students are useful to their preparation and continued professional development. This is important to those concerned with ensuring equitable and successful graduate school experiences for all students. APE programs prepare graduates to demonstrate competency in teaching, research, and service for people with and without disabilities in physical activity contexts, but there is a lack of studies on graduate students' experiences in such programs. Hence, we sought to explore how graduate students at a university interpret their academic and social transition to graduate school while attending an APE program (Ellery & Stewart, 2000). This study expands the knowledge base and will help inform professional preparation programs in education.

Theoretical Framework and Purpose

The conceptual framework of this study was the theory of transition (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995), which was used to frame the graduate students' responses to academic and social transition while attending an APE graduate program. The theory of transition is often used to understand students' transition to graduate studies and to assist them in connecting to the academic support needed to cope with their changing circumstances (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Schlossberg defines the term *transition* as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 27). The theory of transition was developed in relation to student academic and social maturation, characterized by the stages of "moving in," "moving through," and "moving on" (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). Schlossberg (1987) also noted that many individual transitions are not related to a person's age, but to circumstances in their lives. In studies of the graduate student transition process, it is essential that the theoretical framework account for the transitional factors that influence a student's decision and motivation to attend an APE graduate program.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) identified three types of transitions among graduate students: anticipated (e.g., the transition to APE graduate programs), unanticipated (e.g., an extreme underrepresentation of graduate students, resulting in isolation), and nonevents (e.g., expecting to join in academic support groups and not being able to do so because none are available on campus). The *context* is the student's relationship to the transition and its setting, and the *impact* is the degree to which the transition alters the individual's daily academic social routine (Evans et al., 2010). Graduate students in transition often experience feelings of inadequacy and incompetence due to unfamiliar situations and consequences. The need to feel competent relates to the need to master new situations and tasks, such as taking APE graduate courses, research-related courses, and clinical experiences for the first time. The move from incompetence to competence might be difficult for APE graduate students. It depends on the manipulation of the combination of assets and deficits in each transition to a new academic or social environment (Schlossberg & Warren, 1989).

Schlossberg et al. (1995) identified four factors (the 4Ss) in managing the transitions in academic and social environments including situation, self, support, and strategies. *Situation* includes what triggered the event, the timing, control, role change, duration, previous experiences with a similar situation, stress, and assessment (Evans et al., 2010). *Self* is the individual's personal and demographic characteristics, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (McCoy, 2014). This factor affects how graduate students view their academic and social lives. *Support* is the types of help provided, their function, and how they are measured. This factor includes personal relationships, family, friends, institutions, and communities (McCoy, 2014). *Strategies* are the coping mechanisms employed to address the transition. They modify the situation, control the meaning of the problem, and assist in stress management (Evans et al., 2010).

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain master's students' academic and social transition into an APE graduate program. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How did APE master's students handle transitional experiences during graduate studies?

2. How were APE master's students' perspectives on graduate education (coursework, academic advising, and field experiences) affected during graduate school?

Method

Research Design

This study used an explanatory (holistic) multiple case study design (Yin, 2003). These data are unique in their focus on students' experiences transitioning into an APE graduate program. Qualitative studies typically focus in depth on small samples, even single cases, sampled purposefully (Patton, 2002). The purpose of the case study method was to understand complex educational and/or social phenomena better while retaining the holistic and meaningful particularities of real-life circumstances (Yin, 2003). In line with that logic, the explanatory case study method was appropriate for exploring APE master's students' experiences as new graduate students.

Research Site

One flagship university, College State University (CSU; pseudonym), was the site for this study. This site was chosen because it has a reputation and history of APE graduate endorsement within the master's program. The other rationale was to include participants from comparable universities in the accessible geographical region.

Participant Nomination and Selection

A nomination process was used in this case study (Yin, 2003). It consisted of collecting relevant information about the APE graduate program (Yin, 2003) and then defining the relevant criteria for nominating participants. The selection of participants involved contacting APE faculty for nominations of master's students matching the selection protocol criteria (Yin, 2003). Seven participants from the graduate program were nominated and selected for this study.

The participants were Cathy, Donovan, Jason, Ted, Nadia, Aoife, and Tiffany (all pseudonyms). The mean age was 25 years, with a range of 22–28 years. Six participants were native to the United States (New York: $n = 5$; Puerto Rico: $n = 1$), and one was from Ireland, and the participants had diverse educational backgrounds, ethnici-

ties, personalities, and cultures (see Table 1). All APE master's students (Cathy, Donovan, Jason, Ted, Nadia, Aoife, and Tiffany) hold physical education teaching licenses and have completed bachelor's degrees in physical education. All participants entered the graduate program to study new academic fields. Six participants were funded by their college or department (i.e., they held a GA position) or by federal grant fellowships.

Table 1
Master Students' Demographic Data

Pseudonym	Institution	Gender	Ethnicity	Nationality
Donovan	CSU	Male	Caucasian	USA
Aoife	CSU	Female	Irish	Ireland
Tiffany	CSU	Female	Hispanic/Latino	Puerto Rico
Nadia	CSU	Female	African American & Caucasian	USA
Cathy	CSU	Female	Indian American	USA
Ted	CSU	Male	White American	USA
Jason	CSU	Male	Hispanic Latino	USA

Data Collection

Demographic questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was used to collect descriptive quantifiable data from the participants. This questionnaire was designed to measure how well master's students are being prepared for future careers (e.g., APE teaching positions). It consisted of three components: (a) questions to determine respondents' goals and why they enrolled in the program (e.g., motives, career goals, and job market), (b) questions about the program (e.g., transition, general information, student progress, department climate and culture, and funding), and (c) questions about selecting an advisor (e.g., research interests, advising style, and work environment).

Face-to-face open-ended interviews. According to Yin (2003), researchers have two jobs in conducting interviews: (a) to follow the interview case study protocol and (b) to ask the actual (conversational) questions. During the interview, the researcher asked participants factual questions as well as solicited their opinions about

people, places, and events related to their academic and social transitions into an APE graduate program (Yin, 2003) using a face-to-face focused interview that lasted for a short time (approximately 60 to 90 min; Yin, 2003). The interviews remained open ended and assumed a conversational tone. The modified interviews were guided by a preestablished set of questions developed by Lewis, Ginsberg, Davis, and Smith (2004) and by Sato and Hodge (2009). For this study, the specific questions were modified and carefully worded to be relevant to the current investigation of graduate students in an APE graduate program (Yin, 2003).

Interview questions. Students were interviewed using an open-ended interview protocol of 22 questions (Lewis et al., 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009). The questions were derived from the literature on student transition, diversity, retention, and factors associated with successful completion of graduate degrees. The first eight questions focused on definitions of a transition culture, satisfaction issues, key aspects of graduate school experience, factors affecting success, and areas needing development in graduate training (Lewis et al., 2004).

Master's Program of Study (Archival Record)

The participants' graduate programs of study (archival record) were used in conjunction with other sources of information (interview transcripts) in exploring these case studies. The rationale for examining the participants' master's program was that those documents serve as an agreement between a school's graduate program studies committee and the participants regarding (a) chosen area(s) of interest; (b) intended professional goals; (c) previous courses and relevant experience; (d) the expected time schedule for undertaking the required topical seminars and writing seminars; (e) the courses expected to meet the minimum requirements of the school, accompanied by a statement of rationale; and (f) the anticipated additional courses beyond the minimum coursework requirement, accompanied by a statement of rationale.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation involved the use of multiple data sources, including data from the interview transcripts, demographic questionnaire, and master's program. The purpose of

triangulation is to determine the accuracy of the data, as opposed to seeking universal truth (Merriam, 1998). Member checking was used to reduce the effect of subjective bias (Patton, 2002). The researcher sent copies of the interview transcripts and themes that emerged to the participants by postal mail. Their acknowledgment of the accuracy of the transcripts and of the researchers' interpretations of the data ensured that trustworthiness was established (Merriam, 1998). Peer debriefing is a process of exposing oneself to a knowledgeable peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session, with the purpose of exploring aspects of inquiry that might remain only implicit in the inquirer's mind (Patton, 2002). For this study, two professional colleagues who had expertise in qualitative research agreed to serve as peer debriefers. They deemed the interpretations of the data to be accurate and representative of the participants' statements.

Data Analysis

A constant comparative method (Boeije, 2010) was used to interpret the data. The basic strategy of this analytical process is to compare pieces of data constantly. More specifically, each potentially meaningful piece of data in the interview transcripts was coded independently by the first and second authors, and the differences were discussed until agreement was reached. The demographic data and the master's program of study data were coded by the lead author and checked by the second author. The two peer debriefers reviewed the codes to avoid potential researcher bias. The researchers grouped the codes into thematic categories, and these were then refined into recurring themes (Boeije, 2010).

Results

Three interrelated themes emerged from the students' narratives. Explainable by the logic of the theory of transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995), the themes were (a) *difficulty in academic transition to a graduate program,* (b) *relationships with program faculty,* and (c) *experiential learning.*

Theme 1: Difficulty in Academic Transition to a Graduate Program

The students felt it was difficult to navigate the graduate entry transition in regard to academic success in the graduate program.

They believed their training should be designed to balance professional expectations as GAs or fellowship students and academic expectations as APE master's students. They felt anxiety and academic pressure in taking a new program of study. They faced transition challenges and constant concerns because they were required to complete their program of study within a short period (1 to 2 years).

The master's students who were interviewed prioritized their studies over their graduate assistantship or fellowship. They are required to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in graduate school. In an APE graduate program, they need to pass all courses to be eligible to take the National Certification of Adapted Physical Educator (APENS) exam of the National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals With Disabilities (NCPEID). As a future career requirement for fellowship recipients, all APE master's students must work with students with disabilities for 2 years in which 51% of the students have disabilities, or the equivalent (i.e., 25% for 4 years). These academic pressures adversely affected students' balancing of their studies and their assistantships or fellowships. For example, Cathy said,

> Every Saturday, as the fellowship requirement, students had to help disability sport events in the morning. Saturday is the one of important date for study. I have to finish my assignments for the following week. While I am in the duties of my fellowship, I start to think about my course assignments. I really struggle to balance duties of fellowship and coursework. I have hard time passing the courses. I also concern about passing APENS exams and getting the job that holds 50% of APE classes of my teaching assignments after the graduation. Otherwise, I need to pay them back. I am worried about my future. I know that Donovan and Jason are graduate students who have kids and family. It must be more difficult to balance fellowship, academics, and family. (Cathy, Interview)

Cathy explained that she prioritized her studies over her fellowship assignments because she faces three challenges: graduating from the APE program, passing the APENS exam, and getting a career. If she fails any one of these challenges, she will struggle to repay

her tuition to the federal grant agency. She felt these challenges are tough to overcome. APE master's students Donovan and Jason had time management problems related to completing multiple tasks, such as their fellowship duties, course assignments, and family duties. Donovan said, "I tried my best [at] managing the time to stay with my family while completing my assignments. It is not always enough." Jason said, "I have two children. . . . I am stressed. . . . I'm here . . . almost 15 hours working every day because I had to prepare and do the coursework and graduate assistant duty at the same time." He shared his challenges in handling his family, academic, and fellowship responsibilities:

> I have young child before my wife gave a birth. Even my son gets sick, I have to stay home and watch him, but my mind is about academic priority. I feel stressed when the assignments due dates are coming closer. I need to complete assignments, but family emergency is the unexpected event. Many professors knew about my situation, so they are dealing with family issues, so it has been parenting. They trust what I do. It is nice to see. It is tight, nice, and friendly group I am working with. I feel really challenging without any helps from my wife's partnership. I have to plan ahead. There are some students who just started field experiences in March. They can go to once a week, they do not have to worry about family. I do not have a choice like that. I have to go to twice a week and short periods of time, because I cannot stay longer. If I get a few days that my wife can take off, I go to field experiences. I take advantages of it. (Donovan, Interview)

Donovan felt stressed because he felt that if any of his responsibilities were not met satisfactorily, he might lose his fellowship or even be dismissed from the APE program. Therefore, he believed that support from his family members was a key factor in his success in this program.

Theme 2: Relationships With Program Faculty

Most participants were satisfied with the relationships they built with their program faculty, but others were not. Cathy, Donovan, Jason, Ted, and Nadia received their bachelor's degrees in physical

education at CSU, and they were satisfied to have their current advisors and program faculty because they were familiar with the faculty's expectations from their undergraduate programs. However, Tiffany and Aoife graduated from different programs and institutions. They had difficulty developing a positive relationship with their program faculty and difficulty in their transition from their undergraduate institutions. They believed that this occurred because they did not know about the program faculty's academic expectations and thus received lower grades for their coursework and because they encountered different expectations among the program faculty. Therefore, it was difficult for them to develop positive and trusting relationships with the APE faculty. For example, Aoife said,

> I was advised not to do a thesis for my master program, because it is too much work. Perhaps, professors recommend me say, I have to follow all requirements of the program of study, my former advisor told me that I have to take easy classes. It was unfortunate and struggling in exercise science courses. Professors concerned that I should not take any challenging courses like thesis courses in order to graduate. Some classes are much more demanding. I was struggling in the first semester. However, master students who graduated from CSU were recommended to complete thesis projects as a graduation requirement. I felt that I was not well prepared from my undergraduate institution, so that they underestimated my academic competency. I felt that that is different student treatment. I wanted to do thesis project, so I changed my academic advisor, but I need to understand politics and that is one of my transition problems at my graduate program of study. (Aoife, Interview)

Aoife also said that all professors control the environment of their own classrooms and have tremendous power over the types of relationships they form with their students. She believed that the power in student–professor relationships can make the relationships more problematic. If she does not follow professors' guidance, her graduate studies might become a nightmare. Tiffany also said, "I felt marginalized, detached, and isolated in the graduate program, because I was not familiar with the culture and did not know the fac-

ulty in their graduate programs." She felt that some faculty treated students with bachelor's degrees from different programs or universities differently. They were upset and unhappy because they felt they were treated as academically inferior to other students in the same program.

Theme 3: Experiential Learning

All the participants had chances to teach students with disabilities in the APE practicum. Cathy, Donovan, Jason, Ted, Nadia, Aoife, and Tiffany were assigned to complete 200 practicum hours at schools for children and adolescents with disabilities. As part of their practicum experiences, they learned about the academic backgrounds and social goals and objectives of the individualized educational plan (IEPs) with the cooperating teachers and paraeducators. It seems that teaching and consulting on APE classes helped them to teach and assist students with disabilities more effectively. When the cooperating teachers shared instructional and managerial tips, the participants were motivated to apply these tips for more appropriate practice. It surprised them and opened their eyes that there were many staff and teachers involved in APE class settings.

The participants had difficulty working with paraeducators because the paraeducators' roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined. They understood that *paraeducators* are an integral part of the learning and teaching team. Under the supervision of the teachers, paraeducators assist with multiple levels of support in physical education or APE. The participants felt that inadequate training and knowledge on the part of teachers prevented appropriate guidance for paraeducators to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. However, the participants did not have the right to control the paraeducators. Nadia, for example, explained her situation as follows:

> I have a conflict that many paraeducators are not well educated. I would say that there is a lack of knowledge and there is another issue of shortage of paraeducator. I feel that my field experience does not flow well. There are many paraeducators who do not know any expectation from teachers before they come. I taught lessons and many paraeducators do not

> understand what I was saying. They start to chat with other paraeducators who are next to them. I said, "Excuse me . . . There are my students who are listening . . ." All of my students are on wheelchairs and none of them were worried and there was no communication between paraeducators and students with disabilities. I feel that there are some conflicts of professional interests between teachers, graduate students, and paraeducators. They need the session about how they interact with students with disabilities. (Nadia, Interview)

Jason also told of his negative experiences with his cooperating teacher. He believed he might need to develop behavioral management plans in relation to the paraeducators:

> Challenging is that I talk to cooperating teachers about this. They told me that I have to try to teach lessons effectively as much as possible. But I could not stand when I saw some paraeducators who act like babies, I think I have to develop behavioral management plans. The most important piece of this field experience is that paraeducators and teachers have to share ideas and collaborative actions toward meeting goals and objectives of students with disabilities. I know that paraeducators know more about students with disabilities, but they do not share the information with me. I feel that this is the issue in the field experiences. (Jason, Interview)

Jason explained that many paraeducators had behavioral issues because there is no clear definition of their responsibilities as administrative assistants or teacher's aides for students with disabilities. He also believed there is some miscommunication between the paraeducators and the participants. He said, "We need to have a template of communication items all paraeducators, cooperative teachers, and participants need to know." Ted described the experiential learning experiences with paraeducators as "learning how to deal with colleagues and teachers rather than teaching students with disabilities." He also commented, "It seems that I ignored voices of students with disabilities. I agree that APE teachers, administrators, and paraeducators made instructional decision, but it did not mean to reflect the needs of students with disabilities."

Discussion

The themes that emerged from this study were that these students struggled to overcome academic, assistantship, or fellowship challenges and stressors such as time demands and isolated status (Sato & Hodge, 2009). They believed that their transition to graduate school created academic shock, social isolation, and adjustment to a new academic culture. Although they had difficulty adjusting to their new programs, they attempted to cope with the transition by changing the meaning of the academic culture and managing their reactions to academic and professional transition stress. All of the students realized there is "no single, predictable, universal adult experience" (Schlossberg, 1987, p. 75). They agreed that their APE graduate programs help them acquire transferable skills and competencies (i.e., carry-forward or work-ready skill sets relevant to competing for future APE teaching positions; Rose, 2013).

This study found that master's students with a duel agenda (as graduate students and GA or fellowship recipients) might experience academic difficulties and time demands. Their assistantships and fellowships made them feel suspended between their undergraduate role and their new graduate role (Kotewa, 1995). According to the theory of transition (Schlossberg & Warren, 1985), new graduate students often feel inadequate and incompetent because of unknown situations and consequences. The students believed that they need to develop confidence in their academic achievements and assistantships or fellowships during a short period. Lofquist and Dawis (1991) explained that when graduate students develop harmonious relationships between faculty and their ability to adapt to the academic roles of their graduate programs, they can see the transition outcomes and the degree of fit, such as satisfaction, achievement, performance, stability, and retention. The students expressed a strong commitment to attending the APE program, but voiced less commitment to their assistantships or fellowship duties. They prioritized their academic progress because they were concerned about losing their assistantships or fellowships, which would lead to possible separation from the universities. One of the participants dropped out of the graduate program at the end of the academic year after losing her fellowship and failing to maintain her academic standing.

The participants who graduated from other undergraduate programs or institutions (Tiffany and Aoife) shared their social transition experiences in being treated differently by professors in their academic major programs. Faculty–student mentoring relationships provide valuable insights into effective practices that foster the success of graduate students. However, the participants had difficulty finding suitable mentors who could provide proper academic and social support. In this study, for example, one professor discouraged Aoife from completing the thesis option as a graduation requirement of the APE master program. Schlossberg (1987) explained that a sense of belonging must be inclusive, but when graduate students make larger scale transitions (e.g., changing academic programs or institutions), they have a hard time shifting from their role as undergraduate students to their new role as graduate students. Graduate students need to feel that they matter and that they should be the subject of another person's interest. According to Lechuga (2011), reciprocity is a key component of faculty–graduate student relationships in that students receive direction from faculty and faculty members benefit by learning from their students. Aoife found that the professor encouraged other graduate students with a physical education degree from the same undergraduate programs to take the thesis option. Lechuga explained two factors behind faculty–graduate student relationships. First, faculty tend to seek graduate students who demonstrate their ability to work and understand the academic culture of graduate programs. Second, faculty increase their level of productivity by working with "high quality" graduate students who are able to work independently with minimal direction.

The graduate students had valuable teaching and field experiences working with students with disabilities at practicum sites. They worked hard to meet cooperating teachers' expectations. All graduate students were motivated to comply with the instructor's authority and expectations, which they described as social pressure that encouraged them to resolve the challenges. This study found a lack of clarity in relation to paraeducators' roles and responsibilities in APE classes. More specifically, the graduate students believed that many paraeducators did not view APE classes as important academic subjects. They felt that the paraeducators considered APE classes as a relaxed time when they did not have to deal with students with

disabilities, so they stepped back from the students with disabilities (Bryan, McCubbin, & van der Mars, 2013). Therefore, some graduate students had to manage the behavior of students with disabilities and of the paraeducators at the same time. All the graduate students recommended adequate training and clarification of the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators, such as connector, team member, instructor, and caregiver/health service, as this would help all teachers, paraeducators, and graduate students learn appropriate guidance to meet the education needs of students with disabilities in APE classes (Bryan et al., 2013; Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000).

Recommendations and Conclusion

These graduate students struggled to overcome challenges related to their studies, assistantship, or fellowship, as well as stressors such as time demands and isolation (Sato & Hodge, 2009). Although they had difficulty adjusting to graduate school, they tried to learn how to cope in a particular APE graduate program. Below are recommendations that will help support their academic transition.

First, faculty members involved in APE graduate programs should receive cultural awareness training (e.g., in transition issues such as how to handle a duel agenda or academic transfer policies) to help them better understand graduate students' unique challenges (Sato et al., 2011).

Second, college and university faculty and administrators need to become more aware of the growing enrollment of diverse students on U.S. campuses and become more sensitive to the needs of these academic and social sojourners (Sato & Hodge, 2009). In collaboration with offices of international affairs, academic units need to sponsor mandatory events on cultural, social, and academic adjustment and seminars to address issues concerning international students' academic and social experiences, discrimination, marginalization, diversity, and internationalism. It is also important to institutionalize a commitment to student diversity (including internationalism), and colleges and universities should include in the promotion and tenure process an evaluation of faculty activities associated with promoting such diversity. This type of accountability measure would encourage faculty to engage more regularly in activities supportive of diversity, which might lead to a heightened awareness of the kinds of issues presented in this paper (Hodge & Wiggins, 2010).

Third, all graduate students should complete multiple early practicum experiences instructing in APE settings and pay special attention to the rehabilitation and educational purposes of paraeducators. Chow (2002) identified progressive ways to help students by using different collaborative approaches (part-methods, guided practice, and modified games and play). Therapeutic techniques (e.g., students' kinesthetic senses) supported by paraeducators must also be covered within APE programs. Graduate students acquire proper skills and tactics in APE settings.

Last, graduate students should be encouraged to document their sources of transition stress and their coping responses through journaling techniques. These techniques might enhance self-awareness of students' thoughts and feelings in specific work contexts (Reed & Giacobbi, 2004). Hill (2001) stated that self-awareness is a critical first step toward identifying specific situations that elicit stress-related emotions in the graduate transition. This awareness allows graduate students to develop problem-solving techniques.

To better support APE graduate students, we encourage academic departments, administrators, faculty, and all students to learn to view themselves as playing various roles such as academic advisor, graduate student, GA, or fellowship recipient. It might be wise for graduate programs and graduate students to focus on the nuances of academic and social relationships from the outset.

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