

HISTORICAL

African American Physical Education Folklore Surrounding School Transition

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Abstract

Transferring from elementary to secondary school can be difficult for many children, and students making this transition often suffer from anxiety and stress. One source of stress can be found in the scary stories transitioning pupils hear about their new schools, particularly those about physical education and sport. The purpose of this study was to examine the scary stories young African American adults living in the Deep South recalled hearing about physical education as they made the transition from elementary to secondary school. Folklore and the concept of role reversal were the theoretical perspectives that guided data collection and analysis. Participants were 51 African American students. They wrote down scary stories they recalled hearing prior to transferring to secondary school within a two-item open-ended story record. Stories were coded and categorized and reduced to key themes using analytic induction and constant comparison. The key finding was the scary stories the African Americans in this study recalled were similar to the stories American Caucasians recalled in previous research. The stories collected in this study were also reminiscent of those described in the studies carried out with young adults in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. Results of this study also indicate physical education plays only a peripheral role in the African American folklore surrounding school transition.

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Research indicates transferring from elementary to secondary school can be a difficult experience for many children because of the academic and social changes they encounter and because they are moving from the familiar to the unknown (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Pietarinen, 2000). Not surprisingly, students making this transition can suffer from anxiety and stress (Akos, 2002; Grills-Taquechel, Norton, & Ollendick, 2010). Stressors may include the larger school buildings, school enrollment, and class sizes than those to which they are accustomed (Crockett, Petersen, Graber, Schulenberg, & Ebata, 1989; Pratt & George, 2005).

Moreover, the myriad of social changes new students face as they start secondary school can be problematic. These include interacting with other students who are physically and socially more advanced (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Eccles & Wigfield, 1997) and being bullied by older students aiming to gain social acceptance with their peer group (Chedzoy & Burden, 2005; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). In addition, differences in the racial composition of the student body and the teachers at the new school can be disconcerting (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2000; Tonkin & Watt, 2003; Wampler, Munsch, & Adams, 2002). Finally, because this transition occurs at an age when children are also going through physiological and psychological changes, the lack of stability it causes can amplify feelings of distress (Gentle-Genitty, 2009). Not surprisingly, the changes encountered during school transition can also have a negative effect on academic performance (Benner & Graham, 2009; Roderick, 2003; Weiss & Baker-Smith, 2010).

Few researchers have examined the role physical education (PE) plays in school transition. However, some British research indicates this process may be less traumatic for students when their elementary PE teachers pass on data about them to their counterparts at the secondary school to which they are moving. Specifically, sharing data helps academically in terms of curriculum continuity and skill development and socially in terms of facilitating integration into the new school (Capel, Zwozdiak-Myers, & Lawrence, 2004, 2007). Furthermore, Dismore and Bailey (2010) noted students' attitudes toward PE may change for better or worse once they transition to secondary school. This is because they perceive the main goal of PE as shifting from enjoyment at the elementary school level to perfor-

mance at the secondary school level. Students who like this shift are positive about secondary school PE; however, those who do not approve of this shift are relatively negative about the subject. Dismore and Bailey argued these findings highlight the need for secondary school PE teachers to provide positive experiences and a supporting environment for all newly transitioned students.

In addition, researchers have noted PE and school sport feature prominently in the scary stories transitioning pupils hear from siblings, peers, parents, and other adults about their new schools (Delamont, 1991; Murdoch, 1986; Pugsley, Coffey, & Delamont, 1996a, 1996b; Woodruff & Curtner-Smith, 2007). Specifically, in six British studies (Delamont, 1989, 1991; Delamont & Galton, 1986, 1987; Pugsley et al., 1996a, 1996b), children reported hearing stories about long-distance running, taking showers, underwear checks, and sexual harassment by gay and lesbian PE teachers. These stories reveal students are concerned about threats to their person and self-esteem and potentially sexualized situations (Delamont, 1991; Pugsley et al., 1996a). Moreover, many of the stories connect pupils' bodies and schooling (Pugsley et al., 1996a). For example, stories boys hear target their sense of masculinity by emphasizing their need to have skilled, strong, and tough bodies. Stories girls hear are concerned with their physical appearance and issues surrounding the exposure of their bodies in public. As a result of these findings, Pugsley et al. (1996a) suggested those intent on making the process of transition less traumatic would do well to pay attention to these scary stories as they provide clues about specific concerns children and adolescents have about secondary schooling.

Heeding the sentiment of this advice, Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007) examined the scary stories American children had heard just prior to transitioning to secondary school. The goal of this research was to see if the scary stories American children heard were similar to those British children heard and if PE and school sport featured as prominently in these stories as they had in the British stories. American secondary schools were depicted as being particularly violent and inhospitable, and the stories were focused on bullying; the intimidatory size of schools; imaginary places within schools; impossibly high academic standards and harsh discipline; and sex, drugs, and violence. Furthermore, although not as promi-

ment as those in Britain, there were a relatively large number of scary stories about PE and school sport. These were concerned with team initiations, communal showers and locker rooms, long-distance running, coaches and PE teachers, homosexual advances and sexual molestation, personal fears and insecurities, and supernatural incidents.

The participants in Woodruff and Curtner-Smith's (2007) study were predominantly Caucasian and were located in the "Deep South" of the United States. Woodruff and Curtner-Smith theorized the relatively recent history and lingering aftereffects of institutionalized racism in this region (Cazers & Curtner-Smith, 2013) may lead to African American children hearing different and perhaps more formidable scary stories than Caucasians. Other researchers supported this theory, suggesting children of color in general and African American children in particular may have different and more difficult transitions from elementary to secondary school compared with Caucasian children. Specifically, some multiethnic youth have had extreme difficulties with academic work following transition and have suffered badly with anxiety and loneliness. These problems can lead to students of color dropping out of school at alarming rates (Benner & Graham, 2009; Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers, & Smith, 2000; Roderick, 2003; Wampler et al., 2002). Other research has shown that African American children are at greater risk of transitioning poorly to secondary schools when they come from poverty and because of the reduced expectations society has for minorities in general (Ford, 1993; Gentle-Genitty, 2009; Simmons, Black, & Zhou, 1991). In addition, evidence indicates African American students who do not gain a sense of belonging within their new secondary schools may be particularly susceptible to academic failure (French et al., 2000; Gutman & Midgley, 2000). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the scary stories young African American adults living in the Deep South recalled hearing about PE as they made the transition from elementary to secondary school.

Theoretical Perspectives

The two theoretical perspectives primarily employed in previous research of scary stories (Delamont, 1989, 1991; Pugsley et al., 1996a, 1996b; Woodruff & Curtner-Smith, 2007) were also used to guide data collection and analysis in this study. These were folklore

and the concept of role reversal described by structural anthropologists.

Folklore

Folklore consists of scary stories, tales, and urban legends designed to warn and teach the young and inexperienced about the dangers that may exist in the world (Brunvand, 2000; Fox Tree & Weldon, 2007; Inglis, 2007). These scary stories and legends are the “unofficial culture of a group, the means by which information and attitudes are transmitted and interpreted within the group” (Whatley & Henken, 2000, p. 5). Although these stories may be believable, they are usually “too odd, too coincidental, and too neatly plotted to be accepted as literal truth” (Brunvand, 2001, p. xxviii). The tellers of these stories (e.g., older siblings and peers) will claim they are factually accurate, but they often embellish them for dramatic effect (Brunvand, 1999; Whatley & Henken, 2000). For this reason, several variations of the same story may be in circulation at one time (Brunvand, 2001). Moreover, when stories are more detailed (e.g., they include specific times and places), and storytellers are regarded as credible, those listening are more likely to believe them (Whatley & Henken, 2000). In addition, folklore changes and develops over time (Brunvand, 1999). Stories that remain relevant (i.e., warn about possible dangers) and continue to entertain and frighten their recipients survive, and those that do not die out (Brunvand, 1981). This study was focused on the scary stories that comprise folklore about secondary schooling in general and PE and sport in particular and that African American children consume immediately prior to transitioning to secondary school.

Role Reversal

The transition from one level of schooling to another is a rite of passage (Murdoch, 1986) for children that results in a reversal of their status and role (Zhang, 2012). Specifically, students shift from being on top of the social hierarchy in the elementary school to being at the bottom of the hierarchy in the secondary school (Lucey & Reay, 2000). Structural anthropologists have found it useful to analyze urban legends, myths, and stories by searching for opposing constructs or “binary discriminations” that fully or partially describe this role reversal (Delamont, 1991; Douglas, 1975; Levi-Strauss,

1963; Pugsley et al., 1996a). Examples of binary discriminations in the school transition context include before/after, older/younger, stronger/weaker, knowing/unknowing, insider/outsider, old hand/newcomer, us/them, and aggressor/victim (Delamont, 1989; Pugsley et al., 1996a). Specifically, before transition the oldest elementary students are invariably the strongest children in their school and know its culture extremely well. This makes them insiders or old hands, so others consider them of the same status as “one of us.” It also means they are more likely to be the aggressor in bullying situations and throw students to make them dirty. Conversely, after transition, the youngest secondary students are generally the weakest children in the school, who know little about the school’s culture. This makes them outsiders and newcomers, so more established students regard them as “one of them.” Moreover, they are more likely to be the victims of bullying and to end up dirty after having been thrown. During this study, these and other binary discriminations were searched for within the scary stories the participants heard that described and helped explain the role reversal pupils encounter during the transition process.

Method

Participants and Setting

Participants were 51 students enrolled in several sections of an introductory course taught within the Department of Health and Physical Education at one historically Black college situated in the Deep South of the United States. Participants were African American. Twenty-seven were female and 24 were male. Fifty of the participants were traditional students between 19 and 22 years of age. One participant was a nontraditional student aged 49 years. Prior to taking part in the study, participants signed an informed consent form in congruence with the requirements of the university’s institutional review board policy regarding human participants in research.

In previous research in this line (Delamont 1989, 1991; Delamont & Galton, 1986, 1987; Pugsley et al., 1996a, 1996b; Woodruff & Curtner-Smith, 2007), researchers have also asked young adults to recall the scary stories they had heard when transitioning to secondary school. This was because this kind of folklore was thought to be

a “private” matter, as far as children were concerned, and not for the consumption of adults (Best, 1983; Fine, 1987). In short, the suggestion is that young adults are more likely to produce a “rich” source of data than children. The downside of working with young adults, however, is that there is more potential for inaccurate recall of stories heard or embellishment and fabrication of stories (Woodruff & Curtner-Smith, 2007).

Data Collection

The protocol and technique employed to collect data during this study were the same as Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007) used with their largely Caucasian sample and similar to that used by Delamont (1991) in one of the first studies of scary stories. Participants were asked to complete a two-item open-ended story record during a 1-hr session in their classrooms. To enhance credibility, story records were anonymous. Participants were, however, asked to note their gender and confirm their race as being African American.

In the first item in the story record, participants were asked to “write down any scary stories you can recall being told when you were about to move from your elementary school to your junior high/middle/high school.” At this stage, PE was not mentioned. In the second item, participants were requested to “write down any scary stories you can recall being told about PE when you were about to move from your elementary school to your junior high/middle/high school” provided they had not recorded these stories within Item 1.

Participants were required to respond to Item 1 before they turned their attention to Item 2 so the degree to which PE was foregrounded in the participants’ scary stories could be determined. In line with Delamont (1991), the participants were asked to preface the scary stories they recollected with the following statement: “Before I went to ... school, I was told by ... that” (p. 239).

Data Analysis

Data were worked with by employing similar methods to Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007). General scary stories from Item 1 of the story records and stories centered on PE from Item 2

were analyzed separately. Because some students recalled multiple general and PE-oriented scary stories, initially stories for each participant were identified and separated. Analytic induction and constant comparison (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) were then employed to code and categorize the general and PE scary stories. This process resulted in the identification of story themes, that is, collections of scary stories that were common across participants. Trustworthiness in and credibility of the analysis process were enhanced by a search for stories that contained elements that contradicted story theme descriptors. Once all the stories had been coded and categorized, the number and percentage of stories within each theme, and for both general schooling and PE, were computed across the whole sample and for men and women.

Findings

Scary Stories About Secondary School in General

Fifty-nine general scary stories were collected from Item 1 of the story records. These stories were recalled by 34 of the participants (see Table 1). Seventeen of the participants could not recall hearing any scary stories about secondary schooling in general. As shown in Table 1, the general scary stories the participants recalled fell into one of three story themes. These were (a) bullying and deviant behavior, (b) high academic standards, and (c) supernatural incidents and mythical rooms. In congruence with the largely Caucasian sample in Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007), none of the participants recorded a story about PE or sport within Item 1 of their story records. Table 1 indicates the majority of general scary stories the participants recalled were concerned with bullying and deviant behavior. Few stories were about high academic standards or supernatural incidents and mythical rooms. Table 1 also shows the stories men and women heard when they were children were mainly on the topic of bullying and deviant behavior. Only women, however, recalled stories about high academic standards. Women also recalled stories about supernatural incidents and mythical rooms more often than men did.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of General Scary Stories Heard by African American Men and Women

Scary story theme	Men (<i>n</i> = 14)		Women (<i>n</i> = 20)		Total (<i>n</i> = 34)	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Bullying and Deviant Behavior	20	95.24	28	73.68	48	81.36
High Academic Standards	0	0	6	15.79	6	10.17
Supernatural	1	4.76	4	10.53	5	8.47
Incidents and Mythical Rooms						
Total	21	100.00	38	100.00	59	100.00

Note. Ten males and seven females did not recall hearing any general scary stories.

Bullying and deviant behavior. Stories about bullying and deviant behavior were focused on how incoming secondary school students would be abused by older children. Abuse featured within the stories included “name-calling,” “teasing,” being targeted with “water balloons,” “thrown into lockers,” “stuffed in trash cans,” “pushed and punched in the hallways,” and being attacked on “Fresh Meat Fridays”—the day of the week on which older students made a deliberate attempt to increase this behavior. The following extracts are typical of stories about bullying and deviant behavior: “I was told that the high schoolers would pick on you, call you names, and try to put you in the garbage can upside down” (Male).

Before I went to...high school, I was told by my cousins that the first Friday...there was something called “Fresh Meat Friday.” “Fresh Meat Friday” is when [older students] would stuff people in the trash cans, lockers, and maybe hit them. (Female)

Women tended to recall stories with psychological bullying such as “teasing” and “name-calling,” whereas men were more likely to recall stories with descriptions of physical bullying and that were more violent in nature. Men, for example, frequently recalled stories that included boys new to the secondary school being “beat up in

the hallway,” “beat up after school and on the bus,” and attacked by “seniors [who] would take turns punching [new students]”: “Before I went to...high school I was told by some older kids in the neighborhood that the first week of school was going to be freshmen ‘beat down week.’” (Male)

Before I went to high school, I was told by a friend that it was inevitable that I would get into some fights and get seriously hurt. I was told that students would bully and tease you just because you were different. (Male)

Though stories recalled by women about incoming girls being bullied physically by older students were much less prevalent, they were still recorded:

Before I went to my middle school, I was told by other students that you would get involved in at least one fight the first year. I also heard that they cut girls’ hair if it was longer than other girls’. (Female)

In addition, men and women reported hearing stories of older students “trying to take our lunch money and other valuables”: “I was told not to go to the bathrooms alone because students would gang up on you and steal valuable items from you” (Male). “Before I went to middle school, I was told by my older brothers that the students would be bigger, meaner, and would always beat me up and take my lunch money” (Female). Finally, the lone nontraditional student in the sample remembered “stories” from the time when racial tensions were high in the Deep South and integration was still in its infancy:

Not long after the schools were integrated, I can remember my sister telling stories of kids fighting, stabbings, and was even told of one girl’s hair being set on fire. This was all so scary to me...transferring from elementary school to Jr. High. (Female)

High academic standards. The scary stories the female participants in the study recalled about high academic standards were

concerned with “mean, uncaring teachers” and “hard classes” and included the advice “that it was time to buckle down” in the classroom: “Before I went to middle school, I was told that the teachers were mean to the 6th graders because they had to break us in to the middle school way” (Female). “I was told by my teachers that high school would be a lot harder, which it was but in a good way. They also told me that this was when we had to begin preparing for college” (Female). In addition, these stories included the warning that academic grades might suffer if new students were “late for class.” This might be a major issue because students only had “a short time between each class.” Moreover, this issue could be negated if new students could “learn how to use a locker” efficiently.

Supernatural incidents and mythical rooms. Three of the five stories participants recalled hearing within this theme were focused on fairly far-fetched ghost stories connected to the secondary schools to which they eventually moved: “Before I went to high school, my friends and I were told that this girl was hung in the auditorium, and when I got to high school all I could picture was the girl hanging in the auditorium” (Female). “Before I went to high school, I was told by an upperclassman that the school was built on a graveyard and at night you could see ghosts in the halls and the lockers would open and close” (Female).

Furthermore, two stories in this category were concerned with fictitious or mythical rooms and buildings in the school that older students invented with the aim of confusing, scaring, and misdirecting newcomers: “Before I went to high school I was told there was a swimming pool on the roof” (Male).

Scary Stories About Physical Education

Sixteen scary stories about PE and school sport were collected from Item 2 of the story records. These stories were recalled by 11 of the participants (see Table 2). Conversely, 40 of the participants could not recall hearing scary stories on the subject of PE. As shown in Table 2, scary stories with a focus on PE and school sport were categorized as being illustrative of one of four story themes: (a) hard physical exercise, (b) communal showers and homosexual advances, (c) bullying in PE, and (d) team initiations. Data in Table 2 also indicate participants most frequently recalled stories about long-distance running and communal showers and homosexual advances,

whereas they recalled those about bullying in PE and team initiation less often. Table 2 also indicates the women heard more scary stories about PE before transitioning to secondary school than did the men.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Physical Education Scary Stories Heard by African American Men and Women

Scary story theme	Men (<i>n</i> = 4)		Women (<i>n</i> = 7)		Total (<i>n</i> = 11)	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Hard Physical Exercise	1	25.00	6	50.00	7	43.75
Communal Showers and Homosexual Advances	0	0	5	41.67	5	31.25
Bullying in Physical Education	2	50.00	1	8.33	3	18.75
Team Initiations	1	25.00	0	0	1	6.25
Total	4	100.00	12	100.00	16	100.00

Note. Twenty males and 20 females did not hear any physical education scary stories.

Hard physical exercise. Stories in this thematic category were concerned with being required to run long distances and to perform other rigorous and potentially uncomfortable exercise in PE classes. As illustrated in the following extracts, they also included feelings of inadequacy: “Before I went to high school, I was told that we would have to run 8 miles to pass the class, and that was scary to me because I was fat and out of shape” (Male). “Before I went to middle school, I was told by my brother that in PE class we would have to bear crawl and rope climb” (Female).

Communal showers and homosexual advances. Three of the female participants recalled hearing scary stories centered on showering and homosexual advances within the PE setting. These stories included references to girls having to “change into gym clothes in front of each other” and “shower with other females”: “Before I went to high school, I heard some of the girls were lesbians. At that time, I was not comfortable with my body, and I did not want anyone fantasizing and contemplating on taking my innocence” (Female).

Before I went to high school, I was told by a lot of my older peers that the girls were going to get me—especially during physical education when we dressed out. There was a lot of homosexuality in that high school. (Female)

Bullying in PE. The three scary stories recorded specifically about bullying in PE indicated that such action may be taken against incoming students by older pupils and PE teachers. Collectively, they portrayed PE classes as anything but warm and welcoming: “Dodgeball vs. eighth graders! I was told they would kill us younger kids with the ball” (Male). “Before I went to high school, I was told by random people that people used to jump on new freshmen in PE class” (Male). “Before I went to middle school, I was told by my friends that the PE coach would yell really loud” (Female).

Team initiations. Only one scary story was recalled about the initiation of incoming students who made the various sports teams at the new secondary school. It was, however, particularly brutal:

Before I went to high school, I was told by friends that as freshmen athletes you would get stripped and beat with wood. Without a care, they (i.e., older established players on the team) would trap you while in school and take off all your clothes in front of whoever was around. If necessary, they would use their wooden paddle to set you straight. (Male)

Conclusions

This was the second study in which the folklore surrounding PE and the transition from elementary to secondary school in the United States was investigated in which young adults were asked to recall scary stories. Many of the general scary stories, and those specifically about PE and sport, the African American sample recalled were the same as or similar to those a largely Caucasian sample relayed in a previous study by Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007). Participants in that earlier study recollected general scary stories about bullying, high academic standards, supernatural incidents, and mythical or imaginary rooms as well as stories on the subject of PE and sport concerned with hard physical exercise, showering and homosexual advances, bullying, and team initiations. In short, noth-

ing indicates the scary stories young African Americans residing in the Deep South hear are different in nature to those Caucasians from the same region of the country hear. The recollections of the one older nontraditional student in this study, however, indicate that during the civil rights era in the 1960s, African American children living in the Deep South and transferring to newly integrated secondary schools were bombarded with infinitely more scary stories than are the youth of today. Further research of the transitional folklore that existed in that era may be helpful as it could illustrate the extent to which the southeastern region has shifted in terms of racial equality.

The scary story themes unearthed in this study were also reminiscent of those described in the studies carried out with young adults in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s (Delamont, 1989, 1991; Delamont & Galton, 1986, 1987; Pugsley et al., 1996a, 1996b). Like those in the Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007) study, however, they portrayed American schools as being significantly more violent than the British schools in the earlier studies. In addition, many of them indicate a link between the body and schooling. For example, within this study, girls were concerned about exposing their bodies and unwanted sexual advances. Furthermore, both genders were concerned about their bodies being physically attacked or lacking the strength to tackle hard physical exercise. The majority of the binary discriminations illustrating the role reversal students undergo when they transition from elementary to secondary school that had been described in previous studies (Delamont, 1989; Pugsley et al., 1996a, 1996b) were also apparent within the stories collected in this study. For example, these stories portrayed students who were newcomers to the secondary school as weak outsiders likely to be the victims of bullying, whereas the inference was students at the top of the social hierarchy in their elementary schools were relatively strong insiders. In congruence with Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007), then, the stories in this study indicate transitioning students went from being all powerful to powerless.

The British studies of scary stories (Delamont, 1989, 1991; Delamont & Galton, 1986, 1987; Pugsley et al., 1996a, 1996b) indicate PE and sport were a key part of children's folklore surrounding the transitional process in the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast, the only American study conducted to date (Woodruff & Curtner-Smith,

2007) indicates that, although prominent, stories about PE and sport are not as central to the folklore American children constructed. The findings of this research indicate PE and sport play an even smaller and more peripheral role in the folklore of the African American sample studied. The first piece of evidence supporting this conclusion is that none of the participants mentioned PE or sport until prompted to do so. The second is that following the prompt, a large proportion of the participants still could not recall hearing scary stories about PE and sport. This indicates scary stories specifically about PE and sport may be dying out as the folklore surrounding school transition changes and develops. In line with Brunvand (1981), this might be because stories on these topics are no longer relevant, scary, or entertaining. If correct, a positive explanation for this development is that modern American PE and school sport has improved to the extent that incoming secondary school students no longer need to be warned to the same extent as they once were. A more negative explanation is that the status of PE at the secondary school level has slipped significantly and to a point where children do not consider it much.

At this juncture, it should also be noted that 17 participants in this study could not recall hearing scary stories about any aspect of secondary schooling immediately prior to transition. In the Woodruff and Curtner-Smith (2007) study of Caucasian students, only three of 70 participants had no recollection of hearing these stories. If this finding transfers to other groups over time, it would also indicate the folklore surrounding transition in general is weakening.

Following Pugsley et al. (1996a), the main practical implication of this study was that it provides signposts as to where administrators, teachers, and parents might focus their efforts to improve the transitional process for children moving to secondary school. Specifically, we suggest these efforts be directed at eradicating bullying (e.g., see Kneisler, 2001), honing new academic skills children need for success at secondary school (e.g., see Akos, 2002), and familiarizing incoming students with their new school building (e.g., see Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). More generally, the study indicates the importance of training teachers who have primary contact with students as they leave the elementary school and join the secondary school (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Gentle-Genitty, 2009).

Studying the scary stories and folklore surrounding transition should be part of that training. In terms of PE, the results indicate the focus should be on quieting fears about showering, changing clothes, and lesson content. In congruence with Dismore and Bailey (2010), transitional programs would be useful in which secondary school PE teachers visit the elementary children soon to be joining them and discuss these topics and any others within scary stories about the subject these students may have heard. Reciprocal visits would also be useful during which elementary students visit the secondary schools they are soon to attend and participate in a preview of the PE they will receive. Such previews would be particularly helpful if they were designed to counter fears about the subject featured in the students' scary stories. Furthermore, more general causes of stress for transitioning students, including the racial makeup of the student body (Wampler et al., 2002), larger class sizes (Pratt & George, 2005), and interactions with older students (Eccles & Wigfield, 1997), could also be targeted within such PE previews.

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