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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

A Developmental Perspective on Behaviors of New Faculty Transition into Higher Education

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Context: The responsibilities of new faculty members can be stressful because of the expectations of research, teaching, service, and for some, administration. The strain from transition and role complexity can impact faculty members' perceptions of the experience and therefore professional development.

Objective: To understand how individual characteristics and behaviors influenced development of new faculty during their transition from doctoral students to faculty members.

Design: Qualitative phenomenology study.

Setting: Higher education institutions with Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education-accredited athletic training programs.

Patients or Other Participants: Sixteen junior faculty (7 males, 9 females, age = 32 ± 3.5 years) representing 7 National Athletic Trainers' Association districts and 14 different higher education institutions participated.

Main Outcome Measure(s): A semistructured telephone interview protocol was used to examine the experiences of junior faculty within their first 3 years of a faculty role. Interviews were coded inductively using a psychosocial developmental interpretive lens. Credibility was established with saturation of the findings and researcher triangulation.

Results: The data revealed 3 individual behavioral characteristics positively influenced the development of junior faculty through transition: (1) *adaptive perfectionism*, (2) *competence gained through experience*, and (3) the use of a *mentor network*. Our participants adapted personal expectations in light of outcomes that differed from personal standards; gained competence by seeking experience before, during, and after their doctoral studies; and used a mentor network to ease transition.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest that individuals who are able to reflect on their performance and self-adjust personal standards and/or behaviors have a positive perception related to their ability to be successful during transition. Competence gained through experience apart from doctoral assistantships appears to facilitate the transition into higher education. Also, the creation and maintenance of a mentor network that provides a variety of support from multiple sources appears to improve transition by providing comradery, security, and help.

Key Words: Professoriate, psychosocial development, new faculty development, competence, performance

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KEY POINTS

- Junior faculty who displayed qualities of adaptive perfectionism by adjusting high standards and behaviors through self-reflection had a positive perception of the transition process.
- Junior faculty who had work experiences in addition to their assistantships, whether prior, during or after their doctoral work, were able to build competence and thus ease the transition.
- Junior faculty who had developed a mentor network, that incorporated multiple individuals who provided either psychosocial support, career support, or both, were better able to cope with the challenges of transition.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the athletic training education literature has begun to explore the transition of doctoral students to new faculty members.[1] While this exploration in junior faculty transition is new to the field of athletic training, it has been researched within both the general higher education and nursing literature.[2–9] The literature[1–13] to this point has primarily focused on the institutional characteristics of both doctoral programs/institution and the employing institution that influence the transition process. The primary mechanisms at the organizational level that have been suggested by the literature to smooth transition include engagement in the roles of faculty members prior to transition via an assistantship, mentorship received during doctoral education, doctoral education in general, and new faculty orientation/onboarding.[5,6,8,10,13]

Within the athletic training literature, the limited research conducted on the transition experience of faculty has focused on the socialization process.[2,13] Socialization is the process that allows an individual to acquire the information necessary to conform to the norms and roles of a "society" in order to actively participate.[14] Even though these findings provide insight into how institutions can influence new faculty success, they may not fully describe the entire transition process because transition is not solely a function of institutional characteristics.[15] Specifically, the current focus fails to consider the influence that an individual has on his or her environment, a concept referred to as reciprocal determinism.[15] Reciprocal determinism, a concept found within developmental research, suggests that not only is behavior influenced by the social environment and personal factors (eg, attitude), but likewise, individual behaviors exert influence on the social environment and personal factors.[15] The concept suggests that the process of transition cannot be fully understood through a lens that solely considers the environment, but requires a lens that also allows individual behaviors to be considered. One such theoretical lens within developmental research is psychosocial development theory.[16]

Psychosocial development is used to explain the process of interactions that alter or confirm individuals' identity.[17] While identity development was once posited to occur from the late teens to mid-20s, new research suggests that identity development occurs through the late 20s through the earlier 30s.[18] Identity development is an evolving process whereby challenges/conflict rework the structure used to make meaning out of experience and allows individuals to question conceptualizations that influence how an experience is interpreted.[16,19] Such a theoretical lens would provide a more holistic view of the transition, providing information about the individual in transition within context. The use of this lens could fill a gap within the literature by providing valuable information that could improve the transition process.

This holistic view would provide valuable information as it relates to what individual characteristics and behaviors that, if fostered prior to transition, may improve the perceptions of new faculty transitioning from student into the professorate. This development is critical as new faculty are expected to behave immediately from a fully matured identity within their new positions.[19] For these reasons, the purpose of this study was to explore how individual characteristics and behaviors of new faculty influence the development of new faculty members as they transition and have persisted through their respective doctoral programs into new faculty positions.

METHODS

Research Design

The intent of our study was exploration. We used a phenomenological methodology as a means to better understand what individual behaviors and characteristics affect the development that occurs through the transition from doctoral student to faculty member. Specifically, a phenomenological qualitative research design allows researchers to understand individuals' perceptions of meaning related to life experience.[20]

Participants

Phenomenological guidelines were used to define inclusion criteria.[20] In order to be eligible for participation, participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) have a faculty appointment within a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education-accredited program and (b) have completed at least 1 year of full-time employment, but no more than 3 years in their new faculty appointment. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants.[21] Recruitment of participants began after institutional review board approval was received. Sixteen junior faculty (7 males, 9 females) participated. Our participants were 32 ± 3.5 years old, representing 7 National Athletic Trainers' Association districts. Twelve held tenure-track positions and 4 had nontenure-track positions. Nine participants held 9-month contracts and 3 held 10-month contracts. Ten of the

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Table. Participant Demographics, N = 16 (7 Male, 9 Female)[a]

Name	Age	Sex	Years Certified (Board of Certification)	Years in Current Faculty Role	Tenure Status	Years of Clinical Practice	Carnegie Classification of Current Employer
Emma	29	F	8	1	NT	6	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Olivia	34	F	12	2	T	4	Master's colleges and universities: larger programs
Ava	30	F	8	1	T	2	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Sophia	34	F	12	1	T	3	Master's colleges and universities: larger programs
Isabella	29	F	7	2	T	2	Master's colleges and universities: larger programs
Mia	32	F	10	0.5	NT	4	Master's colleges and universities: medium programs
Charlotte	34	F	12	2	T	5	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Amelia	32	F	10	1	T	5	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Harper	30	F	8	1	T	2	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Liam	30	M	8	1	NT	2	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Noah	32	M	9	1	T	3	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Ethan	43	M	20	2	NT	18	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Caden	29	M	7	2	T	3	Doctoral universities: highest research activity
Mason	33	M	11	1	T	6	Master's colleges and universities: larger programs
Bryson	28	M	6	1	T	2	Master's colleges and universities: larger programs
Aiden	32	M	10	2	T	5	Doctoral universities: moderate research activity

Abbreviations: F, female; M, male; NT, nontenure; T, tenure.
[a] Mean ± SD for age and sex = 31 ± 3.5; years of certification and years in current faculty role = 9.9 ± 3.3; years of clinical practice = 4.5 ± 3.9.

participants were married to spouses who were either employed or were students working towards a degree (7 full time, 3 part time). Four participants had children. Data saturation was reached within our sample of 16 faculty members. The Table illustrates individual demographic information for our 16 junior faculty members.

Data Collection Procedures

A social constructivism interpretive paradigm[20] informed the methodology used for data collection. Data were collected through a semistructured phone interview that was crafted prior to data collection. A semistructured interview with broad, open-ended questions is a characteristic of the social constructivism interpretive paradigm as it allows participants to construct meaning.[20] Researchers trained in qualitative research, who are experts in the field of faculty development, psychosocial development, and transition to practice developed the interview guide prior to data collection using current literature.[10,13,20]

Interviews were captured on audio recording and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company. Interviews were facilitated by 1 researcher using the semistructured interview guide to ensure consistency. This consistency is critical as probing[20,21] is commonly used in semistructured interviews to allow for clarification of response and/or to gain further insight. Interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes. Specific questions that were the primary focus for the study included: "What has assisted or hindered you during your transition into a full-time faculty position?" "In general, what experiences have prepared you for your role in higher education?" "After completing your doctoral work, did you feel prepared to assume your current position?" "Did your assessment of this level of readiness change after assuming the role? Why?" and, "Are you confident you will be able to succeed?"

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness Measures

Data were analyzed using the stepwise approach for phenomenological analysis.[20] Initial analysis was completed independently by 2 research team members. A social constructivist interpretive paradigm acknowledges that researcher experience and background shape development and interpretation and should therefore be disclosed.[20] The authors who analyzed the data have extensive knowledge of the psychosocial development theory, which influenced the interpretation of the current literature, the development of the research question, the design, and a lens for theme identification.[16] Each researcher completed a general read of the transcripts to become familiar with the data, followed by labeling and coding of themes. Upon completion of individual coding, themes were compared. Codes and experiences were grouped together and defined to identify commonalities within the experiences of transition for new faculty members.

Two primary measures of trustworthiness were used to establish the rigor of the study: (1) researcher triangulation and (2) peer review. One, data analysis was completed independently by the first 2 authors (B.F.K., T.G.B.), content experts in both the psychosocial development framework and socialization framework. Two, the coding structure and the presentation of the results were sent to a peer-scholar in the area of transition to practice for review in order to verify accuracy and presentation of the results. Additionally, all authors were included in the planning of the study protocol in order to reduce bias and ensure the design accurately reflected the purpose of the study.

RESULTS

Three behavioral themes (Figure) emerged as a part of the transition process of new faculty members. Specifically, participant transition experiences were influenced through

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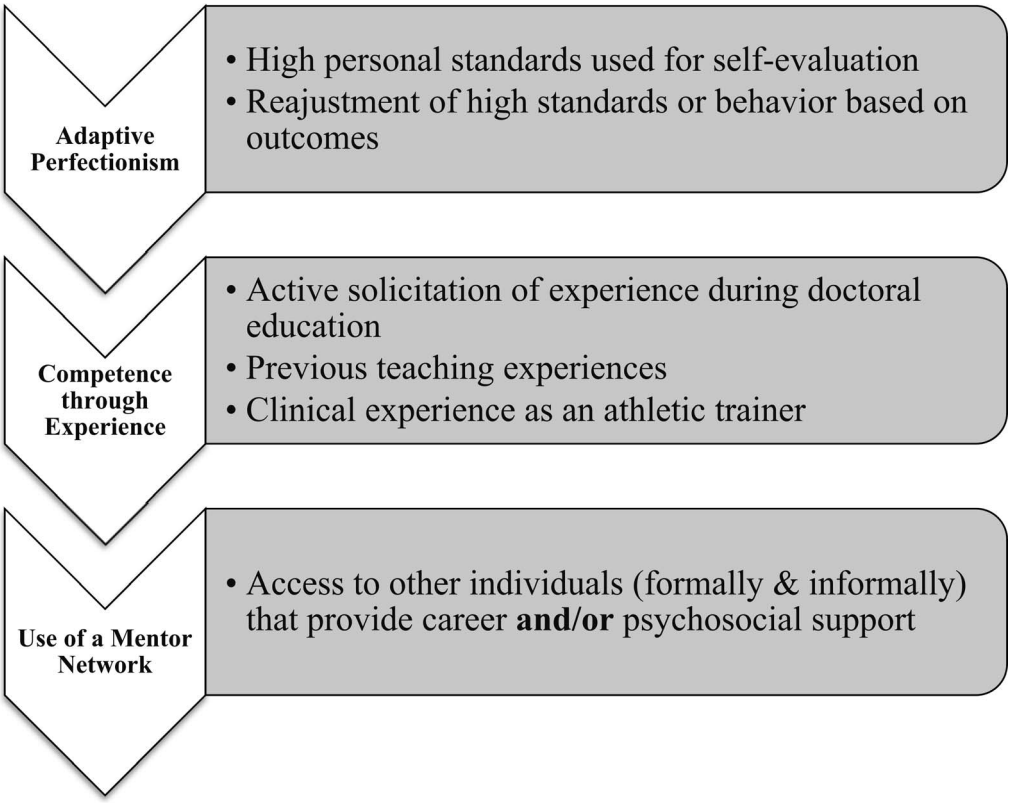
Figure. Individual behaviors supporting role transition.



adaptive perfectionism, *competence gained through experience*, and the use of *mentor support provided by a mentor network*. These themes are defined and supported with participant quotes provided below.

Adaptive Perfectionism

Adaptive perfectionism is a particular type of perfectionism characterized by high standards that are dynamic in nature and allow for individuals' self-esteem to remain intact.[22–24] According to the definition, individuals with adaptive perfectionism will exhibit 2 qualities: (1) high standards that are used for self-evaluation and (2) readjustment of personal standards and/or behaviors in relation to self-assessment and feedback. The personal standards of our participants were evaluated as high not only because of statements expressed throughout the interviews, but because it is implied by their persistence to completion of a terminal degree. During the evaluation of our data, we found that our participants were either able to readjust their behavior to meet their own standards, or they adjusted their personal standards as a result of engagement within the role.

Interestingly, the characteristic subthemes of adaptive perfectionism emerged as threads that ran throughout interviews, materializing at varying points within the interviews in response to a variety of questions. For example, when asked if his assessment of his level of readiness had changed once he assumed his position, Aiden provided specific examples of outcomes he used to evaluate his performance as a faculty member (eg, "deadlines") as he discussed internal (eg, core values) and external factors (eg, "expectations" of co-investigators) that exert influence on his professional life and standards. He explained behavior adjustment (self-imposed "deadlines") as a result of these factors. His reflections focused on the main facets of faculty life: teaching and research. He said:

> *You know, I have in my head that I have a deadline coming up, and so I need to get that done. Clearly, there's things like, well, class on Tuesday. I need to prep for that class, but manuscripts don't really have deadlines inherently unless you have a revision that needs to come back and the journal says there's a deadline. You know, they get written as they get written kind of thing, but if I'm working with other people, I try and put that pressure on myself to say, hey, they're relying on me. I need to finish this by this date.*

Given the nature of the theme's expression, results will be presented in relation to the 2 characteristics of adaptive perfectionism.

High Personal Standards Used for Self-Evaluation. Participants frequently inferred high standards, a hallmark of the perfection construct, that had to be readjusted as outcomes did not meet their standards. Aiden provided an example of this high standard, even referring to perfection, when he realized how unprepared he was for lecture during his first year as a professor:

> *[It was] an eye-opening experience that first semester. [I realized] I definitely need to leave myself 7 hours prep time for an hour in class, you know. Not every PowerPoint's going to be perfect.*

Mia had a realization that was commensurate to Aiden during her first year in her faculty position. Mia alluded to her high standards as she explained what she wished she had known prior to starting her position:

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What I wish I knew was that things don't have to be perfect, that it's okay to not know everything, and that even the best laid plan, it's okay to change. You really have to be a little bit more fluid and you really need to be accepting of that. I felt that I needed to have every class 100% laid out, that I had to follow my syllabus to the T, and so it's been interesting to learn that, well, sometimes students are really interested in something, and our conversation extends, or something that I think is awesome, they are falling asleep at. So it's been interesting learning those ebbs and flows...

Mia's above comments reflect self-evaluation and reflection during the transition process, something internally stimulated. Self-evaluation and reflection was also evident as it related to participants' personal standards related to personal performance in relation to institutional expectations and student achievement. Emma expressed this self-reflection as she described reconciling the high level of institutional support she had come to expect during her doctorate with the perceived lower levels of support made available to her by her employer. Emma stated:

I had expectations of how things were going to go before [assuming this position] and got used to different levels of support and different levels of—kind of just how we did things there [the institution at which she earned her PhD, doctor of philosophy]. And so coming into new positions, sometimes it was tough to get used to a smaller institution where things run differently.

Additionally, Amelia provided insight into the measures used to evaluate student performance. Amelia discussed the realization that student achievements were lower than the standards she had developed for them. Therefore, she exhibited change in her behavior. She explained:

I made a lot of assumptions with what the kids were supposed to know as juniors or seniors. Yeah, that didn't work. So really changing the course almost on a monthly basis by them saying, "Oh, we've never heard of..." I mean, all right, we'll throw this lesson out. We're now teaching this.

Amelia's statement is not only indicative of high standards and self-evaluation, but also the desire to maintain the high standard when appropriate (ie, a change in the content that was taught, not the standard). Furthermore, Amelia's statement is indicative of the second subtheme, which is presented below, the readjustment of behavior.

The Readjustment of Personal Standards and/or Behaviors in Response to Self-Evaluation and Feedback. The importance of adjusting personal standards or behaviors seemed to be essential in those situations where the conflict was produced by something that was not under the control of the participants (eg, institution structure, resources, expectations). Sophia described a situation in which her line of research was challenged due to a lack of resources available to her through her employer, a factor she could not control. Her response reflects this idea of readjustment through behavior. Sophia stated:

Do I have some concerns because I've come from basically doing clinical research and patient outcomes, and now I'm somewhere that's not affiliated with a medical institution, and I'm trying to figure out where best to direct my resources? Yeah. But I think, if it doesn't, I'll adapt and figure it out.

The readjustment of personal standards was not always as obvious as changes in behavior. The readjustment of personal standards appeared to occur subconsciously in that the readjustment was often described or implied as a shift in perception or a mental reframing of the conflict between personal standards and outcomes. That is, the behavior change or adaptation may not be obvious to the eye. As such, Sophia described her struggle to identify resources and her desire to adapt when asked if her perception of readiness had changed since starting her position. Her response alludes to a mental adaptation. She replied, "Yeah, I don't know if it was my level of readiness [that changed] or if it was my expectations that changed." Charlotte described the same adjustment or reframing as it related to her line of research. Charlotte shared:

There are ebbs and flows and that you're going to get 4 products out 1 week, and then you're not going to get anything out for 6 months, or that you feel like you don't have the wheels turning, and you're not getting traction, but you really are. I think that, even when you get those 3 rejections in the 1 week I got during the spring semester, that you are a good researcher and that at least you had 3 products out there... your self-worth is not tied to reviewers' comments or the number of pubs you have, and that you're still a strong faculty member, even though a reviewer tells you that you suck.

Charlotte's statement speaks to the cognitive dissonance that resulted when her publication expectations were not met and her self-evaluation did not match the evaluation of journal reviewers. Charlotte's response to this cognitive dissonance was the shift from a standard that tied faculty worth with publication outcomes.

Competence Gained Through Experience

Simplistically, competence is the ability of a person to do a job properly and effectively.[25] In theory, competence is a function of a person's level of practical knowledge, skills, and behaviors that relate to the job in question. Many participants discussed the importance of gaining competence through involvement and engagement in previous experiences that related to faculty roles. This theme is unique in that it was founded through the active pursuit of experiences before and after the doctoral experience and in some cases in addition to the experience obtained as part of the doctoral process. Charlotte demonstrated this theme as she discussed advice she now gives students who want to pursue a doctorate, "[T]ry to set yourself apart just as we tell our undergrads and our master's students, setting yourself apart and [get] those experiences."

Our participants reflected on 3 primary areas that contributed to their development of competence as faculty members. First, our participants shared the need to be active in their doctoral education experiences, seeking opportunities when they could as a means to gain understanding. Second, experiences prior to doctoral education that were related to education were mentioned as helpful (ie, adjunct roles). Finally, the group shared the impact of their clinical education experiences as foundational to their transition into their faculty roles.

Active Solicitation of Experiences During Doctoral Education Beyond the Assistantship. The breadth of faculty responsibility is difficult to experience as a doctoral student. Mason alluded to this difficulty as he recalled his experience. Mason stated:

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Some of the people I've talked to who have gone through other programs, as your 4 years may be different, 1 person got a lot more experience in teaching, where somebody might get the experience in research. I think whatever program you come through is going to have those unique experiences that people feel confident going in on their first teaching job, but people may or may not.

The importance of gaining relevant experience is not negated by the difficulty in experiencing the entire breadth of responsibility required of faculty members while also successfully completing the required doctoral coursework and research requirements. From Mason's perspective, his development came from "experiencing both [research and teaching] before and after" his doctoral experience, saying one "[needs] to make those things happen." For Charlotte, her motivation to seek out additional opportunities was because it was a way of "setting yourself apart and getting those experiences. They're not going to be handed to you. You have to go find them yourself."

Past Experiences Prior to Doctoral Education/Assistantship. Previous experiences, which related to the roles of faculty members, were also shared as helpful in the transition process for our participants. Experiences included adjunct roles or serving as dual-role athletic trainers (clinicians and instructors). Olivia recalled the importance of her experiences related to faculty responsibilities not always experienced as part of doctoral assistantships. Prior to entering her doctoral program, Olivia was in a dual-role as a clinical athletic trainer and instructor. Olivia reflected:

I think the best tool and resource I had was [the job I held prior to starting my doctorate] because when I was—even though I was only half-time teaching and half-time athletic training, I was allowed to sit in on faculty meetings. I wasn't allowed to vote, but I knew what was going on. And so I was learning in a different environment. And so when I got to my faculty role here, I kind of knew what was expected of me in that regard.

Mia's experience mirrored Olivia's. Mia recalled that "having the opportunity to be an adjunct prior to going back to get my PhD helped me significantly. I think that was a really big help."

The use of a "transition year" or "transition position" was also shared as helpful in the acclimation to a faculty role. Several of our participants served as postdocs or visiting professors immediately upon graduating with their doctoral degrees, and this facilitated the development of confidence and provided opportunities to gain role independence. Charlotte stated that her postdoc helped her:

... realize to let go of my adviser and to start taking the lead on things... so that once I hit the ground in a tenure-line position, that I had some things already going, and I didn't have to work underneath my adviser to get those products.

Similarly, Harper recalled the post doc position provided to her with the additional training she needed. She explained:

I think a lot of times people don't have sort of that—not necessarily a gap year, but protected time to just learn the ins and outs of the different institution, get different people's perspectives, sort of not being a faculty role yet, but not being so dissertation focused either, and be able to assist and have more responsibility, but ultimately not have you at the end of a rope. So I think that was immensely helpful.

Like those with postdocs, those who accepted nontenure, annually renewed positions received similar benefits and perspective. Ava specifically recalled how her experience influenced her perceptions of her current position. Ava explained when asked what aided her in her transition:

... and then my crazy teaching load at [the institution I was at the year between my doctorate and my current employer]. And so when everybody's like, "Oh, I'm on a 2-2 load," which I'm on a 1-2 load, but people are like, "Oh, I'm so busy teaching," and I'm like, "I taught 5 classes a semester when I was at [the previous institution]." I'm like, to me, teaching 3 classes is nothing because I taught 5-5s, and that was crazy. That's just insanity, and I got through that.

The Influence of Past Clinical Experiences. Participants viewed engaging in clinical practice as athletic trainers as valuable in their ability to transition into faculty roles. Some felt these experiences eased transition as it gave credence to their teaching and credibility as a faculty member. Mia stated when talking about her experiences which shaped her role transition, "I would say don't underestimate the importance of clinical experience." Olivia much like Mia, associated clinical experience to validating them as faculty members and supporting them moving into that role. Olivia stated:

I think it's good to get some clinical background. I know a lot of students kind of just go right through and do the full thing, which that's fine for some people, but I think it would be good, especially if you're teaching athletic training courses and clinical courses, like taping and bracing and stuff.

Noah also expressed the importance of his previous clinical experience to his transition stating that "[Clinical experience] makes a big difference so you can actually talk about the job that you're training all these people to do."

Mentor Support Provided by a Mentoring Network

Participants repeatedly discussed the influence of a mentor network that was developed prior to employment and maintained through transition. A key concept of the mentor network our participants mentioned was that only those individuals who specifically offered support were considered mentors. In other words, mentors are participant defined and not defined by title or position. Mia described her network when she stated, "[T]o be honest, I feel like I fell back on those relationships that I made during my PhD where I reached out to my adviser, I reached out to classmates." Mentor support described by participants demonstrated an active interest on the part of the mentor in helping advance participants' professional careers as faculty members. This support was received as support related to career specifics and/or to the psychosocial development as a professional. It is important to note that, while data is presented specific to subthemes, participants all self-identified multiple individuals that provide 1 or both forms of support.

Career Support. Career support is classified as any type of sponsorship, coaching, or protecting that aids in career specific development. For some, mentorships developed prior to employment had an impact on how transition was

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experienced. For example, Olivia identified the director of sports medicine at the institution where she completed her master's degree as providing her with continued support related to choices she has made professionally. Olivia stated:

> *Basically, every step I've taken he's been my—well, I guess he's my supervisor, adviser. Every step I've taken, I literally run it through [mentor name], or [mentor name] has given me—pumped me up or given me the resources and the advice that I needed to take that next step. I almost feel like he's the dad in my professional life, like I'm going to check with dad before I make a big move and what I want to do, and is this the right thing for me?*

With few exceptions, all participants mentioned career support gained from those involved associated with their doctoral education (eg, advisers, mentors, classmates). In Isabella's case, the influence of the career support provided by classmates and alumni aided transition by directing her toward elective courses related to higher education and pedagogy that were not identified otherwise by her program. She explained:

> *I did learn a lot about some of the nuances of higher ed. It was not completely ingrained in it, but I did learn a little bit about—I don't know that it was set up for that. I think I went that way because of advice that I got from previous people who had gone through that program as [graduate assistants].*

Amelia described how her doctoral mentors assisted her through the negotiation process during transition:

> *My [doctoral adviser]... has been instrumental, honestly. Like I can call her, ask advice, even with a negotiation process and trying to get—I don't even know what the heck I was supposed to be trying to negotiate honestly.*

Aiden's experience was influenced by the continued career support provided by mentorships that developed during the doctorate when he stated:

> *I rely on my PhD mentor a lot. I call her every once in a while, and we're still writing a lot of manuscripts up from when I was there. So certainly, I still rely on that relationship. So I had 2 professors who I relied on in my PhD. So both of them have really helped me throughout the first 2 years I've been here.*

While many participants described the influence of career support as it related to navigating general transition, several participants also mentioned how the career support was useful in making a difficult transition more bearable. Isabella explained advice she received from a mentor when her job security was in question. Isabella said:

> *Yeah, having them to support me through it when I can just call up and be like, "This is what's happening right now, and I don't know what to do," and she helped me really navigate what to do in those situations and where to put my energy, "Well, it's like you can't really help what's happening over here, but you can work on your research. You can work on your teaching. You can do this." So that really helped.*

Participants also identified new colleagues who provided career support as part of their social network. Charlotte stated:

> *But like I said, my program director has been phenomenal about teaching me boundaries and teaching me to say no at times. So I think it's been an informal mentorship process. Our offices are right next to each other. We go down and talk to each other all the time.*

Similarly, when asked what had significantly influenced her professional development, Sophia responded:

> *My officemate who was a fellow new faculty member, as I sort of mentioned, we kind of found our way together often and bounced ideas off of each other, whether it was classroom [or other things]. It helped that his degree is public health, which was one of the courses I got tasked with last semester.*

Psychosocial Support. In addition to the support that aided in career development, participants' perceptions were also influenced by the psychosocial support provided by their mentor network. Psychosocial support includes any support that provides acceptance, counseling, friendship, or role modeling. In the context of the transition of new faculty members, this psychosocial support was expressed as support that contributed to feelings of professional acceptance, counseling related to outside issues that influence work (eg, work-life balance), and exhibiting behaviors that participants wished to emulate (ie, role modeling).

Participants relied on their mentor networks to provide psychosocial support through acceptance and confirmation as a faculty member. Acceptance is the action/process of being acknowledged as adequate or suitable to a group (ie, fitting in, meeting social norms). This acceptance is often what can be described in Harper's words as knowing "you have somebody who's in the trenches with you, so you can relate." Liam described this psychosocial support through acceptance when he said:

> *Yeah, I mean, I think from a misery-loves-company perspective, they're [classmates/friends] going through kind of the same thing, so kind of sharing stories and kind of what they're going through yeah... camaraderie.*

Some participants gained psychosocial support through the acceptance provided by the classmates within their mentor network. Mia said, "I'm talking to one of my classmates. She's entering her third year, so she's going through the process, and she's really stressed, and I can completely relate to where she is." Additionally, participants also found professional acceptance from colleagues who were also new to the institution. Charlotte noted:

> *The new faculty thing that I did my first year was very helpful, just teaching me how to be a new faculty here, able to go get drinks with other new faculty that they're scared to death as well about how are we going to do this?*

Moreover, participants were provided psychosocial support through friendships or relationships. Participants frequently used words such as "relationships" and "caring" and "friend" as they discussed support provided by their mentoring network. Harper referenced her network when she stated, "I think I have had really good mentorships. And I've had mentors who have become good friends who are a phone call away." Sophia concisely stated how lucky she was because she "had faculty mentors who really cared about students and cared about relationships."

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For many, the trust produced by the relationships and friendships as part of the network were a critical component of the psychosocial support provided by their mentor network. Isabella recalled how the psychosocial support provided by one of her mentors was crucial in helping her to develop focus not directly related to a career, but as a soft skill essential to success. Isabella described this form of psychosocial support when she said:

> *I think that was the hardest thing with the transition. There was that overwhelming, looming presence of uncertainty and doubt through all my classes... trusting my mentor who said, "It's going to be okay. Just focus on this." So I was like, "Okay, I just got to trust what she says, and I'm going to do that," and that's what I did, and I just kept focusing on other things... The other one, I can go to her too for anything. I just—I guess I had more of a relationship with [mentor name] than the other.*

Another form of psychosocial support provided by the mentor network was role modeling. When describing her professional journey, Ava spoke with great intensity about the relationship she had with her doctoral mentor whose behavior she hoped to someday emulate:

> *I hope I can do for a student what she did for me. She is a female. She's young. She's 43, but that's young in her career. And she's amazing... So I have a really great relationship with her. We probably talk once a week, at least an e-mail or text or a phone call or whatever. So I always feel like she's there.*

Similarly, Olivia continued her desire to replicate the professionalism she experienced from a former coworker and supervisor. Olivia stated:

> *One other person, I should have mentioned this too, is that the program director at [previous employing institution name]... She was definitely someone who, once I decided I wanted to get my doctorate, I'm like, "I want to be [mentor name]. I want to be at a smaller school. I want to be a program director. I want to follow in her footsteps."*

While participants unquestionably received both career and psychosocial support from their mentor networks, it is of importance to note that these mentorships were intentionally maintained during the doctoral process and into transition. Liam demonstrated his continued communication with the faculty at his doctoral alma mater. He stated, "I still keep in contact with my adviser, my academic adviser, and my PhD adviser." Caden also described an active pursuit to maintain relationships with his classmates when he said:

> *To be honest, some of my best friends came from grad school, and they're all now 2-year faculty members at other institutions. So just keeping in touch with them, and I think we've equally learned some of our successes and some of our pitfalls from them, has been a big help.*

DISCUSSION

The impetus for our study was to gain a better understanding of individual characteristics and behaviors that affect new faculty members as they transition from students to faculty. The transition of new faculty members into the professoriate is a time of continued development, and despite a rich understanding of organizational processes, limited understanding of the individual characteristics that support transition were available. The findings of this study suggest that new faculty members in transition exhibit behavioral characteristics that may positively influence the transition and thus persistence. Although organizational constructs must be present to support role transition for faculty, the individuals themselves must also take an active role in their transition.

The findings of this study suggest that, even through the doctoral process and transition into faculty roles, individuals are still developing their identity. As part of new faculty members' transitions, our participants discussed a series of challenges and tasks that led to continued changes in their thinking. The stories of the participants reflect the underpinnings of the psychosocial development theory, which suggests that, through some sequence of developmental tasks or challenges, the self is altered or reinforced, which influences how individuals think, feel, and interact with the environment.[26]

Adaptive Perfectionism

The development of personal standards from ideals is a part of human development and drives human behavior.[25,27] Personal standards are a developmental process and are often founded by self-evaluation and can be influenced by both internal incitements (eg, beliefs, core values) and external stimuli (eg, cultural expectations, environmental stressors).[27] Perfectionism is a trait that is part of individuals' personal standards and is defined as a propensity to hold high standards that may or may not be attainable.[28]

Participants within our study held high personal standards that were used as a bar to measure success. Using the information gained through self-evaluation and reflection, however, participants continually modified their personal standards and behaviors. Standards were lowered when performance did not meet their expectations, or behaviors were changed in order to meet the standard. It is believed that human behavior is heavily influenced by the motivation to meet personal standards, particularly when standards are high.[29] Participants within this study consistently discussed their behavior in the context of meeting their standards as opposed to the institutions' standards. Adler[27] suggests that, as part of development, there is a natural tendency to yearn for perfection based on personal perceptions, which was a yearning expressed by multiple participants. While it is the behavior that stems from perfectionism, those behaviors cannot be understood without understanding perfectionism.

It is important to consider the possibility that high personal standards must be necessary for success as a faculty member. In other words, given the requirements of the professoriate are flexible and faculty are responsible for setting and accomplishing professional goals with some level of autonomy, it is logical to expect that a degree of intrinsic motivation and commitment would be critical to success given the dissatisfaction experienced by many faculty.[6] While our participants were still within the first few years of transition, participants had already exhibited behaviors to help them achieve success on time or early, such as attending professional development conferences and courses and forging research collaborations.

As the concept of professionalism is explored, it is important to note the known association between perfectionism and

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psychological distress within the professoriate.[28] Perfectionism is the tendency to have high goals and standards.[30] Two subtypes of perfectionism have emerged within the literature, adaptive or normal perfectionism and maladaptive or neurotic perfectionism.[22,31,32] Maladaptive perfectionism is described as situations where high standards result in high levels of concern related to the ability to meet the standard with feelings that personal performance is inadequate.[22,24] Adaptive perfectionism, on the other hand, is characterized by high standards that act as a healthy motivator stemming from malleable personal standards, which allows for self-esteem to remain intact.[22–24] The behavior characteristics of adaptive perfectionism were described by participants; they used high personal standards for self-evaluation and readjusted their personal standards in response to self-evaluation and feedback. The process was iterative as they evaluated their performance and then realigned their standards accordingly in order to be successful throughout their first few years as junior faculty members. These findings suggest that not only is it important for individuals transitioning into a faculty role to evaluate and self-reflect on their performance, but it is equally important for personal standards to be evaluated. Ideally, personal standards will be evaluated using the new information faculty learn through the process of transition, which in turn allows for standards to be adjusted appropriately.

Competence Gained Through Experience

Participants used a variety of experiences prior to their current positions, whether part of their educational experience or apart from their education, to gain competence. Participants described the importance of experience in the classroom, with research, and in the clinical setting to ease transition. The experiences provided opportunities to learn through exposure and thus provide opportunities to gain confidence. Paloniemi[33] found that job competences and self-confidence were a function of experience that allowed participants to learn from both successes and mistakes and provided new and challenging job tasks. The findings of Paloniemi[33] both support and provide a deeper understanding of the results of this study. Specifically, the prior experiences of the participants may have allowed opportunities for learning through success and failure of new and challenging tasks in a setting/position that is temporary.

The literature suggests that experience is positively associated with perceived competence and that perceived competence levels are highly predictive of intrinsic motivation.[33,34] From a psychosocial developmental perspective, intrinsic motivation is behavior that is driven by its inherent satisfaction (eg, fun, challenging) rather than for an outside consequence or reward.[35] While there were not questions within this study's interview guide related to motivation, no participants mentioned salary, notoriety, or any other extrinsic reward in relation to the transition process. Intrinsic motivation has been shown to produce high-quality learning and/or creativity and is a critical component of cognitive and social development.[35] From this perspective, prior experience may be a critical component of persistence in a new faculty role. As such, individuals pursuing the professoriate should seek out experiences to develop the skills and gain the knowledge prior to, during, and in some cases after completing their doctoral studies.

Mentor Support Provided by a Mentoring Network

Our findings support previous literature[10,13] that found the importance of mentoring to the transition process. However, our findings go beyond the "traditional" perspective of mentorship that focuses on a single or primary mentoring relationship (ie, the first named, senior individual) with a focus on the amount of assistance provided.[36] This traditional perspective fails to recognize the mentee involvement in the process.

Erikson[16] suggested that, from a developmental perspective, mentorship is most beneficial in a period of identity development. Furthermore, it was suggested that, before individuals will seek a mentor, there must be a need that can be met by a more experienced person.[16] This active involvement highlights the engagement of a mentor based on identity needs of the mentee.[16] Transitioning to a faculty position is a known time of identity development[37] and thereby would be a time when individuals want and seek out individuals to help support them through the process.

The results of our study present evidence that mentors met the needs of mentees through a variety of mechanisms. Kram[38] was the first to suggest that mentor support could be classified into the 2 distinct categories of career (eg, protection, challenging, sponsoring, curricular advising) and psychosocial (eg, acceptance, behavioral modeling, friendship, counseling). Later, Higgins and Kram[36] determined that the phenomenon of mentorship was not a function of a single, isolated relationship between individuals within institutions, but rather a subset of individuals' entire social networks. Those considered mentors are thus identified by the individuals (ie, mentee) themselves and take an active role in not only advancing the career of the mentee, but also by providing developmental assistance.[36]

The findings of our study support these 2 perspectives of mentoring. These results also expand the existing mentorship literature.[4,10,13] Specifically, the results suggest that, while valuable, mentorship as it relates to development of new faculty members may best be investigated from a network perspective. Participants consistently discussed a variety of individuals who played a role in supporting their transition from doctoral student to a member of the professorate. This network of individuals was composed of a variety of individuals (eg, former supervisors, coworkers, classmates, professors) and provided career support and/or psychosocial support for the participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From our data, we make the following recommendations to both doctoral students and new faculty in athletic training. These recommendations are grounded in the primary findings related to the individuality of experiences in preparing to become faculty members.

1. Use self-evaluation and reflection as a means to grow as a professional. Trial and errors often accompany role transition and are an informal, yet important part of this process. Use information gained as a means of determining what behaviors should be reinforced and those that need to be changed.

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2. Evaluate personal standards regularly. Personal standards are a function of both internal and external stimuli; it is critical for new faculty to evaluate standards that were developed as doctoral students. Doing so can ensure that the standards used during self-reflection are appropriate and attainable.
3. Cultivate and maintain strong relationships with your doctoral adviser, faculty members, and peers during doctoral training. These individuals can provide valuable knowledge and guide opportunities for knowledge development that can assist transition into the professoriate.
4. Reach out to mentors as a means to gain career support on activities or experiences that can support transition into higher education and allow for success.
5. Taking an active role in one's professional development is necessary to support a successful transition. Seek and be receptive to learning experiences, rather than waiting to be advised or mentored to gain them.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We recognize that our findings are focused on a small sample of athletic training faculty; thus, our findings are representative of these individuals only. We believe that future studies should include a more diversified sample of allied health and medical faculty members. Research has often focused on the organizational and professional socialization tactics used to support role transition. Our results suggest that individuals themselves play a critical role in transition. Therefore, future studies need to focus on the influence of the individual on transition from a qualitative perspective. Variables that we did not account for must also be explored, including institutional type where doctoral education occurred in contrast to current employment. Finally, quantitative measures of individual characteristics that are known to influence behavior and job satisfaction within other related bodies of literature should be included in future research, but were not measured within our study.[6,11,12]

CONCLUSIONS

As with any transition in life, the transition from doctoral student to faculty member can be stressful. Our findings expand the current body of literature and provide additional insight into the transition experience by considering the interaction of individuals and the institutional environment. The findings of this study suggest that individuals who exhibit characteristics of adaptive perfectionism have positive perceptions related to the transition experience. Specifically, individuals who maintain high standards, but are able to reflect on their performance and self-adjust their personal standards and/or behaviors transitioned well. Additionally, those participants who gained competence through clinical and teaching experiences beyond those provided by a doctoral assistantship benefitted in transition due to greater understanding of job responsibilities. Finally, those who had developed a mentor network were aided in transition due to the career and psychosocial support.

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