An Examination of Kinesiology GTAs' Perceptions of an Instructional Development and Evaluation Model

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Abstract

Kinesiology graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) provide an invaluable role in carrying out the instructional mission of many universities and colleges. However, the last two decades have seen an increase in public criticism and concern concerning the manner in which GTAs are employed to teach higher education courses, the extent they are prepared to effectively deliver course content, and the degree to which they are supported in their instructional development by appropriate administrators (Meyers, 2001). In response to this criticism, administrators have sought non-traditional means of enhancing GTA instructional development and socialization in light of their ever-increasing work-load. The purpose of this participatory ethnographic case study was to examine the perceptions of 27 kinesiology GTAs regarding an innovative GTA instructional development and evaluation model. Findings suggest that the proposed GTA instructional development approach, highlighted by the utilization of Videotape Instructional Analysis and Clinical Consultation (VIACC) processes along with consistent supervisory interaction could positively impact kinesiology GTAs' instructional development and socialization as teachers of basic instruction program (BIP) courses. More specifically, the GTAs reported higher levels of instructional confidence, professionalism, and preparedness after participating in this instructional development program.

Historically, GTAs have served in varied instructional capacities within higher education settings (Wulff & Austin, 2004). Their instructional roles and responsibilities have changed in accordance with the ever-expanding social mission of the universities by which they are employed (Prieto & Meyers, 2001). These responsibilities can be as diverse as proctoring undergraduate exams, leading discussion and lecture groups under the supervision of a professor, and/or assuming teacher-of-record status and full accountability of course offerings (Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004). When allocated and supervised properly, the graduate teaching assistantship affords many valuable benefits to the graduate student and graduate academic program. For the GTA, the assistantship provides means for financing graduate studies and acquiring "on-the-job" training for a future career in higher education while under the mentorship of an experienced faculty member. For the graduate academic department, the graduate teaching assistantship allows for the management of faculty course loads as well as the possibility of increasing course offerings for the undergraduate student body. Furthermore, the graduate teaching assistantship financial benefits serve as a recruiting tool for departments to lure prospective talented graduate students to their respective programs.

Despite kinesiology GTAs playing such a pivotal role in higher education institutions, scant research has examined the means by which graduate academic programs socialize and support GTAs in their teaching. The purpose of this participatory ethnographic case study was to examine the perceptions of kinesiology GTAs regarding an innovative GTA instructional development and evaluation model. The model,

termed the VIACC model, utilizes Videotape Instructional Analysis and Clinical Consultation as the primary means of providing GTAs with formative instructional supervisory feedback. Moreover, the model was highlighted by consistent and relevant supervisory interactions between the GTAs and their instructional supervisor.

The Role of the GTA in Kinesiology Graduate Academic Programs

The GTA's value is particularly apparent in relation to the instruction of foundational courses that tend to have large numbers of students. Wert (1998) wrote that "graduate teaching assistants provide instruction for roughly 40% of the undergraduate courses in research and comprehensive universities, and they have teaching responsibilities in approximately 60% of the introductory courses taken by first- and second-year undergraduates" (p. xvii). This is especially true in basic instruction programs (BIPs), also known as general, service, or basic activity programs, in which it is common to assign GTAs as lead instructors for the majority of, if not all, course offerings (Hensley, 2000; Rikard & Nye, 1997).

Despite GTAs' critical place in the instructional hierarchy, graduate academic programs have done very little to ensure that they receive the appropriate and consistent instructional supervision, evaluation, and training which will facilitate their development as instructors (Rikard & Nye, 1997). Routinely GTAs practice their craft in a vacuum without formal guidance, supervision or support in their teaching (Savage & Sharpe, 1998). Moreover, they acquire teaching practices from readings, recalling the techniques of former teachers or by informal interactions with fellow GTAs (Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004). Much too often they are abandoned by administrators to acquire on their own the proper instructional techniques and practices that would facilitate student learning (Meyers, 2001). Sage (1984) commented on this troubling trend in BIPs:

> With graduate programs came the practice of turning over basic instruction classes to graduate teaching assistants thus relegating basic instruction to the least experienced and to a group whose highest priority, understandably, was their own education and not the physical education of others. (p. 118)

Often upon accepting the assistantship, attending a short orientation, and securing their teaching assignments, GTAs are quite simply left to their own devices to effectively set-up, administer and teach their classes (Savage & Sharpe, 1998). As the literature bears out, the provision of effective and timely supervisory feedback, specifically instructional evaluation feedback is not common in GTA programs (Black & Kaplan, 1998; Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004). Frequently GTA instructional supervision is seen as an administrative duty to be administered on an "as needed basis" (i.e., when there is a problem, students complain, etc.). Moreover, GTA instructional evaluations are often treated as simply a necessary administrative process to ensure that departments are holding GTAs accountable for demonstrating minimal instructional effectiveness (Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004).

Research demonstrates that the teaching assistantship is best characterized as a culmination of experiences that are not meaningful to the development of immediate instructional effectiveness or to future members of the professoriate (Golde & Walker, 2006). No longer is the granting of a teaching assistantship the initial step in the process of preparing graduate students to be members of the professoriate highlighted by close mentoring or "apprenticeship" between faculty and graduate students (Austin & Wulff, 2004). Rather, GTAs report experiencing profound isolation and marginalization within graduate academic programs. As a result close mentorship and instructional support with faculty is the exception rather than the norm (Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004).

Why more attention has not been focused on the instructional development of GTAs in the kinesiology academic field has yet to be explored. However, several potential reasons quickly come to mind. First, program administrators may be reluctant to invest already limited human and financial resources into the GTAs because their employment is a relatively short period of two to five years (Savage & Sharpe, 1998). Secondly, perhaps too few GTA supervisors or program coordinators have formal training or educational experience in the implementation of practical processes of GTA socialization and development (Prieto, 2001). GTA socialization and development is a field of study yet to be fully explored in the kinesiology academic discipline. Accordingly, it would be expected that those faculty members asked to supervise GTAs are functioning primarily as managers rather than instructional developers, due to a lack of knowledge or experience (Prieto & Meyers, 2001). Consequently, graduate academic programs may be less concerned with the supervision, evaluation and improvement of their GTAs' teaching when the GTA's academic or research potential is being realized (Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004).

Whatever the rationale for the lack of attention to GTA instructional development and evaluation, this predicament is unfortunate because the courses commonly found in the curriculum of BIPs offer significant benefits to undergraduates. BIPs annually provide thousands of college-aged students formal opportunities to develop the healthy life-styles and sport-related skills that are necessary for increased overall health and life-long recreational participation. National reports reveal that approximately 50% of the U.S.'s adolescents and young adults do not consistently engage in moderate intensity physical activity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). The downward trend in physical activity level has been shown to begin during the high-school years and accelerate during college, leading to a reported 60% of adults in the U.S.A. not meeting the minimum recommended amount of daily physical activity (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Given these social statistics, universities and colleges potentially provide an invaluable opportunity to students by allocating resources to the establishment of academic courses in the areas of team and individual sports, wellness, weight-control, and fitness for students. As a result of their position as significant fixtures in the curriculum of institutions of higher education BIPs have begun to take measures to provide their GTAs appropriate and formal instructional support and development.

Background to Study

At the start of the fall 2003 academic year, the BIP and Health and Human Performance (HLHP) program administration to a major university in the southeastern part of the United States of America recognized the critical need for on-going, consistent and focused instructional development for its GTAs. First, they developed and implemented an innovative model to aid instructional development, support, and evaluation. The videotape instructional analysis and clinical consultation instructional development model, coined the VIACC model, was introduced as an intricate and complementary component to existing instructional development and evaluation processes. Prior to this addition the department relied solely on the departmental pre-teaching orientation, student course evaluations and informal faculty observations as the sole means of providing GTAs with instructional effectiveness feedback. Secondly, the department added a course titled *Seminar: College Teaching*. This course, in conjunction with the VIACC model, was developed with the intent of providing novice BIP GTAs with a structured setting in which to discuss their teaching. Moreover, the course allowed for GTAs to interact with departmental faculty and peers, obtain information concerning effective instructional strategies for their courses, and participate in various activities designed to facilitate their

development and socialization as future members of the professoriate. Lastly, during the spring 2004 academic term, clinical consultation cycles were implemented to complement the videotape instructional analysis processes.

The goal of these socialization and supervision changes was to encourage and maintain a formative and supportive dialogue between the GTAs and their instructional supervisors in regard to instructional concerns, evaluative feedback, and experiences. More specifically, the inclusion of the VIACC model supported the departmental goals of (a) providing GTAs formative and more meaningful instructional evaluative feedback; (b) better informing BIP program administrators' personnel decisions; and (c) providing consistent and systematic formative processes to aid the GTAs in their socialization and development as instructors. As the BIP GTAs instructional supervisor, I was charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the VIACC model, in light of the aforementioned departmental goals, which in turn formed the basis of inquiry for this research study.

Research Purposes and Questions

Traditional inquiries into BIPs have provided varied perspectives on their administration and organization. A review of the limited available literature in the kinesiology academic field reveals that three main areas dominate the landscape: (a) survey-oriented, descriptive accounts of program student enrollment motivations and trends (Hensley, 2000; Leenders, Sherman, & Ward, 2003), (b) program administrative and/or institutional policies (Boroviak, 1991; Mondello, Fleming, & Focht, 2000), and to a lesser extent, (c) the impact of innovative and non-conventional instructional training and course curriculum considerations (Pennington, Manross, & Poole, 2001; Poole, 1991). Housner (1993) and Savage and Sharpe (1998) have called for graduate academic programs to invest more research into assessing the effectiveness of socialization and developmental processes by which BIP GTAs are recruited, trained, and supported as instructors. Additionally, the greater GTA instructional development literature stresses the need to continually develop, implement and evaluate models of GTA instructional supervision (Meyers, 2001; Prieto, 2001). The current study's purpose was an effort to meet those mandates. Three research questions guided this exploratory study:

1) What are the GTAs' perceptions of the VIACC model in regard to their instructional socialization and development?
2) In particular, what aspects of the VIACC model did GTAs perceive to improve their immediate teaching performance?
3) What possible supervisory or evaluative limitations are associated with using the VIACC model?

Method

Research has long supported the use of videotape instructional analysis and clinical consultation models as a means of improving the instructional effectiveness of GTAs (Chism, 1998; Prentice-Dunn & Pitts, 2001). Specifically, this model of instructional supervision has been helpful as part of processes of formative instructional evaluation (Black & Kaplan, 1998). Video allows for heightened awareness of discrepancies between established and actual instructional goals, and provides feedback that allows GTA program administration to develop processes that attend to the developmental needs of GTAs. The extant literature in the field of clinical supervision and teacher development provides information relevant to the format and proceedings of the VIACC model (Acheson & Gall, 2003). In defining clinical supervision Acheson and Gall wrote, "clinical is meant to suggest a face-to-face relationship between teacher and supervisor and a focus on the teacher's actual behavior in the classroom" (p. 9). As implemented in this research, the goal of this process was to provide hands-on instructional support and supervision for GTAs, with varied developmental needs and concerns. Moreover, these supervisory and specifi-

cally evaluative interactions took place in an environment conducive to providing the most objective and meaningful feedback necessary to facilitate their development as effective teachers.

Further discussions of the VIACC model will be framed within the context of evaluating GTAs as instructors. The VIACC model of instructional supervision is a cyclical process and is comprised of the following three major phases based on work by researchers Acheson and Gall (2003) and Black and Kaplan (1998):

The planning conference (Planning)

The role of the supervisor was to help the GTA clarify his or her instructional concerns and expectations in light of the proposed lesson to be evaluated. The discussion centered on the GTA's current instructional practices, his or her view of the ideal lesson, and the possible discrepancy between the two. With the use of the pre-observation paperwork (see Table 1), both the supervisor and GTA worked to develop clear expectations and discuss possible techniques and classroom processes that would move the GTA's instruction towards the ideal lesson. Each conference lasted approximately an hour and was conducted the week of the actual evaluative observation.

The classroom observation (Implementation)

The GTA and the supervisor collected videotaped observational data from the actual class under evaluation. Each evaluative observation began 10 minutes before the actual class and ended 10 minutes afterwards. This was done to capture the manner in which the GTAs interacted with students and proceeded to set up his or her classroom environment. At the completion of the observation, the GTA supervisor provided the GTA with a copy of the lesson within 24 hours of the observation. Lastly, both the GTA and the supervisor independently reviewed and evaluated the lesson via the Basic Instruction Program (BIP) Teaching Effectiveness Inventory (see Table 2).

The feedback conference (Reflection)

The GTA and supervisor met to review and discuss the observational data and their perceptions concerning the overall lesson. Most importantly, the supervisor facilitated a formative and nurturing environment that allowed the GTA to openly discuss his or her inferences concerning instructional effectiveness. The primary goals of this conference were to (a) reflect on and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, (b) prescribe techniques for improvement, and (c) identify concerns that may have impacted the lesson or might impact future lessons. The GTA provided post-observation paperwork (see Table 1) that documented his or her reflections on the lesson. Each conference lasted approximately an hour and was conducted the week of the actual evaluative observation.

An ethnographic case study research design was deemed most appropriate for this study. Ethnographic research focuses on utilizing the "voices" of the participants to communicate aspects of the findings which in turn uncover and describe beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior of a group within a specific cultural setting (Merriam, 2002). Moreover, case studies are highly effective means of evaluating extensive and intricate patterns of organizational or cultural behavior in "bounded" instructional programs and settings (Tierney, 1991). Data collection efforts were coordinated with existing instructional supervisory and evaluation processes found within the BIP.

Context of study. This study occurred in a major university in the southeastern part of the United States during the fall 2003 through summer 2005 academic years. In particular, the BIP of the Department of Health and Human Performance (HLHP), located in the College of Education was examined. The Department of

Table 1
Videotape Instructional Analysis Pre- and Post-Observation Consultation Questions

Pre-Observation Questions

1. What are the instructional goal(s) and/or objectives of this lesson?
2. How do you plan to meet the identified instructional goals and/or objectives?
3. What potential **positive** instructional/environmental variables might influence your lesson?
4. What potential **negative** instructional/environmental variables might influence your lesson?
5. Identify any pre-observation concerns you have?

Post-Observation Questions

1. What were the instructional goal(s) and/or objectives of this lesson?
2. Think about the instructional positives of your lesson.
   a. What aspects of the class were valuable to student learning?
   b. Which instructional goals or objectives were met? Why?
   c. Identify factors that influenced you lesson positively.
3. Think about the instructional weaknesses or areas of improvement of your lesson.
   a. What aspects of your lesson were not valuable to student learning?
   b. Which instructional goals and objectives were not obtained? Why?
   c. Identify factors that influenced you lesson negatively.
4. Based on this evaluative experience, how do you plan to improve your instruction?

Table 2

Basic Instruction Program (BIP) Teaching Effectiveness Inventory
Overall, the GTA ***consistently*** exhibited these characteristics/behaviors during the lesson:

CHARACTERISTIC/BEHAVIOR	YES
Arrives to class on time	
Teacher utilizes students' name during interactions	
States daily academic goals	
Links past, current, and future academic goals	
Dressed appropriately for instructional environment	
Instructional setting is prepared for class	
Attendance is taken	
Class is dismissed on time	
Instant activity- Students are presented with options for preparing for instruction (warming-up, modified games, etc.)	
Instructional interaction- Students are given instruction, feedback, motivation, etc. (teachers does not stay passive)	
Skill knowledge- Teacher effectively demonstrates knowledge of the activity or techniques	
Questioning- Teacher asks students questions to either test understanding or to clarify misunderstandings	
Social interactions with students- Approachable, positive, professional (shows respect for students)	
Instructional practices- Student are doing developmentally appropriate practices and routines	
Practice time- Students are given appropriate time to appropriately practice skills and techniques	
Student activity levels- Students are working throughout the allotted time (students are not sitting out)	
Work expectations- Students who are loafing or not on-task are encouraged to get on-task	
Enthusiasm- Teacher provides or stimulates an atmosphere of appropriate energy within classroom	
Instructor ended class effectively (reminded students of important points of lesson, etc.)	
Conveys positive attitude	
Establishes appropriate student-teacher rapport	
Uses humor appropriately	
Is respectful to students and themselves	
Students are attentive	
Students are responsive	

HLHP offers Master's and Doctoral degrees in physical education teacher education (PETE), health promotion and behavior (HPB), and exercise science (EXRS) academic disciplines and respective sub-disciplines. The BIP affords the university's student body two primary types of courses: (a) traditional individual or team sport physical activity-oriented courses such as basketball, tennis, and soccer, and (b) wellness and weight-control courses that are focused on the content aspect of wellness and physical activity. Moreover, these courses are comprised of lectures, laboratory assignments, and the use of WebCT (a course management software program) technology to facilitate student learning. The university does not mandate that undergraduates take BIP courses to satisfy graduation requirements. However, courses are graded and designated with a letter grade (i.e., A, B, C, etc.), which is calculated into the students' overall grade point average. All courses carry a two hour academic credit weight.

Participants. 27 kinesiology GTAs took part in this research at various stages by granting the primary researcher permission to utilize data collected as part of the BIPs' instructional effectiveness analysis evaluations and focus group discussions held during a mandatory course titled Seminar: College Teaching. Based on their time as GTAs employed by the BIP under investigation for this research *Novice GTAs* ($n = 14$) were those GTAs with one year or less experience teaching at the time of their participation, while *Veteran GTAs* ($n = 13$) had taught a year or more. As a departmental assistantship requirement, each GTA taught a minimum of three BIP courses per semester. Cumulatively, at the time of their participation, the GTAs taught approximately 175 BIP, courses resulting in an instructional impact on 5, 250 students.

Participant confidentiality. At the onset of the data collection process, participants provided the primary researcher with pseudonyms to use throughout the research process, including the presentation of findings in scholarly works. The purpose of obtaining and using the pseudonyms were to protect the participants' identities and assure confidentiality of their statements. I was the only faculty or administrator privy to the identities of the participants and to whom which statements belonged to which specific GTA. Furthermore, I obtained informed consent from participants as stipulated by the university's Institutional Research Board policies and guidelines.

Data Collection Processes

Data collection processes included semi-structured interviews (individual and focus group) and examination of instructional and evaluative documents.

Individual and focus-group semi-structured interviews were the primary methods of data collection. Interviewing has been shown to be an effective means of collecting participants' thoughts and perceptions in a manner that allowed the researcher to effectively engage the meaning-making process (Merriam, 2002).The primary researcher facilitated each of the interviews which lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Interview topics focused on the participants' perceptions of the BIP program's GTA instructional socialization, development and supervisory practices, specifically in regard to the implementation of the VIACC model. During the course of this study participants took part in a minimum of three and a maximum of six individual interviews. Moreover, a total of 12 focus group discussions took place during the research process, with each GTA taking part in at least 2 of the discussions. Four of the twelve focus group discussions took place as a part of the Seminar: College Teaching course that all novice GTAs were required to attend. All interviews were audio-taped, video-taped and transcribed verbatim within ten days of the interview. After transcribing the interviews, the participants were provided a copy of the transcript and asked to review their comments for accuracy. The interview guide can be found in Table 3 with the interviewer asking supplementary or "probing" follow-up questions as needed.

Table 3

Interview Guide: Individual and Focus-Group Interview Questions

Interview Guide
1. In regards to your instructional development, what are your perceptions of the BIPs current use of end-of-semester student course evaluations?
2. What are your general perceptions of the VIACC model in regard to your instructional socialization and development?
3. In particular, what aspects of the VIACC model did you perceive to improve your immediate teaching performance?
4. What aspects of the VIACC model were not beneficial in regard to your instructional socialization and development?
5. How can the VIACC model be changed to better meet your needs?
6. What administrative assistance do you perceive is necessary for your development as an effective instructor?

Instructional and evaluative documents analysis.

Data were collected via the open-ended questions found on paperwork associated with the VIACC evaluative process, such as the pre- and post-observation consultation paperwork, class handouts and lesson plans (see Table 1). These documents can be thought of as artifacts or symbolic materials that identify what was considered important to the participants with regard to their instructional duties and perceptions of student learning (Merriam, 2002). Primarily, the purpose of collecting this information was to shed light on the planning and reflective practices demonstrated by the GTAs as well as to obtain samples of materials they utilized in their classes.

BIP Teaching Effectiveness Inventory development.

The primary instructional development instrument for this research was a multi-point instrument comprised of items directly linked to characteristics and behaviors commonly found in effective teaching environments (see Table 2). The instrument had 25 items. The primary researcher developed the instrument items with the intent of providing GTAs with an outline of key characteristics and behaviors drawn from existing literature concerning effective lecturing, classroom management, and teaching physical activity skills (Curzan & Damour, 2000; Hastie, 2003; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006; Rink. 2006) by which they could evaluate their teaching. Once a draft of the items was developed, faculty with expertise in pedagogy and the evaluation of teaching, within and outside physical education, were asked to examine the items for accuracy, content, and relevance to evaluating BIP program GTA instructional practices. From their comments, adjustments were made to the instruments. Then the instrument was piloted with GTAs and peer evaluators during the summer semester before the data collection process began. I noted the weaknesses in the instrument in regard to ease of use and relevance of the items. Again, adjustments to the format and grammar were made

and a final copy of the instruments was sent to three faculty members with expertise in assessing physical education pedagogy and several GTAs. Their final recommendations were used to make the final modifications to the instrument.

Data Analysis Process

The qualitative data analysis process involved the systematic organizing (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002; Wolcott, 1999) of interview transcripts, responses to open-ended questions found on paperwork associated the VIACC's pre- and post-observation consultation, classroom instructional materials, notes from GTA supervisor field observations, and other documentation in an effort to enhance understanding and aid in the presentation of results to others. Data analysis procedures were conducted concurrently with data collection throughout this study. Consequently, the primary researcher was able to identify tentative themes that provided context for future data collection processes. The product of this process was a valid, thorough and comprehensive description of the phenomenon under investigation.

Collected data were analyzed in the following manner. First, participants' responses to open-ended, semi-structured interview questions and other data sources were grouped and analyzed to obtain insight into various aspects of the participants' instructional experiences as BIP GTAs within the context of participating in the VIACC process. Data categories are defined as units of information that comprise various occurrences, events, or happenings (Wolcott, 1999). Based on provisional interpretations, diverse participant statements and common patterns across transcripts tentative themes were generated. Themes were based on commonalities between participants' experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2002). Findings in the context of this study are considered legitimate based on the extent in which the data sheds new light on the phenomenon under investigation based on information that provides the reader with a fresh awareness of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2003). Moreover, thematic analysis was used to further deductively generate categories and themes which in turn led to a better understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Lastly, the participants' quotations were used to provide a richness and depth to the representation of their experiences (Creswell 2003; Wolcott, 1999).

Credibility and trustworthiness of data.

Even though the constructs reliability, validity, and generalizability are misnomers in qualitative research seven strategies were utilized to effectively address issues of data credibility and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002; Wolcott, 1999). Moreover, due to my participation in the research process as a researcher and BIP GTA supervisor these steps were deemed critical in order to enhance the overall credibility of provided conclusions. *Triangulation of data* was established through the use of multiple sources of participant feedback. Thematic consistency was identified within and between data sources through systematic crosschecking of tentative themes and interpretations. The results section provides evidence of data source triangulation. *A rich, thick description* has been provided to make available to the reader a clear understanding of the research setting, participants, and their perspectives. *Member checks* were performed with each interviewee within three days of the actual interview. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcript and identify any discrepancies or errors. Furthermore, tentative themes and the final report were presented to the participants and their feedback was instrumental in establishing the accuracy of relevant conclusions. *Negative case or discrepant data* are provided in the results section. These findings provide evidence that divergent participant perspectives were included in the data analysis and presentation phases of the research. *Peer debriefers* were utilized throughout research process to enhance the accuracy of the final

account to be presented to the reader. They enhanced the research process by asking questions and reviewing aspects of the study including tentative themes, methods, and conclusions. *Prolonged time and exposure* to the participants was established through consistent observations, interviews, and meetings across two academic years (2003-2005). An *external auditor* reviewed the entire project at the study's mid-point and conclusion. The auditor, a faculty member at another university and not involved in the research, presented specific questions and concerns about various aspects of the study. Consequently, I addressed these topics throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases of the research process.

Research limitations and generalizability.

The research findings and analysis sought to provide practical solutions and recommendations rather than test, support, or develop a hypothesis concerning the use of the VIACC model as part of a formative instructional supervision approach for BIP GTAs. In the case of this research the findings generated and documentation of the participants' experiences might shed light onto the experiences of administrators and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in similar settings at other institutions but those experiences are still particularistic to that setting (Creswell, 2003). The individual perspectives of the participants are their own and as a unit are bounded by time, space, and their current perception of reality. Therefore, the uniqueness of the participants in their particular setting limits the transferability and generalizability of findings from one situation to another (Merriam, 2002).

Results

The following sections present this study's findings as pertinent to the implementation of the VIACC model. An interpretive analysis of the transcripts revealed five major emergent themes that characterized the perceptions of the participants in regard to the use of the VIACC model as a formative supervision and evaluation process. These themes will be presented as outlined by the aforementioned research questions. The participants' own "voices", through the use of quotes, are used to illustrate and describe specific thematic interpretations. However, themes are not to be construed as independent or unrelated to one another, but as interrelated aspects of a single overall pattern of meaning.

Research Question 1: What are the GTAs' perceptions of the VIACC model in regard to their instructional socialization and development?

Theme 1: GTAs reported a greater sense of instructional preparedness and confidence. Consistent and formal interactions with the GTA instructional leader, especially prior to, and after instructional evaluations, allowed the GTAs to develop a greater sense of instructional preparedness and subsequently more confidence. More importantly, as the study progressed, the GTAs evolved in their perceptions of their instructional practices. Utilizing prescribed effective instructional practices and strategies became second nature as the GTAs began to think about improving their teaching regardless of whether or not they were being evaluated or observed. Moreover, the *BIP Teaching Effectiveness Inventory* items were used to plan, implement, and self-evaluate their daily lessons. Bailey, a wellness course instructor, noted this change in her perception of her teaching and motivation to adequately prepare for her courses during an individual interview:

> Being from a non-teaching major I struggled with planning and reflecting on my lessons in the beginning. The multiple observations and meetings with my mentor GTA made me stay on my Ps and Qs. This "always on alert" feeling carried over through the semester. I'm more aware now and I feel more confident about teaching because I have thought out the lessons in advance. In fact, I have already planned out the remainder of the

> semester which also helps me balance my academic and teaching responsibilities. (Bailey, Veteran GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

Trevor, like many of the other GTAs, began to use the *Teaching Effectiveness Inventory* as a means of making sure he delivered the content of his choice to his students in an orderly and consistent fashion. This further supports the perception that the GTAs look at the VIACC model's evaluation process and criteria to shape their teaching philosophy and practices rather than simply as a means of "passing" a routine evaluation. Trevor, a tennis instructor, wrote in his post-observation reflective assignment:

> I knew that when I did my evaluations I would be just fine because of the paperwork and meetings [consultations] we had. At first student issues and the sort messed up my lessons totally. Now I go with the flow and make minor adjustments as needed. Now I'm better at teaching and even when I make mistakes in implementing the lesson my confidence stays high and I don't panic. That's saying a lot for an exercise physiologist, right! (Trevor, Novice GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

Theme 2: GTAs expressed a sense of appreciation and professionalism as instructors due to formative instructional supervision processes associated with the VIACC model. As a group the GTAs exhibited appreciation and a sense of professionalism for their role in the delivery of HLHP instructional content. The comprehensive and consistent evaluation and supervision provided by the BIP's GTA supervisor allowed the GTAs to gain appreciation of the department's perspective of their value to the overall instructional mission. Several of the Ph.D. students noted that at their M.A. institutions no one cared about how well they taught. They saw this ambivalence as indicative of a lack of instructional leadership, supervision and evaluation. Elijah, a wellness course instructor, stated during an individual interview:

> I'm so grateful for supervision. I feel like a "professor-in-training" and a valued member of the teaching team in the department. At my Master's institution the supervisor just took the students' feedback at the end of the semester and did nothing with us concerning it until the grilling session at the next August orientation. Here I know someone cares about my teaching's impact on students… It is good to have someone telling me and the others [GTAs] that we are professionals, we represent the department, and we represent health performance. (Elijah, Veteran GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

The GTAs began to view themselves as valuable and intricate parts of the university instructional work-force and to hold themselves to a higher standard of professionalism and excellence. Once the GTAs became comfortable with the HLHP department's expectations they began to "informally" evaluate the instructional effectiveness of their own instructors. This practice enlightened them and facilitated discussion about the balancing of research versus teaching in academia, and which is more valued by particular types of institution. Karla, an aerobics instructor, took the instructional evaluation tool to a non-HLHP class and evaluated her professor who recently was awarded a prestigious faculty university-wide award. She stated in an individual interview:

> My instructor missed most of the items on the [evaluative] checklist. I was amazed at how he was given a faculty award for excellence but did not demonstrate the basic aspects of effective teaching. Research-wise I can see, but teaching no way! That episode gave me some insight into what life will be when I get a job as a professor. This experience and conversations have shown me that I must hold myself to high standards as a teacher even if no one else appreciates my efforts. (Karla, Novice GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

Research Question 2: In particular, what aspects of the VIACC model did GTAs perceive to improve their immediate teaching performance?

Theme 1: Videotaped lessons allowed for discussions more conducive to enhancing pedagogical practices, habits, and dispositions. The primary benefit of using videotape instructional effectiveness analysis techniques is that it allowed the GTA instructional leader to clearly show during their evaluative consultation how and when the GTAs demonstrated or did not demonstrate the *Teaching Effectiveness Inventory behaviors*. By seeing themselves teaching, many for the first time, the GTAs were more aware and understanding of the feedback and praise being directed at them by the GTA instructional leader and their fellow GTAs. During a pre-observation consultation Susan, a weight-training instructor, was amazed at seeing herself miss what she called "teachable moments" due to her inability to state the names of her students correctly during the first weeks of class. She discussed during a focus group interview:

> I never knew I didn't use student names or talked to them directly until I saw myself on tape. I passed up so many teachable moments with my students because I didn't want to mispronounce their names. I didn't know something as simple as learning students' names could enhance my teaching so much. I'm glad it was made clear I wasn't the only one with this issue because I was so embarrassed. The ideas for learning names more quickly from the other GTAs worked well in my classes and were very helpful. (Susan, Novice GTA, M.Ed. candidate)

The use of videotape clips to facilitate understanding and discussion concerning instructional practices was extremely helpful when working with the novice instructors enrolled in the Seminar: College Teaching courses. With the use of the videotape clips from their observations, the instructor was able to clearly point out and address specific instructional issues while facilitating formative classroom discussion and analysis. The GTAs were able to develop instructional goals within the context of the established evaluative criteria while receiving formative feedback from the GTA instructional leader and fellow GTAs. Tranece, an aerobics instructor, noted that as a GTA with a non-pedagogy background she often had difficulty understanding many of the pedagogical considerations and terminology expressed during class. However, with the use of the video clips and specifically the classroom discussions she was able to more effectively grasp the content. She asserted during a focus group interview:

> I get it now. Sometimes it takes others to point out the simple things about teaching. The class discussions are great because everyone is in the same boat at some time during the discussion and we can help each other. My background isn't in teaching but I feel that by talking it out I can grasp the information faster and make sense of it without feeling completely dumb. (Tranece, Veteran GTA, M.S. candidate)

Theme 2: GTAs were able to effectively compare actual instructional performance against pre-determined goals and objectives to improve their awareness of instructional effectiveness. The *Teaching Effectiveness Inventory* clearly defined what instructional behavior and practices were appropriate and expected in the classroom. The GTAs at first only focused on doing well during the evaluations. As they became more aware of the evaluative items and comfortable with their they began to incorporate the practices into their general teaching habits. Greg, a former collegiate tennis player, looked at each time he was evaluated as a challenge to do the "perfect lesson". During an individual interview he discussed a lesson that involved a round-robin tournament that did not go as planned:

> Too many kids showed up to class late and it threw my teams off. I went into panic mode and didn't even call roll or warm them up properly. But I like the hit or miss way of evaluating myself. This is the way it went when I would review my [tennis] matches with Coach. No discussion—either I executed the shots correctly or not. Now I know I need to work on improving my teaching even when I'm not being observed. The [instructional] practices and habits I'm forming will be helpful in the long run as a coach and teacher. (Greg, Novice GTA, M.Ed. candidate)

The use of formative instructional supervision processes not only allowed for more meaningful and effective evaluation of the GTAs' teaching, but it also aided their development of an appreciation of excellence in teaching. Hector, an aspiring professor, summed up this point as he described how the VIAC model, monthly GTA meetings, and other formative supervisory processes allowed him to gain an appreciation of what practices were to be demonstrated in his teaching at all times. During a focus group interview he asserted:

> The evaluation checklist and group discussions really lay out what is expected of us. I had to think about my teaching before and after the lesson rather than "just winging it" day to day. I know I want to be a professor some day. These concepts will surely help me to be an excellent teacher and researcher when I get a job at a major university. (Hector, Veteran GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

Research Question 3: What possible supervisory or evaluative limitations are associated with using the VIACC model?

Theme 1: GTAs expressed that initially aspects of the VIACC model were intrusive and a hindrance to their teaching. The final theme illustrated the possible limitations and obstacles GTAs and instructional leaders may face when implementing the proposed supervisory and evaluation methods. Several of the GTAs expressed that the VIACC model caused them to see the negatives in their teaching and actually raised their sense of anxiety. Although such comments typically were expressed during the first two evaluations cycles of the first semester of teaching it is important to note the feeling that the GTAs had for later reference. The first quote highlights the general perception concerning this issue and specifically the GTAs' perceived inability to "be themselves" during the evaluation out of fear of doing something wrong that would be caught on videotape. Yancy, a jogging instructor, wrote in his post-observation reflective assignment:

> I thought it would be cool at first to see myself teaching but it wasn't at all. I found myself walking on "eggshells" the entire time. I couldn't be myself and my students said so at the end of the observation. They were use to my tough and straightforward personality which I was toned down for the camera. The camcorder made me think about doing everything exactly right rather than just being my self and focusing on teaching. I felt more like an actor than a teacher. (Yancy, Novice GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

The GTAs expressed difficulty grasping the purpose of the multiple observations during the beginning of their teaching careers. Although at the conclusion of the semester the consensus was that the provision of evaluative feedback concerning their instructional practices was meaningful and appreciated. For example, Abby, an aerobics instructor, discussed her initial difficulty connecting the role of evaluation to the enhancement of her overall instructional performance. Furthermore, she provided practical suggestions to improving the process for her developmental level during a focus group interview:

> I understand that these evaluations are useful in bettering our teaching but they seem to add to my stress level. I see that

> many of the other GTAs are doing fine but that may be because of their educational backgrounds and experiences. I'm trying to see the big picture. I am not from a teaching undergraduate major so many of the concepts and practices are foreign to me. I need more hands-on and rudimentary information and training. However, I feel like I am going in the right direction and I have a deeper appreciation for the "art of teaching" rather than simply the process of teaching. (Abby, Novice GTA, Ph.D. candidate)

To summarize, findings suggest that the VIACC model's supervisory process, especially as those associated with instructional evaluations, aided the GTAs in their development as effective instructors. Moreover, the GTAs reported a greater sense of confidence and awareness of instructional practices despite having limited initial instructional experiences. Some apprehension was reported by the GTAs but this was commonly exhibited during the early stages of their introduction to the VIACC model. More importantly, the GTAs clearly saw the evaluation objectives as the measure by which to assess their everyday teaching practices rather than just during actual formal evaluation processes. This in turn facilitated their appreciation and awareness of quality teaching on the post-secondary level.

Discussion

Unlike comparable academic areas, the extant literature provides limited coverage of effective means of appropriately supervising the instructional development of BIP and kinesiology GTAs (Russell & Chepyator-Thomson, 2004; Savage & Sharpe, 1998). The present study's results support and extend existing knowledge concerning the instructional development, socialization, and particularly the evaluation of BIP program GTAs. The VIACC model allowed significant and relevant instructional supervision opportunities for GTA supervisors. These opportunities afforded engagement in meaningful dialogue with GTAs concerning relevant instructional concerns, issues, and strategies that had a direct impact on student learning. As research shows, it is this engagement that is pivotal to the overall development of GTAs as effective and confident instructors (Austin & Wulff, 2004; Chism, 1998; Meyers, 2001). Consequently, these dialogues formed the groundwork for GTAs to consider their assistantship experiences to be means of preparing themselves to be excellent instructors immediately and in their future roles as members of academia, rather that as temporary financial necessities.

The primary finding was that the VIACC model was an invaluable means of providing both the GTAs and supervisor with a powerful, vibrant, and objective medium for evaluating the instructional practices found within the classroom. Consistent with existing research (Black & Kaplan, 1998), when participants were provided video images of their teaching, rather than just observational recollections and notes, they were more readily accepting of evaluative feedback. Furthermore, with the aid of video images the GTAs were able to effectively provide commentary and insights into their decision-making processes in regard to events in the classroom as (Nolan &Hoover, 2004). At this point the GTA supervisor interceded and aided GTAs in recognizing the strengths, weaknesses, and methods of improving the instructional techniques of a given lesson. In this research, the videotape images were invaluable to the development of relevant and meaningful instructional evaluation interactions between the supervisor and GTA. These findings are consistent with observations by James Stigler, who emphasized the importance of videotape analysis as part of continuous instructional improvement initiatives when he wrote (as reported in Willis, 2002):

> Teaching is a performance…it occurs in real time, in a real classroom, with real students. If you want to improve teaching, you need to find ways of studying the

> process. Video is the best way of representing that process so you can study it…video allows you to come back, observe the lesson with a group, talk about it, analyze it, and do the kind of work that can actually improve your teaching. (p. 8)

Along with being a persuasive means of discussing instructional practices the acquired videotape evaluative data provided an impartial complementary source of instructional feedback. Prior to the VIACC model the only formal evaluative feedback GTAs were provided concerning their teaching effectiveness was the occasional faculty observation and student course evaluations. The faculty observations, although meaningful, were primarily performed once during an academic term with little follow-up subsequent to teaching episodes. Using end-of-the semester student course evaluations as the primary measure of teaching effectiveness was problematic due to well-documented issues of inaccuracy and subjectivity (McCormack, 2005). These singular or "one-shot" evaluative processes provided little formative feedback and dialogue that aided the GTAs in the development of proper instructional practices.

The inclusion of videotape instructional analysis and consultations afforded the GTAs of this study an accessible, objective, and accurate representation of their teaching. Furthermore, the VIACC model served as a means of obtaining immediate evaluative feedback that made clear, reinforced, or explained instructional practices that facilitated or hindered student learning. This need for GTAs to have timely and accurate representations of their teaching in order to make proper instructional changes has been noted as imperative to the evaluation and development process (Black & Kaplan, 1998). Consistent supervisory interactions between the GTAs and supervisor allowed for the facilitation of an instructional dialogue that not only improved immediate teaching efficiency but also allowed for the imparting of information relevant to the professional socialization of the GTAs into careers as members of academia (Golde & Walker, 2006; Rikard & Nye, 1997). In fact, the most notable finding may have been that the GTAs perceived that their efforts were appreciated and that the department recognized teaching as important and worthy of investing resources into its improvement, and subsequently into GTAs' development as future academicians. It is this sense of appreciation that benefits the entire university and its constituency by producing competent, committed and reflective instructors.

Implications of Research

The findings from this study have significant implications for graduate academic programs. Multiple implications of this research present themselves in regard to the preparation of BIP GTAs for their immediate and future roles as college instructors. First and foremost, this study demonstrates the necessity for further research to be directed at the implementation of models of GTA instructional socialization and development. Specifically, graduate academic programs should continue to strive to better understand the instructional realities, concerns, and issues that BIP GTAs have regarding their teaching practices and roles. Consequently, we as an academic field will be better prepared to recruit, induct, socialize, and develop graduate students into effective college instructors.

In regard to GTA instructional development, the extant literature provides a myriad of programmatic models for developing instructional effectiveness and self-efficacy in GTAs via effective instructional supervision (Meyers, 2001). Unfortunately, despite the available information, many graduate academic programs have yet to make a concerted effort to develop and implement formal GTA instructional supervision programs despite the ever-increasing instructional load GTAs are required to deliver in programs (Prieto & Meyers, 2001). The application and sustainability of various GTA instructional supervisory approaches depend greatly on factors such as

program size, the GTAs' initial instructional experiences and developmental level, and availability of resources (i.e., administrative support, funding).

However, more important than these issues is the philosophical stance that graduate academic program administrators take in regard to how their particular cohort of GTAs will be mentored into competent instructors. Central to the discussion of implications of this research for graduate academic programs is the question: Is the focus of the graduate teaching assistantship experience to prepare GTAs for initial and future roles as effective higher education instructors? Or is it primarily a means of financing graduate studies and meeting the instructional labor needs of the respective department? For many GTA programs the answer is the latter of the two options.

Recently mainstream publications such as the National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education special theme issue *of Quest's* titled *The Academy Papers: Preparing Future Faculty* (Landers, 2003) and *Paths to the Professoriate: Strategies for Enriching the Preparation of Future Faculty* (Wulff & Austin, 2004) have discussed in detail the necessity of exploring these and other relevant issues associated with the professional development of graduate students. A critical aspect of GTA development and professional socialization is the manner in which they receive relevant instructional supervision which entails support, mentorship, and evaluation. The VIACC model allows for GTA supervisors to provide the consistent and formative instructional supervision that facilitates constructive dialogues about teaching that GTAs need throughout their development as instructors (Prieto, 2001). Experiences documented in this study serve as an example of a process that effectively integrated essential characteristics of a comprehensive instructional supervision model: (a) consistent formative instructional supervision; (b) authentic evaluative data and feedback; and (c) increased instructional dialogue.

In conclusion, the administrative practice of "instructional abandonment" is rampant in GTA programs. This is not the philosophical foundation upon which the graduate teaching assistantship was conceptualized and formally introduced into higher education in the 1800s. The assistantship experience was meant to be a time when the GTA could work hands-on and alongside an experienced mentor faculty member. The relationship between the two was to facilitate the development of the proper instructional practices, habits, and perspectives that graduate students would need as they transition into their own faculty positions upon graduation. Physical education and related graduate academic programs pride themselves on being in the business of assisting the public with developing and maintaining healthy lifestyle choices. Consequently, since our graduate students are employed to deliver this vital instructional content, it is in our best interest that they are properly prepared and supported. Furthermore, as the current generation of academics transition out of academia, these same graduate students will be called upon to continue to fill the labor void. To not put forth a consistent and appropriate effort for the development of organizational processes that effectively support GTAs as they develop as teachers is not only a disservice to the GTA but also to the students and greater institutional constituency served. Graduate academic programs and specifically GTA supervisors must take a stronger stance on the manner in which GTAs are selected, developed, and supported in their teaching. The VIACC model, as utilized in the current GTA program under investigation, meets these philosophical goals.

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