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Synergistic Supervision: Impacts on Student Affairs Employee Job Satisfaction

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SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION: IMPACTS ON STUDENT AFFAIRS

Synergistic Supervision: Impacts on Student Affairs Employee Job Satisfaction

By

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A proposal for research study submitted to the Department of Leadership

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Synergistic Supervision: Impacts on Student Affairs Employee Job Satisfaction

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DEDICATION

To my wife and family; Andrea, Mom, Mom Manning and Kurt, thank you for you loving me through this LONG process. It would not be finished without your encouragement, listening, questioning, care and of course the occasional tough love.

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Growing up, education was something that was not taken lightly. I was not just to go to school, but it was important that I did well and learned. Although going to college to earn a bachelor's degree was something that I had the privilege of knowing would be within my grasp, earning a master's degree and now a doctoral degree is something I could not have done without an amazing support system.

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ABSTRACT

Supervision is a critical component to any employee's professional life, but it can be especially impactful to a student affairs professional. The foundation of the student affairs field is to help a student grow and develop as a whole person. This concept carries on to student affairs professionals as well, as supervisors should strive to develop the whole professional creating a positive work environment. This study analyzed the use of the synergistic supervision techniques on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. An anonymous, electronic survey was emailed to student affairs professionals at public, private and community colleges across the nation. One hundred fifty-one participants in various positions within the field took the survey. Synergistic supervision, created by Winston & Creamer (1997), and the human resource theory served as the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. The findings from this study indicate that the use of synergistic supervision techniques predict job satisfaction. These results inform practice involving training in supervision for student affairs divisions from the top down, and revision of staffing models and the professional development opportunities offered by guiding professional organizations.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Many higher education institutions put a priority on the *holistic development* of students, or educating and meeting the needs of the whole person rather than focusing solely on academic intellect (Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001). Student affairs divisions were introduced on college campuses starting in the early 1900's with the intention of fostering positive environments for students to grow socially and emotionally while also providing academic support. Indeed, research on student support in college indicates that students need to feel supported and encouraged in all steps of the education process, including areas such as financial aid, residential life, campus activities, and advising and counseling services (Winston et al., 2001). Divisions of student affairs play a critical role in ensuring that this support is provided.

In addition to creating and maintaining an environment conducive to student growth and development, administrators within the division of student affairs on many campuses are tasked with helping students transition smoothly from high school to college (Winston & Creamer, 1998; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Assoc., 2001). For many students, college marks a major transition from living at home to living independently on campus; such a change can be potentially overwhelming for a new student. On the college campus, administrators in the department of Residence Life, typically within the division of student affairs, are often relied upon to facilitate smooth transitions, setting the stage for student success in college. To aid in this transition process and to promote academic and social integration, colleges and universities have begun in recent years to create such programs as living-learning, designed to help students connect to the university both in and out of the classroom. According to Inkelas and Weisman

(2003), these programs have the main goal of connecting and engaging students by allowing them to participate in coordinated academic activities and live together within the same residential area, receiving extra academic and social support. Furthermore, additional research shows that if students feel supported academically and are connected socially outside the classroom, they are more likely to persist through challenging times (Purdie and Rosser, 2011). This ability to persist despite challenging times is key not only in retaining students past their first year, but also in ensuring that they are successful in persisting to degree. Pascarella and Terenzini (1999) concluded that when learning is purposefully integrated inside and outside the classroom, students showed gains in important learning outcomes such as communication and quantitative and critical-thinking skills each year they progressed in college. Overall, the students become better learners. Departments within the division ensure that this type of intentional and purposeful integration takes place.

Statement of Problem

Student affairs administrators play an important role in college student learning outcomes; therefore, it is critical to understand how to support the student affairs administrator. The student affairs profession is a helping profession, meaning that someone who is drawn to this work will likely be dedicated to helping others. This notion of a tendency toward altruism is reflected in the professional standards guiding the field of student affairs. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has created standards of best practices for higher educational professionals, seven ethical principles for administrators within the profession to follow. According to the third principle, *beneficence*, those in the student affairs profession should promote goodness and work toward the positive welfare of others (CAS Standards, ND). While being a part of a helping profession can be very rewarding, these professions also tend to

experience high levels of turnover because of employee burnout (Van den Broeck et al., 2017). Indeed, working in student affairs often requires a staff member to be available to help outside of typical 8 a.m.-5 p.m. working hours (CAS Standards, ND; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001; Bender, 2009; Shupp & Arminio, 2012). Furthermore, it is well-established that helping professions require a deep sense of emotional investment in those you are helping (Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001; CAS Standards, ND). When working with students through challenging developmental times, a staff person can easily become emotionally invested and overwhelmed. The emotionally taxing and round-the-clock nature of the work can lead to fatigue, stress, and burnout. Furthermore, research indicates that staff members at higher education institutions often feel they are not paid what they are worth (Bender, 2009; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001; Shupp and Arminio, 2012). With the high potential for burnout, as well as the perceived inadequate compensation, systems of support and encouragement are critical for staff members in student affairs. With this in mind, Winston and Creamer (1997) conducted a study focusing on supervision techniques and trainings. They published two major findings from the study of eight campuses. First was a prevailing belief that supervision of employees is an important function of the institution. The second finding, ironically, was that training for supervision techniques was basic or nonexistent. The lack of attention to supervision is concerning and can lead to burnout of professionals and poor-quality service for students (Bender, 2009; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001; Shupp and Arminio, 2012; Hall-Jones, 2011; Tull, 2011; Janosik et al., 2003).

In sum, divisions of student affairs are critical to the success of students in colleges and universities because of the important role student affairs administrators play in helping students

grow as a whole person (Janosik et al., 2003; Nuss, 2003). However, the helping nature of the profession comes with high demands on administrators' time and energy. Taken together with administrators' perception of relatively low compensation, it is understandable that divisions of student affairs experience high turnover. To this end, it is critical that colleges and universities examine ways to provide supportive environments for student affairs professionals, to increase satisfaction with their job and decrease the likelihood of turnover. The concept of *growing others* should start with the staff at the top of the division hierarchy and continue on to the students (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Satisfaction with one's supervisor has consistently been shown to be important to employees. Indeed, literature on employee turnover indicates that those who report being satisfied with their supervisor are less likely to leave (Bender, 2009; Shupp and Arminio, 2012). Despite this, institutions provide student affairs administrators limited training on how to supervise employees (Winston & Creamer, 1997, Hall-Jones, 2011). Furthermore, opportunities for growth within the area of supervision are limited. For example, within the profession, there are two trusted organizations which provide guidance for student affairs professionals: American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Personnel Administrators. Each organization offers professional development along with personal connections, with the goal of keeping professionals competitive and knowledgeable about current trends within the field. Supervision is identified as important; however, few resources are devoted to improving supervision skills.

Additionally, research indicates that certain supervision techniques, such as synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer 1997, Shupp and Arminio, 2012), are most effective in producing environments satisfactory to employees. Currently, there is a limited amount of literature on outcomes of using specific supervision techniques within the division of student

affairs staff members, and an even smaller amount on synergistic supervision (Saunders, Cooper, Winston and Chernow, 2000; Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Shupp & Arminio, 2012). This is the gap the present study aims to fill.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to discover the effects, if any, that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This study will show the importance of defining, using and creating trainings on synergistic supervision (a specific positive supervision technique) with student affairs employees. The main research question guiding this inquiry was: Is there a relationship between the use of synergistic supervision techniques (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focus on competencies) and the level of a person's job satisfaction when controlling for demographic information?

It was hypothesized that if specific synergistic techniques were used, participants' level of job satisfaction would be higher. The aspect that sets synergistic supervision apart from other supervision approaches is that it is viewed as a process aimed at helping the staff achieve personal and professional goals even while pursuing organizational goals. This is different from other supervision techniques used mainly to reprimand or correct a problem. This study will examine all four aspects of synergistic supervision: dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and a focus on competencies.

Framework

The model of supervision researched is within the area of higher education, specifically the division of student affairs. Supervision is a component of what Winston and Creamer (1997) call staffing practices. Winston and Creamer (1997) created the first comprehensive model of good staffing practices within a division of student affairs. The model's five elements are:

recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, and performance appraisal (Winston and Creamer, 1997; Tull, 2011). By naming the process *staffing practices*, Winston and Creamer intended that the five elements would be integrated, therefore facilitating interrelationships between the people and the positions they are in (Hall-Jones, 2011; Tull, 2011, Winston and Creamer, 1997). Given that a main function of higher education is to serve students and help others, the process of maintaining a staff is critical to the student affairs division as well as to the institution as a whole (Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Tull, 2011; Winston and Creamer, 1997). Additionally, the division of student affairs as a profession believes that staff members should focus on helping students develop to the fullest level of their potential. With this said, there is a strong connection between the quality of staffing practices and the quality of services provided for students (Winston and Creamer, 1997). Winston and Creamer (1997) further explained that if staffing practices are not taken seriously within a division, student affairs professionals will have less influence on students (Janosik et al., 2003; Lane, 2014; Tull, 2011).

When referring to supervision within student affairs, Winston and Creamer (1997) view supervision as a “helping process provided by the institution to benefit or support staff” (p. 30). Within higher education, supervision is seen as a way to engage staff for their professional improvement while simultaneously improving the organization.

Overall, there are four approaches to supervision in higher education: authoritarian, *laissez faire*, companionable, and synergistic. When using the authoritarian approach, the supervisor has constant watch over the employee to ensure that production is at its highest. This approach assumes that an employee will do the least work possible, thus requiring constant oversight. The second approach, *laissez faire* supervision, involves the attempt to hire the right

person for a position and letting them work independently. Supervision is viewed as something that need happen only when the employee seeks help with a task or has performed poorly. The third approach, companionable supervision, is based on friendship. In this approach, the supervisor plays the role of friend, wanting to be liked by the employee. Under companionable supervision, issues with performance are often ignored for fear of breaking the friendship bond. The last supervision approach within higher education is synergistic supervision. This approach involves a collaborative effort between the supervisor and the employee to not only better the employee but also better the organization. This approach assumes that the outcome of the supervisor's and employee's efforts together will be greater than mere individual efforts (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Most in line with the holistic foundation of the student affairs profession, synergistic supervision calls for the supervisor to be in tune with the whole professional, with the employee's professional goals as well as with their personal needs (Lane, 2010).

The main framework used for this study was the concept and elements of synergistic supervision. Winston and Creamer created synergistic supervision as a new way to focus on supervision of staff members. The difference between synergistic supervision and other techniques is that it is a group process, which means the employer (the supervisor) and the employee (supervisee) work together to achieve goals of the organization at the same time as working toward the goals of the individual (Winston and Creamer, 1997). There are four main components to synergistic supervision: dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and a focus on competence (Janosik et al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The main outcome of synergistic supervision is for the employee and employer to collaborate, achieving more together than an individual would achieve (Winston & Creamer,

1997). This technique gives the supervisee freedom to make his or her own decisions while being positively supported by the supervisor through open communication. Such an approach promotes confident decision-making, particularly in young professionals. When employing the synergistic supervision technique, a supervisor focuses on the supervisee as a professional and as a person. By sharing professional goals along with current struggles, the supervisor fosters care and concern for the whole employee. As a result, the employee feels connected and cared for within the position and will be more willing to stay not just in the profession but at the current institution (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Tull, 2014; Winston & Creamer, 1997). According to Dalton (1996), supervisors face six main pitfalls: discrediting the potential weight of personal issues and the effect on performance; supporting the wrong behavior; focusing on tasks without the vision in mind; focusing on the vision without explaining the details to supervisees; failing to model behaviors that they advise; and not acknowledging leadership as service. The synergistic supervision technique avoids these issues by providing more focused supervision from the supervisor and better service to students by the supervisee.

In summary, student affairs divisions were created to ensure holistic development of the college student. Specific programs and departments within the division provide services and support to students to encourage growth, which aids student success. The purpose of this study was to discover the effects, if any, that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. To determine this, the synergistic supervision model created by Winston and Creamer was used as the main framework. There are four remaining chapters to this study. Chapter Two will give an overview of the literature, digging deeper into the student affairs profession as well as synergistic supervision. Chapter Three will explain the methodology

of the research, including the design, population, and data-collection process. Chapters Four and Five will analyze the findings of the research and provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The second chapter of this study will provide a review of the literature covering four main areas. First, the student affairs profession and professional will be explained and defined. Second is the concept of supervision within the field, focusing on the synergistic supervision technique which will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. The third area in this chapter will describe the theoretical framework used to support the study: the human resource theory. Fourth, the reason and significance of the study will be explained. A summary will conclude the chapter.

Student Affairs Division

Throughout the history of the student affairs division, the exact definition and function of the profession have grown and varied. However, one concept has stayed constant: as a whole, student affairs has a long history of helping students learn life skills outside the classroom that serve them well beyond their four years at the institution (McCulluen, Stinger, 2016; Hamrick, Evans, Schuh, 2002; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001). Beginning with deans of men and women in the early 19th century, institutional leaders sought to address what they saw as a need to help students adjust to college life both in and outside the classroom. The role of a dean was to monitor the behavior of students as well as guiding them through the personal growth they were experiencing both in and out of the classroom (McClellan & Stinger, 2016; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001). The professionals in these positions realized a need to establish a community in which they could share ideas, expectations, and goals for themselves personally and for the position and the profession as a whole. At a collective meeting

of deans in 1903, the student affairs profession was born (Gerda, 2007; McClellen & Stringer, 2016).

Though educators saw the impact of the deans, a new role called student personnel was formed to take the role of supporting students to another level. At the collegiate level, administrators broke up tasks and assigned them to different departments, allowing for the tasks to be completed in a timelier manner while serving the students more effectively. Through this process, the concept of the division of student affairs was developed. Student personnel, though successful at most institutions, was disorganized and inconsistent. There was a need to create order within the student personnel movement and for the profession at large to adopt this concept as the most effective way to support students. This need manifested itself in 1937 through a document entitled *The Student Personnel Point of View*, which outlined 23 functional responsibilities within the area of student affairs (now known as departments), some of which were academic and career advising, and provision of recreational facilities, housing, and financial aid. *The Student Personnel Point of View* recommended that student affairs professionals provide guidance and assistance outside the classroom to enable students to learn, grow, and achieve a more fulfilled college experience (Hamrick, Evans & Schuh, 2002; McClellen & Stinger, 2016; Shaffer, 2005).

Although the organization of the profession changed with time, the purpose of helping students has remained the same. According to Winston and Creamer (1997, p. 15), three essential values were molded throughout the years to define and fit the Student Affairs profession: “Human dignity (including freedom, altruism and truth), Equality (including individuals and groups), Community (including justice).”

If student affairs professionals keep these values at the forefront of their work, they will in turn place the entire student and the student's needs first, which is the foundation of the profession.

Human Resource Theory

The underpinnings of modern Human Resource Theory derived from a paradigm shift in the 1920's; theorists began to posit that the main purpose of an organization ought to be to serve human needs and that the fit between the person and the organization is of critical importance (Bolman & Deal, 2013, Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2011). Human resource theory held that a person's behavior shapes the organization and the interactions of individuals within organizations shape everything within the context of the job. This concept is important to understand for my study on employee perceptions of synergistic supervision. Within the context of human resource theory, one can assume that if a person and organization fit well together, the person will have positive interactions with their supervisor and therefore have a more positive perception of the supervision experience. Douglas McGregor (1957) looked more deeply into the function of human nature in the workplace. His theories, named Theory X and Theory Y, create two different ideas of the employee in an organization. Within Theory X, he proposed that management is ultimately responsible for manipulating the people and the work within the organization to best fit the needs of the organization. Theory X also assumes that, by nature, a person does not want to work and lacks the desire and sense of responsibility to lead himself; therefore, he is reliant on the manager to direct him. In contrast, according to McGregor (1957 found in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2011), Theory Y states that:

1. "Management is responsible for organizing the elements of productive enterprise.

2. People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs. They have become so as a result of experience in organizations.
3. The motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, the readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals are all present in people.
4. The essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions and methods of operation so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives” (p. 187).

It is clear that Theory X and Theory Y have different focuses and, more likely than not, different outcomes with employees. The focus of Theory Y is on the individual and the organizational goals, which creates more of a team environment and bestows on the employee a greater sense of ownership for the organization and for the decisions the employee makes. Increased sense of ownership is likely to enhance the relationship between supervisor and employee. Based on the connections and experiences described above, employees form their perception of not only the organization and their relationship with their supervisor, but also of their role within the workplace as a whole.

Supervision and Leadership

In order to understand student affairs employees’ perceptions of synergistic supervision, we first must look at supervision generally. Although there are many concepts and technical definitions of supervision, for this discussion we will use the definition provided by Rue (1982): “Supervision is the first level of management in the organization and is concerned with encouraging the members of a work unit to contribute positively toward accomplishing the organization’s goals” (p. 9). A main difference between the role of the supervisor and the role of

a subordinate is that a supervisor is continually learning instead of mastering one task like that of a line worker would do (Sartain & Baker, 1978). The supervisor does not have the task of doing the actual work but does have the responsibility to make sure the work is done (Rue, 1982). The supervisor's role "embraces every aspect of a company's relationship with the persons on its payroll" (Mack, 1970). The supervisor must be aware and in touch with his or her reports and keep them aligned with the company's main goal; hence, the supervisor is continually learning, growing, and adapting to new situations and ideas.

Supervision spans various careers on various levels, and definitions and expectations differ with each career or level. Although these differences may convolute the definitions, Rue (1982) stated that "mastery of supervision is vital to organizational success because the supervisor is the management person most of the employees see and deal with every day" (p. 9). This generalization collects the definitions and emphasizes that, regardless of employment type, the supervisor makes the most impact on the employee. For each profession there are different types of supervision, many of which are noted below in Table 1; for this study, supervision is within the division of student affairs.

Table 1

Descriptions of Different Types of Supervision

Profession	Supervision Type / Technique	Key Characteristics
Business / Corporate (Carelli, 2010)	Managing People and Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach employees to meet company goals. • Conduct interviews. • Design a good team. • Conduct performance evaluations -- 360-degree evaluations. • Delegate tasks for efficient completion. • Recognize employees for making positive contributions.

Clinical (Keenan, 2015)	Learn by doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish with supervisee a formal relationship for guidance and oversight. • Develop the supervisee into a well-rounded, effective practitioner. • Develop supervisee's skills to work in the appropriate fields. • Help supervisees learn from their experiences.
Counseling (Borders & Brown, 2005)	Two main concepts -- Discrimination Model and Developmental Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall -- Develop professionals who are teachers, counselors, consultants, researchers, supervisors, and supervisees. • Discrimination Model (Bernard) -- A grid made of the following focus areas: Counseling performance skills (what a counselor does). Cognitive counseling skills (how a counselor thinks before, during and after a session). Self-awareness (recognition of personal beliefs that can affect view of client). Professional behaviors (adhering to laws, ethical/professional behaviors). • Developmental Models -- Not focused on theory; rather, focused on developing and progressing in complexity and integration. There are multiple models with no set course, as it depends on the individual, but there are overarching themes. The overall thought is that the counselor development continues throughout a lifetime.
Counseling (Borders & Brown, 2005)	Instructional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the behaviors of teachers as they focus on behaviors of students. • Manage classroom instruction. • Focus on the mission of the school while promoting positive school climate. • Professional development/growth of teacher while focusing on student growth. • Methods -- conferencing with teachers, remaining visible, praising results, extending autonomy.

Supervisors have a direct impact on new employees in the division of student affairs. During the first year of employment, a supervisor is responsible not just for helping the new employee to learn the position but also learn the culture of the department and the institution. This well-rounded instruction will help the employee feel connected and set them up for stability to learn and grow (Barham & Winston, 2006).

The need to teach the culture as well as the job was discovered in a qualitative study conducted by Barham & Winston (2006). The researchers interviewed four pairs of supervisor/supervisees to understand their perception of the supervision the supervisees were receiving. Two of the pairs were from a public, land-grant university in a college town and two were from an urban, public, research university. After conducting interviews, transcribing and coding, four main themes emerged: new professionals' perceived needs for supervision; supervisors' perceptions of the needs of new professionals; incongruence between the two perceptions; and the presence of the diagnosis phenomenon. For the first two themes, researchers found that the new professionals could easily communicate their needs, but it was not easy for the supervisor to articulate the supervisee's needs. When each set of needs was communicated, the needs were different; when there was a balanced relationship of challenge and support, the supervisors' and supervisees' expressions of the supervisees' needs were more similar. Barham and Winston called it "the Diagnosis Phenomenon" (p. 74). Overall, it was found that supervisors supervised the way they wanted to be supervised rather than tailoring their supervision to the needs of the employee. It also was found that the longer a supervisor was in the field, the better they were able to identify the supervisee's needs. This increased level of skill was attributed to the supervisor's additional experience, development, and training (Barham & Winston, 2006).

When thinking about the findings relating a supervisor's ability to identify employees' needs to the supervisor's longevity in the field, one must consider the supervisor's leadership style. This is particularly useful to note with middle managers in the student affairs division, because most combine having the most contact with students with having input on major department decisions. It is important that these middle managers understand supervision,

specifically synergistic supervision and practiced leadership skills, to successfully navigate the dual roles (Hall-Jones, 2011). Hall-Jones (2011) conducted a study on student affairs middle managers' leadership qualities and the relationship with synergistic supervision techniques used with staff members. With a sample size of 214 student affairs middle managers, Hall-Jones found a statistically significant link between transformational leadership skills and use of synergistic supervision techniques, further showing that leadership skills are connected to the quality of supervision received.

Much research shows that leadership itself cannot be easily defined. However, Northouse (2013) describes four aspects of leadership: It is a process, it involves influence, it occurs in groups, and it involves common goals. Based on these components, Northouse (2013) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). This definition implies that since leadership is a process, it is not based solely on traits or characteristics; however, the traits and attitudes of the leader, the supervisor in this case, can positively or negatively affect the process of leadership. Leaders' personal attributes influence the choices and the decisions they make in the organization and, in turn, these decisions influence followers' attitudes and beliefs (Oreg & Berson, 2011). In the early years of trait leadership research it was found that specific traits make a person a better leader in a number of situations. Although a conclusive list was never agreed upon, some of the main traits of a good leader are: "drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, drive to exercise initiative in social situation, ability to influence other people's behavior" (Northouse, 2013). The idea of the trait theory concludes that, ultimately, a person's traits will affect his/her ability to lead and influence others.

Power, influence, and control are also key players in supervision and the effects it has on employees. Since the creation of reporting levels within a workplace, power and influence and the desire for control have had an effect on supervision. French and Raven (1959) concluded that there were five types of power; reward, coercive, legitimate, reverent, and expert. Most commonly in the workplace, subordinates first experience legitimate power, which is power given to a person based on the position that he/she holds. This then could lead to reward or coercive power. Reward power is the power to give rewards based on performance; the opposite is coercive power, which involves the use of power in a negative fashion to get the outcome you desire. Reverent and expert power are also common in the workplace and could have more positive effects on the employee and the organization as a whole. Reverent power is based on how much an employee identifies with the person in power. This is more of a social and relational type of power, whereas expert power is based on knowledge of topic. The way a supervisor uses the power he/she has will affect the way the organization is run and on the ways in which employees interact (Shafritz, Ott, Jang, 2011). In fact, Sartain and Baker (1978) explain that personality is also a type of power: “a supervisor that derives his or her influence from personality or behavior has personal authority (often referred to as leadership)” (p. 56). This is combining the idea that a person is not only appointed into a position of power but is using his/her personality traits to influence others as well. This concept will be key in the discussion of the different types of supervision and the effects they have on the employee.

Synergistic Supervision

The concept of managing others has been studied since the 1900's when James Taylor created the idea of scientific management, studying how to get maximum employee productivity within an organization. There is, however, a lack of research on specific and named supervision

techniques. Throughout the literature researched, many discussed qualities and characteristics of a supervision style or technique; however, only four mentioned the name of the supervision used. In order to use a specific, intentional style of supervision, one must know about supervision in the broad sense and then be knowledgeable about the different styles. As mentioned above, this would require training and time spent on employees. Leaders who take time to train employees and own a supervision style within the department show they care about professional growth and, even more, the quality of service the student will receive (Petroc & Piercy, 2013).

Winston and Creamer (1997) conducted a survey of the staffing practices within student affairs. The survey was distributed to 491 institutions varying in type and size, which yielded a response from 121 intuitions, creating a broad and sufficient cross-section of the areas within student affairs. From these data, it was found that the overall process of staffing, training and developing student affairs employees needed changing; specifically, in the areas of orientation for new employees, supervision, and performance appraisals. Based on these findings, Winston and Creamer (1997) created a staffing model to be used as a best practice by divisions. The staffing model includes a focus on recruitment and selection, orientation to the position, supervision, staff development, and performance appraisals. Within this model, Winston and Creamer (1997) focused on supervision as a linchpin. Throughout their research, they found that no single style of supervision fit the needs of employees within the division of student affairs; therefore, they coined the term *synergistic supervision*. The aspect that sets synergistic supervision apart from other supervision approaches is that it is viewed as a helping process for the staff. According to Winston and Creamer (1997), many new employees have a negative perception of supervision due to previous knowledge and experience with other managers. In

fact, they found that employees equated supervision with “incompetence or malfeasance” (p. 180). Tull (2006), surveyed 435 members of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) to find whether there was a connection between the level of synergistic supervision received, job satisfaction, and intention to leave the position. It was found that there was a negative correlation between level of synergistic supervision received and intent to leave the position, meaning that employees with positive supervisor support will stay in the position longer. Therefore, it is important to understand that synergistic supervision happens throughout a person’s career, not just when they are an entry-level professional. In this model, supervision is a collaborative and growing process between the employee, the supervisor and the organization (Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). There are four main components to synergistic supervision; dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and a focus on competence (Janosik et al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

With a dual focus, synergistic supervision aims to achieve both organizational goals and the goals of the supervisee. As a result, the supervisor is concerned with the personal and professional well-being of the supervisee. This is a key difference between supervision in the student affairs field and in a corporate setting (Janosik et al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Creamer, 1998). Young (1993), as cited in Winston and Creamer (1998), states “An important value of the student affairs field is respect for the worth and dignity of each individual” (p. 30). Within this dual focus, clear expectations of organizational goals and vision are established while, at the same time, the supervisee sets expectations of what they would like to achieve professionally. Therefore, both parties are not only putting forth effort but also accomplishing the goals that were set (Janosik et. al, 2003). In

order for synergistic supervision to work effectively, supervisees need to feel that they have input in organizational goals and where the department is heading in the future. This will allow the supervisee to have a personal investment in the department, increasing their determination to do their part to complete the goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

The second component to synergistic supervision is a joint effort between the supervisor and the supervisee. Both parties are responsible for creating and maintaining a healthy professional relationship (Winston & Creamer, 1998). When expending time and energy to create this relationship, the two staff members are also creating the synergistic factor that lies in synergistic supervision. When both the supervisor and supervisee put forth equal levels of effort, both parties develop a sense of commitment that will help them achieve both sets of goals (Janosik et al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Two-way communication is the third piece of the synergistic approach. When creating the quality relationship addressed above, it is important that the lines of communication between the supervisor and supervisee are open and honest (Winston & Creamer, 1998). With open and honest communication, the relationship moves to a place where personal well-being and concern are mixed with professional lives. This allows the supervisor to address performance issues and concerns without the supervisee feeling as if they are being attacked or undermined (Janosik et. al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1998). At the same time, the supervisor must produce an environment that allows the supervisee to provide feedback to the supervisor and ask open and honest questions. This will not only allow the relationship to grow but simultaneously allows the supervisee to continue growth and achievement of goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

The final component to synergistic supervision is a focus on competence, which is split into these four areas: knowledge, work-related skills, personal and professional skills, and attitudes (Janosik et. al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Creamer, 1998). The first area of competence is focused on the knowledge of the job. It is assumed that the employee came into the position with a base level of knowledge that can be built upon; however, because the employee is presumed to have this base level, it is easy to neglect the area of job knowledge (Winston & Creamer, 1998). In student affairs, professionals deal with much information that is confidential and urgent. This urgency, plus ever-changing social circumstances, make it important for employees to continue adding to and refreshing their knowledge base.

The second area of competence is work-related skills. Within this area, the supervisee and supervisor will address the skills related to knowledge of the job; however, more attention will be placed on methods to enhance skill areas that may be lacking. Commonly neglected in student affairs is keeping abreast of theory and practice. This is a work-related skill that could easily be brought into supervision discussions to help both parties keep fresh in this area (Janosik et. al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Creamer, 1998).

The third area of competence is honing personal and professional skills, which entails working on skills that connect an employee's personal life with their professional life. An example of this would be anger control, career planning, and preparing for retirement (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Due to the hands-on nature of student affairs, it is imperative that these personal and professional skills are developed to ensure professional relationship-building, proper communication within departments, and the ability to manage time well (Janosik et. al,

2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Creamer, 1998).

The fourth and final area of competence is the attitude of the supervisee as well as of the supervisor. This area holds great importance but is often hard for supervisors to influence or control. It is often found that an employee's attitude is addressed only when there is an issue rather than throughout the duration of the supervision (Winston & Creamer 1997). Because of the interactive nature of student affairs, as referenced above, an employee's attitude can have great power over the way in which a task is completed. Attitude can determine how well a task is completed and, in some cases, can determine whether in fact the task is ever completed (Winston & Creamer, 1997). People with positive attitudes have the ability to influence others to use their own knowledge in a productive manner, while those with negative attitudes can hinder work being done (Mouton and Black, 1984). Further, people with positive attitudes tend to surround themselves with like personalities. The same can be said about employees with a negative attitude. The clustering of positive and negative attitudes can create a positive force of productivity or a destructive energy, which affects the division or department as a whole (Dulton, 1996; Mouton and Blake, 1984; Winston and Creamer, 1997).

Two other important aspects of supervisee attitude are: one, that understanding your own attitude can help a person understand how others perceive you; and, two, that people with the same attitude seem to congregate together. First, if an employee understands how others see them, they can create better working relationships. Second, having like attitudes in the same department could affect the retention of a department as a whole. For example, if the attitude of the organization is positive and energetic, employees will want to stay and grow; but if the

attitude is negative, the negative impression created will deter prospective employees from joining the department.

A good attitude in the department can determine the performance of the individual and of the division as a whole. A review by Maughan and Ball (1999) looked at a synergistic curriculum for high performance in the workplace. First, they defined a high-performance workplace as one that is up to date with trends, constantly changing as a result, and has a present-day environment. Then they discussed a synergistic school curriculum to be used in K-12 schools that would prepare students to enter into this high-performance workplace. The commonality between their proposed synergistic curriculum and the synergistic supervision technique is the amount of effort and attention given to open and honest communication. Maughan and Ball (1999) suggest that with this synergistic curriculum, students could more easily adapt to changes, work better in teams, and strive to learn for themselves as opposed to relying on instructors to teach. They concluded the review by encouraging a curriculum that focuses on teaching higher-level concepts that require problem-solving skills as well as focusing on the critical thinking that is needed in decision-making. This process would be collaborative between the educator and the administration, reinforcing the idea of a joint effort.

When looking at synergistic supervision as a whole, one should look beyond the specific focus areas (dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and focus on competence) to the overriding focus on goals to understand that synergistic supervision is an ongoing, systematic process that works to connect growth of the supervisee professionally as well as personally (Janosik et. al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Creamer, 1998). By setting goals, the supervisor is giving structure to the process. Setting short- and long-term goals allows the supervisor to continually check in and note progress while

allowing the supervisee to gain confidence by achieving goals. Secondly, in order for the whole concept of synergistic supervision to be successful, both parties must understand that the process is ongoing and systematic. Supervision meetings should occur at regularly scheduled times and in a place that allows for open and honest communication.

Saunders et al (2000) performed a study in a quantitative manner using the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), to measure if employees perceived that dual focus was an effective element of synergistic supervision. An initial version of the survey was sent to 114 student affairs employees at four institutions with a 60% response rate. To determine validity and reliability, a second round of data collection was administered by mail to student affairs vice presidents to distribute to their staff members. In total, 312 responses were received in this second round of data collection, for a 30% response rate. The 30-item SSS was created from the data within the first data collection. After missing data was eliminated, alpha factoring was conducted and analyzed, which resulted in eight items being removed. The 22 items that make up the SSS have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .94 and a Pearson's r of .91 (Saunders et al, 2000). It was shown that supervisees rely on consistent and frequent supervision meetings with their supervisor. During these meetings, the topics ranged from discussion of performance, career goals and attitude (Saunders et al., 2000). Based on the results of this study it was shown that employees perceived supervision as a time to share both personal and professional thoughts; however, it was found that among the supervisors studied, many did not approach both subject matters. Overall, the study concluded that the synergistic approach was in fact a valid supervision method and generally had positive perceived effects.

The last key point to understand when implementing synergistic supervision is that the whole concept is to aid the supervisee in personal and professional growth; this is referred to as

growth orientation. In their model for using synergistic supervision with graduate students, Petroc and Piercy (2013), point out that by focusing on the growth orientation of the supervisee and being proactive in situations rather than reactive, supervisors build up areas of weakness within the supervisee, raising their confidence level as well as their skill level. Being proactive also encourages the open and honest relationship previously mentioned (p. 5). Combining these elements to varying degrees during the supervision period will create a lasting, positive, growth-filled experience for not only the supervisee but the department as well.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an area of employee behavior that has been heavily researched since the idea of worker productivity began in the early 1900's (Bender, 2009; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Shafritz, Ott, Jang, 2011). James Taylor's concept of scientific management researched the idea of employee productivity (Shafritz, Ott, Jang, 2011). In 1939, one of the first studies on job satisfaction was conducted on 20,000 employees at Western Electric and was published thereafter (Lawler, 1994). From these studies grew the theory that people work for more than just pay. Subsequent research has found links between various aspects of employee benefits and the work itself (Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). In a review of the literature, there was not an agreed-upon measure of job satisfaction; however, Spector's (1997) definition is accepted among researchers. Spector (1997) describes job satisfaction as "simply how people feel about their jobs" (p. 2). He goes on to explain that the degree to which a person likes or dislikes their job is that person's satisfaction level. Since job satisfaction is a personal feeling, job satisfaction when assessed would be an attitudinal value (Schubert-Irastorza and Fabry, 2014; Spector, 1997). Several factors have been found to make up job satisfaction (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito & Morree, 2000; Bender, 2009; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Spector,

1997). These factors, used when measuring how satisfied a person is with their job, have been debated among organizational psychologists, academic researchers, and human resources professionals (Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). Van Sanne et al (2003), acknowledged that although job satisfaction has been studied for more than 40 years with varying instruments, there has not been an overview indicating what instruments measure and how valid and reliable the instruments are. Van Sanne et al (2003) established a meta-analysis of existing job satisfaction tools. Overall, they found 11 factors used frequently within job satisfaction measurement tools that met the reliability and validity criteria. These factors are: “nature of the job, autonomy, growth and development opportunities, financial rewards, promotion opportunities, supervisor, communication, co-worker behavior and relationships, meaningfulness, workload, and work demand (p. 197).

Two major literature reviews were performed to fully understand job satisfaction in higher education and student affairs professionals. Anderson, Guido-DiBrito & Morree (2000) found through a general satisfaction survey that 83% of the U.S. population is generally satisfied with their jobs. The literature was heavy when regarding job satisfaction in business settings; however, the information on administrators and faculty in higher education, specifically student affairs, was lacking (p. 100). It is important to look at job satisfaction in higher education and student affairs, specifically due to the fact that professionals in different settings face different challenges than those employees within the business setting (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito & Morree, 2000). Pressures on institutions to produce more for less and to increase graduation and enrollment rates translates to pressure on employees to extend their already maximum workload and remain flexible in a changing work environment (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito & Morree, 2000). When looking at women higher education administrators, Anderson et al (2000) found

multiple studies (Steward, 1995; Reisser and Zurfluh, 1987) which concluded that satisfaction levels for women were much lower than for their male counterparts. Schonwetter, Bond, and Perry (1993) found that women with Ph.Ds were among the most satisfied and men with Ph.Ds were next most satisfied. Least satisfied were men without Ph.Ds and finally women without Ph.Ds. Significant differences in job satisfaction between the groups implies that the higher a person's education level, the more job satisfaction they will have (Schonwetter, Bond, and Perry, 1993). Austin (1985) found that men were more likely to be committed to the institution, whereas women found more satisfaction being committed to students. Salary and benefits were more important to men, while gaining skill and transferable opportunities were important to women. Bender (2009) conducted a study specifically on job satisfaction within student affairs and found that the fit between the goals of the organization and the goals of the individual affected the individual's perception of their position's importance (p. 554). This is important to note when looking at job satisfaction and synergistic supervision since an element of the technique is a dual focus on personal goals and organizational mission. Bender (2009), also found that participants in her study indicated "either their satisfaction had no impact on performance, or that their satisfaction increased their level of competency" (p. 557). She also found that participants with high satisfaction completed more work, were more willing to stay longer on the job, and had a better relationship with their supervisor (p. 557). Although there is beginning to be more literature on job satisfaction within the student affairs profession, there is no research specifically on synergistic supervision's effect on job satisfaction.

Tull (2004) surveyed 435 student affairs professionals on their job satisfaction in relation to synergistic supervision techniques used and found a significant positive correlation among entry-level professionals. Elements of synergistic supervision such as open communication,

including social support and organizational commitment, were found to positively affect a person's job satisfaction.

In a study focusing on job satisfaction within the division of student affairs, Lombardi (2013), found that out of 844 professionals surveyed, there was a significant connection between environment, specifically the number of hours spent directly with students, and a positive feeling of job satisfaction. This is important to note for two reasons: First, working with students is the foundation of student affairs and, as discussed above, it is a major point of appeal for working in the field. This would suggest that a person enters the field to work with students and if that continues, the person is more satisfied at work. Secondly, understanding how each aspect of the work environment affects an employee's job satisfaction is key. In this case, *environment* was considered where an employee spent their time, along with the tone of the environment the supervisor sets and maintains. Elements of synergistic supervision -- open communication, constructive feedback, and focusing on goals -- are shown to create a positive environment (Janosik et. al, 2003; Lombardi, 2013; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Tull, 2004; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Summary

The effects of positive supervision techniques must be studied in order to educate key stakeholders within student affairs divisions on the importance of supervision of employees. With proper training in and focus on supervision, it is likely that employee morale, employee retention rates within departments, and overall employee job performance will improve (Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Shupp & Arminio, 2012).

Significant research has been done on abusive supervision and its effects on the employee; however, there is a gap in literature focusing on the effects of positive supervision

techniques on employees. Specifically, there is a gap in identifying the precise supervision technique used: synergistic, laissez faire, authoritarian, or companionable. Studies show that supervision is important to employees; however, follow-up studies have not been done on which types of supervision are beneficial and what divisions could do to provide better supervision for their employees (Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Shupp & Arminio, 2012; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

The findings of this study could highlight a need to train employees in a specific supervision technique, which would result in a more positive morale within the division of student affairs; the improved morale would then be passed down to students in the form of a more positive experience. Winston & Creamer (1997) found that when more time was spent on a staffing model for each department, the employees felt knowledgeable and confident in their positions. Thus, if leaders of the department spend more time grooming the professional, teaching them the best practices within the student affairs profession, the benefit will transfer down to the student in the form of a better experience. Researchers have found that when an employee is content, they will be more willing to perform on a higher level. For example, Oldham and Cummings (1996) found that if an employee's job were complex enough to challenge them while they were receiving appropriate supervisor support, they would perform at a higher level and have lower intentions to quit (Oldham and Cummings, 1996). They also found that employees were most creative and excited about their work when they had a supportive and non-controlling supervisor. Students are likely to experience service satisfaction if the professional helping them is willing to go above and beyond the norm to provide the answer or service they are requesting. This would then have an impact on the productivity of the division and the institution as a whole. For example, based on the quality of

supervisor/supervisee relationship, all members of the team will communicate and work more effectively as a whole, resulting in a higher productivity level and potentially fewer turnovers within the positions. With less turnover, employees can continue to build their knowledge and skill levels and enhance the experience for the student (Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Saunders, et al., 2000; Shupp & Arminio, 2013). Shupp and Arminio (2012) conducted a research study inquiring how synergistic supervision was perceived to affect retention among entry-level student affairs professionals. Within their study they found that entry-level professionals were more likely to be satisfied professionally if their supervisors were accessible and had meaningful interactions with them (Shupp & Arminio, 2013).

Saunders et al (2000) performed a similar study in a quantitative manner using the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) to measure if employees perceived dual focus, an element in synergistic supervision, effective or not. It was found the supervisees rely on frequent meetings with their supervisor and furthermore, that the synergistic approach was in fact a valid supervision method and generally had positive perceived effects.

A review by Maughan and Ball (1999) looked at a synergistic curriculum for high performance in the workplace. The commonality between their proposed synergistic curriculum and the synergistic supervision technique is the amount of effort and attention given to open and honest communication.

To understand the effects of supervision on employees' job satisfaction within the division of student affairs, it is important to understand the history of student affairs and the history of supervision. Within this chapter, the Student Affairs profession was defined, and history was given. The definition of supervision was explained, particularly focusing on supervision within the student affairs division. One specific supervision technique, synergistic

supervision, was focused on. After discussing synergistic supervision, job satisfaction was defined and explored. The Human Resource theory, specifically Theory X and Theory Y, was examined to better understand the relationship between an employee and an employer. Lastly, in order to bring reason to literature and research discussed within the chapter, the potential significance of the study was explained.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methods and procedures used to understand the relationship between synergistic supervision techniques and employee job satisfaction in divisions of student affairs.

This study will help direct supervisors create a better relationship with employees so that student affairs divisions can have better training on supervision, better employee retention rates, and highly motivated employees. Having motivated employees would then transfer directly into providing better service to students. This study could also advise what should be taught in a higher education degree program. As indicated in Chapter Two, there are few training programs currently devoted to supervision. Along these same lines, the topic of supervision is not specifically addressed within the master's curriculum. By adding instruction on the synergistic supervision technique, programs could be better preparing their students to enter the workforce.

The following research question guided this study: Is there a relationship between the use of the synergistic supervision technique (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort and focus on competencies) and the level of a person's job satisfaction when controlling for demographic information?

It was hypothesized that if specific synergistic techniques are used, participants' level of job satisfaction would be higher. For this study, all four aspects of synergistic supervision -- dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focusing on competencies -- will be studied.

Design

For this study I used a survey to gather data to examine the relationship between synergistic supervision and job satisfaction within divisions of student affairs. According to Fowler (2009), survey research is used to generalize a population and gather statistics about a particular population by asking questions. In using a survey approach, I was able to access a large population and receive a quick response rate (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, I used an electronic survey sent via email to participants. Sue and Ritter (2012) explained that using an online survey is useful when your population is large and spread out geographically. They also explained that online surveys lend themselves to a quicker turnaround, which was helpful to the completion of this study. Due to the fact that computerized programs and surveys can be constructed to require participants to answer one question before moving onto the next question, using an electronic survey was beneficial to maintain consistency with responses (Fowler, 2009).

Population

In this study, current student affairs professionals from public, private, and community colleges were surveyed. The selection process for participants was intentional. The field of student affairs is continually changing and growing. This means that student affairs professionals work at a variety of institutions. As institutions varied in size and mission, their differences were reflected in to their divisions of student affairs. This study invited participation from universities with large, established divisions as well as from younger, smaller divisions. The population was intentionally large in order to better grasp the concept of supervision on a large scale. The division of student affairs has expanded greatly from when it was first developed. Thus, participants for this study included traditional student affairs professionals. Participants were individuals whose main role in their daily position was to work directly with

students by providing support and educational initiatives or to direct departments that directly serve students. Participants are graduate students, full-time entry-level employees, full-time mid-level professionals and full-time senior staff members. Participants' understanding of supervision varied based on experience; however, all participants had or were in the process of receiving educational training on traditional supervision within the field.

Due to the fact that the chosen institutions vary in size and location across the United States, there is a diverse makeup of professionals within the division varying by age, race, length of time in the field, etc. This study gathered demographic information on age, race, gender, length of time in the field of student affairs, years of supervision experience, and length of time with their current supervisor. The gender question is all-inclusive (male, female, and transgender/gender non-conforming). Participants ranged in age from 20 to over 60. Although gender and race were hypothesized to correlate with the use of synergistic supervision or the intent for turnover, previous studies conducted within the student affairs profession did not find such correlations (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Tull, 2004). However, Bond and Lehmann, (2018) conducted a study researching prejudice and racial matches with supervisors/supervisees at law firms. It was found that a black employee would work for lower wages if employed at a black-owned firm rather than earning more at a white firm due to the fear of prejudice and mistreatment at white-owned firms. Bond and Lehmann also found that the length of time at the firm increased when the race of the supervisor and supervisee matched.

Student affairs vice presidents of each institution were contacted first to gain access to professionals within their divisions. At the request of the researcher, the vice presidents then emailed their employees directly. The responses were collected through Qualtrics, an online platform to which only the researcher had access. Due to the fact that this survey is asking

questions about supervisor relationship, the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey is important. The responses were kept anonymous and could not be tracked back to the individual or institution. Professionals within each division vary in age, experience level, and length of time with the current institution.

Demographics among participants varied: 116 identified as female, 32 identified as male, and 3 identified as transgender or gender non-conforming; 130 identified as white, 12 identified as black/African American, 8 as Hispanic or Latino, 1 as Asian/Pacific Islander. Length of time working in student affairs included 46 participants for 0-5 years, 38 for 5-10 years, and 67 for more than 10 years. As for supervising experience, 8 participants had less than 1 year, 53 had 1-5 years, 41 had 5-10 years, and 42 had more than 10 years. Length of time with their current supervisor included 44 for less than 1 year, 88 for 1-5 years, and 19 for 5-10 years. Table 2 shows the demographic breakdown of the participants.

Table 2
Survey Demographic Information

Demographic Indicator	# of participants
Gender	
Male	32
Female	116
Transgender/GNC	3
Race	
White	130
Hispanic or Latino	8
Black or African American	12
Native American or American Indian	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1
Other	0
Age (in years)	

20-30	43
30-40	67
40-50	35
50+	6
Length of Time in Profession	
0-5 years	46
5-10 years	38
10+	67
Time with Current Supervisor	
Less than 1 year	44
1-5 years	88
5-10 years	19
Years of Supervision Experience	
Less than 1 year	10
1-5 years	55
5-10 years	43
10+	43
Position in Profession	
Graduate Student	6
Full-time entry-level employee	28
Full-time mid-level professional	90
Full-time senior staff member	27
Institution Type	
Public	137
Private	10
Community College	4

Note: (n = 151)

Instrumentation, Reliability, and Validity

An electronic survey was emailed to student affairs vice presidents at 51 flagship institutions. There was direct response from three institutions: two were willing to send out the survey and one was not. The lack of positive response from the VPs might have been because the survey was received at the start of the school year. The link to the survey was shared on multiple student affair social media discussion boards, including: Student Affairs Professionals, Residence Life Professionals, ASCA Women of Student Conduct, Cardinals Taking on Higher Education, Chippewa Student Affairs Alum, Michigan Housing & Dining Officers Association, Student Affairs Moms, and LinkedIn. The survey consisted of five main parts, four of which correspond to the components of the independent variable, synergistic supervision (dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and focus on competence). The fifth section of the survey focused on the dependent variable, job satisfaction.

Synergistic supervision detailed by Winston and Creamer (1997) served as the definition of effective supervision in student affairs. Survey questions for the first four sections were created by using a combination of the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) created and tested by Saunders, Cooper, Winston, and Chernow (2000) and the Staffing Survey created by Winston and Creamer (1997). The SSS “measures the extent to which staff perceive that their supervisor focuses on the twin areas of advancement of the institutional mission and goals and the personal and professional advancement of the individual staff members” (Saunders et al., p.181, 2000). The Staffing Survey was developed by Winston and Creamer (1997) to provide more information about what effective staffing practices in student affairs should look like.

The SSS consists of 22 questions however, only 13 were used in this survey. The Staffing Survey focuses on the entire staffing process which includes demographic information, approaches to supervision, job satisfaction, and staff development. For this study, survey

questions that focused on supervision and job functions were analyzed and a total of 14 questions were chosen. Questions for this study were chosen with the focus on the direct contact and relationship between supervisor and supervisee within the professional setting. Due to the fact the two surveys were similar in purpose, it was necessary to narrow down the questions asked due in order to avoid duplication. Using 13 questions from the SSS and 14 questions from the Staffing Survey, within the supervision portion of the survey, there were 27 questions total.

To determine internal consistency reliability in the SSS, Saunders et al. (2000), calculated a Cronbach's alpha of .94 for the entire scale. Due to the fact the survey questions were gathered from two surveys and combined, a new Cronbach's alpha was found for each section of questions. The new Cronbach's alpha for the synergistic supervision sections are as follows: dual focus .86, joint effort .89, two-way communication .72 and focus on competence .86.

Winston and Creamer's (1997) staffing survey was created to investigate affairs professionals ranging from vice presidents to entry level professionals working at each institution type and size across the united states in order to collect comprehensive information about staffing practices within student affairs. Within their study, a sample of 500 institutions were surveyed using three different instruments. Originally, one survey was created for vice presidents and one was for other student affairs professionals, however due to the size of the questionnaire, it was split to make two questionnaires' that were randomly assigned to participants. Although these instruments and results are cited and considered reliable, Cronbach alphas were not discussed or published.

The fifth section of the survey focused on job satisfaction. Van Sanne et al (2003) established a meta-analysis of existing job satisfaction tools. The study looked at journal articles spanning 14 years (1988-2001) not including dissertation studies. Once the studies were

identified, the instruments were assessed for psychometric quality based on their Cronbach's alpha; Pearson correlation and reliability were noted by using the internal consistency as well as test/retest. The validity was assessed by the convergent and content validity. This led to 29 instruments that met the basic qualifications and was narrowed down to seven that were found to meet the psychometric quality of reliability and construct validity. Overall, 11 factors were found to be used frequently within job satisfaction measurement tools that met the reliability and validity criteria. These factors are: "nature of the job, autonomy, growth and development opportunities, financial rewards, promotion opportunities, supervisor, communication, co-worker behavior and relationships, meaningfulness, workload, and work demands (p. 197). These 11 factors were used to create a survey to measure participant job satisfaction. To ensure reliability and variability, a Cronbach's alpha of .82 was found for the job satisfaction section of the survey.

Data Collection

For this study an electronic survey was created using the online survey tool Qualtrics, which is free of charge for enrolled students. An email detailing the study, copy of IRB approval, as well as a link to the survey was emailed to each vice president of student affairs at the chosen 51 institutions.

The vice presidents were asked to reply to with their interest (or non-interest) and confirm with me when they sent out the email requesting their student affairs employees to participate in the survey. After one week, if a response was not received from a VP, a reminder email was sent, following up on the first request of survey distribution. According to Sue and Ritter (2007), sending follow-up emails to remind participants to complete the survey is a good way to increase participant response rate. After the link to the survey was emailed to

participants, they were given two weeks to complete the survey. Survey participants did not enter any identifying information while completing the survey, thereby keeping identities anonymous

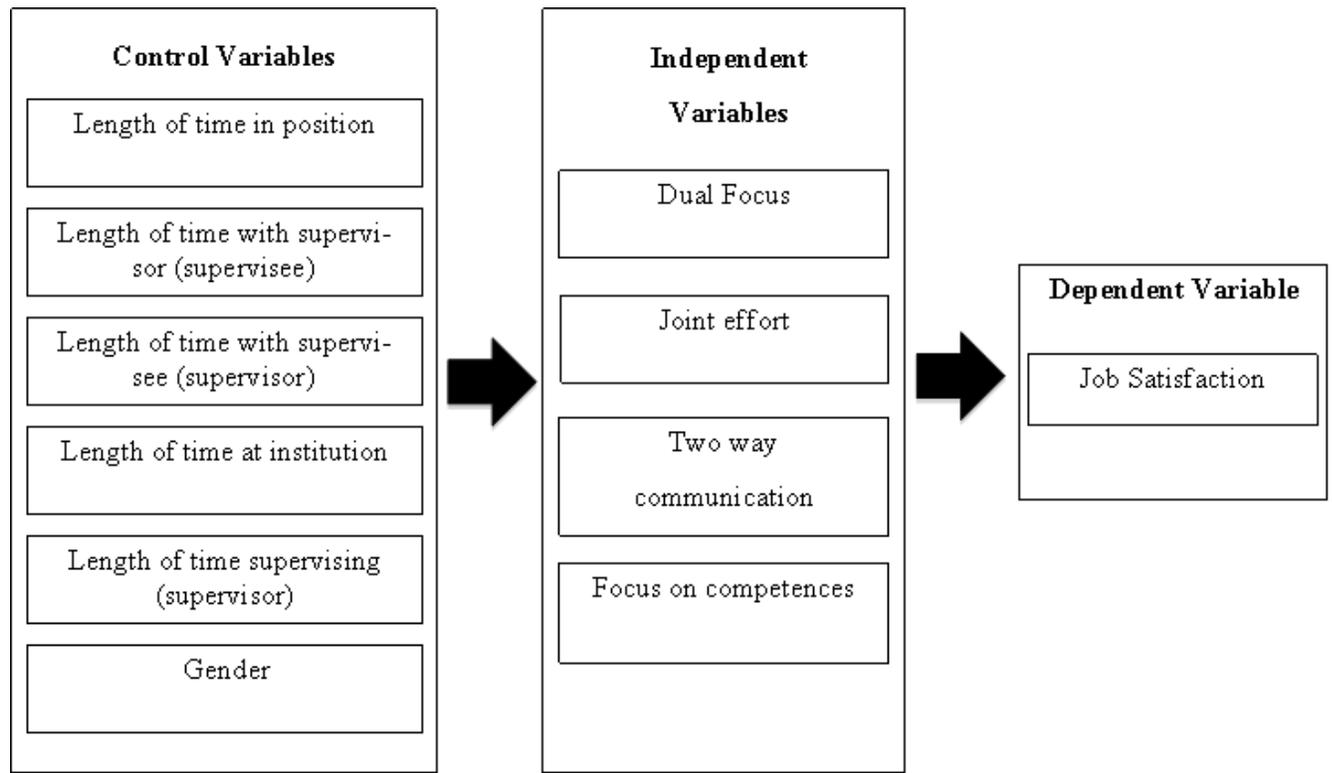
Three institutions provided direct response: Two were willing to send out the survey and one was not. The low response rate was attributed to the timing of the survey at the start of the school year. The link to the survey was shared on multiple student affair social media discussion boards, including: Student Affairs Professionals, Residence Life Professionals, ASCA Women of Student Conduct, Cardinals Taking on Higher Education, Chippewa Student Affairs Alum, Michigan Housing & Dining Officers Association, Student Affairs Moms, and LinkedIn.

Conceptual Framework

The four independent variables of the study are the four elements of synergistic supervision (dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and focus on competencies). Winston and Creamer created the term *synergistic* as a construct to describe supervision of staff members. The difference between synergistic supervision and other techniques is that synergistic supervision is a group process, which means the employer (the supervisor) and the employee (supervisee) work together to achieve goals of the organization at the same time as achieving goals of the individual. This differs from previous supervision approaches, which tend to focus specifically on performance appraisal and typically have more of a reprimanding dynamic (Winston and Creamer, 1997).

The Dependent Variable for this study is job satisfaction of the employee. The most widely accepted definition of job satisfaction was created and refined by Spector (1997), who defines job satisfaction as how people feel about their job as measured in a person's attitude (Schubert-Irastorza and Fabry, 2014).

As discussed in Chapter Two, many factors such as gender, length of time in the field and length of time with a supervisor can affect the relationship between a supervisor and supervisee (Janosik et al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1998). For this study, I created questions focused mainly on demographic information that would control for those different factors. Figure 1. displays the conceptual model for this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Data Analysis

Completed surveys were downloaded from the web-based reporting tool Qualtrics and imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualtrics is a survey platform created to gather data from and manage success of organizations (www.Qualtrics.com). SPSS was created in 1968 as a way to analyze, categorize and edit many types of data derived from various sources (Muijs, 2011).

A multiple linear regression was run on the data to determine how well the independent variables (elements of synergistic supervision) predict the outcome on the dependent variable (job satisfaction). An R Square value was calculated to ascertain how much of the variance in job satisfaction could be explained by the synergistic model. Next, the betas were standardized to understand the effect size of each of the variables. It is important to understand which variable

have the strongest effect (beta closest to 1). When running the regression, the number of residuals was noted in order to understand the linear relationship between the variables. The variables were also checked for collinearity by understanding the amount of tolerance in a variable. Muijs (2011) explains that if a variable has a value close to 1, the other variables do not explain the variance within that variable. Therefore, having tolerance close to 1 is a good indication that the variables do not explain each other.

Limitations and Delimitations

A limitation of the study is that the survey was self-administered; therefore, outside factors could have affected how the participant answered the questions. Lastly, because this study only analyzed commonalities not causalities between the variables, the research would more likely predict an outcome of the use of synergistic supervision but not determine a cause.

There are two main delimitations to this study. First, the population studied was a sample of three types of institutions; public, private, and community colleges. The populations of student affairs professionals vary at each type of institution. The definition of student affairs will also differ depending on the population of student. These differences inject some inconsistency. Additionally, the findings might not apply to divisions not within the historical definition of student affairs.

The second delimitation to this study is the narrowness of the topic. Synergistic supervision is not commonly known within the field, let alone outside the realm of higher education. Although supervision is thought to be an important topic within the field, little time is devoted to it during training sessions. Winston & Creamer (1997) created a study to learn about the staffing practices, including supervision techniques, of student affairs professionals. It was found that only half the participants had received training in how to supervise fellow staff

members, and the majority of the training was received while the employee completed their graduate work rather than at their current institution. Focusing only on synergistic supervision could limit the audience to those who have prior knowledge of the technique.

Summary

This chapter explained the methodology and techniques used to analyze the relationship (if any) between synergistic supervision techniques and employee job satisfaction. Within this chapter instrumentation, population, data collection, and analysis were discussed. Limitations and delimitations were also discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the effects (if any) that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This chapter will discuss the results of a survey given to student affairs professionals within the timeframe of September 1, 2018, and September 15, 2018. This chapter is focused around the main research question guiding the study: Is there a relationship between the use of synergistic supervision techniques (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focus on competencies) and the level of a person's job satisfaction, when controlling for demographic information? This chapter will provide: a summary of demographic information regarding the population surveyed; a discussion of the assumptions of the analytical model; an explanation of the descriptive statistics for each variable within the model; an overall analysis of the model; and an analysis for the main research question.

Summary of Demographic Information

The overall sample that participated in this study consisted of 169 student affairs professionals from 45 public institutions, seven private and three community colleges. Initially, three institutions responded out of the 51 contacted over a two-week period. Within this period, two reminders were sent requesting participation. This created a response rate of less than 1%. Due to the low response rate, the survey was posted for five days on eight public student affairs discussion boards with the potential to reach more than 20,000 student affairs professionals across the country. This posting yielded 151 completed surveys out of the 169 that were initiated. Out of the completed surveys, 137 respondents were working at public institutions, 10 respondents were from private institutions, and four respondents were from

community colleges. The decision was made to delete any response that was not fully completed because the study only included four independent variables, and the 151 responses produced enough data to analyze.

Discussion of Assumptions

A multilinear regression (MLR) was run to understand if synergistic supervision techniques (dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and focus on competencies) had an effect on student affairs employee job satisfaction while controlling for demographic items (gender, race, age, length of time in profession, time with current supervisor, years of supervision experience, and position in profession). See Figure 1 in Chapter Three for a visual understanding of the conceptual model.

The assumptions for an MLR were assessed through a total of six tests run on the model. There was an independence of residuals by finding a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.93. The partial regression scatter plots and a normal p-plot of the standardized residual demonstrated a linear relationship between the scaled dependent variable and each of the scaled independent variables, as well as the dependent variable and the collective scaled independent variables. All tolerance values were less than .1, all VIF values were greater than 10 and all correlation values were .7 or lower, which indicated no issues of collinearity. Casewise diagnostics were run to show that there were no studentized residuals greater than ± 3 standard deviations, indicating that there were no outliers. All leverage points were analyzed and were less than .2, indicating a safe range with the exception of one that was .29, rising just above the safe range but still within the usable value. All Cook Distances fell below 1, indicating no further investigation was required. Lastly, normality was confirmed by a Normal Q-Q plot of the studentized residuals. The above-named assumption tests revealed that the model met all of the assumptions of an MLR.

Descriptive Statistics

When participants began the survey, they were asked to input their demographic information. The demographics collected of participant age, race, and gender align with information requested by researchers of previous studies. This information is presented below in Table 3. In this study, more females completed the survey than males or transgender individuals (116 to 32 and 3). However, it has been found that the profession of student affairs is often female-dominated (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Almost half of respondents have been in the field for 10 or more years. Yet, the majority have been with their supervisor between one and five years. This can be explained by the transient nature of the profession. Many professionals will move to different institutions and positions until reaching the level of senior administration (Barham & Winston, 2006; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Table 3

Summary of Demographic Information

Race most identified with	# of Participants	%
White	130	86.70%
Hispanic or Latino	8	5.20%
Black or African American	12	7.90%
Native American or American Indian	0	0.00%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.60%
Other	0	0.00%
Gender most identified with	# of Participants	%
Male	32	21.20%
Female	116	76.80%
Transgender/Gender Non-conforming	3	1.90%
Length of Time in Field (in yrs.)	# of Participants	%

0-5	46	30.00%
5-10	38	25.17%
10+	67	44.37%
Length of Time With Current Supervisor (in yrs.)	# of Participants	%
> 1 year	44	29.13%
1-5	88	58.28%
5-10	19	12.58%

Note: (n=151)

All descriptive statistics related with the MLR model can be found below in table

4. Standard Deviations for each variable are similar, indicating normal variance. All variable characteristics will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Analytical Model

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Dependent Variable:			
Job Satisfaction	37.9	7.45	151
Independent Variables:			
Dual Focus	20.56	5.60	151
Joint Effort	26.24	5.97	151
Two-way Communication	22.62	4.00	151
Focus on Competencies	23.23	6.26	151

Note: Descriptive statistics for analytical model. Includes all variables.

A multiple linear regression (MLR) was run to predict job satisfaction from the use of synergistic supervision techniques, controlling for demographic variables. The MLR model significantly predicted job satisfaction, $R^2 = .621$, $F(4, 139) = 48.794$, $p < .001$; adjusted R^2 of

.591. All variables were found to be significantly significant, $P < .05$. See Table 5 below for a full report of findings.

Table 5

Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Job Satisfaction in Student Affairs Professionals When Synergistic Supervision Techniques Are Used.

Variable	Job Satisfaction			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	β	B	β
Position	.64	.06	1.1	.11
Race	.45	.04	.24	.02
Gender	.99	.06	1.38	.08
Age	-2.6*	-.28*	-1.30	-.14
Length of Time Supervising	-.91	-.11	-.01	-.00
Length of Time with Current Supervisor	.07	.01	.13	.01
Length of Time in SA	2.9*	.33*	1.80*	.21*
Dual Focused			.292*	.219*
Joint Effort			.326*	.261*
Two-Way Communication			.327*	.175*
Focus On Competencies			.258*	.217*
R ²	.088		.621**	
F	1.967		20.669**	
ΔR^2	.088		.533**	
ΔF	1.967		48.794**	

Note. $N=151$. * $<.05$, ** $<.001$

Analysis of Main Research Question

Research Question: Is there a relationship between the use of synergistic supervision techniques (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focus on competencies) and the level of a person's job satisfaction when controlling for demographic information?

A multiple linear regression was run to understand if the use of synergistic supervision techniques (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focus on competencies) would positively predict job satisfaction. An R^2 of .62 was found, indicating that components of synergistic supervision explain 62% of an individual's job satisfaction. With a $p < .000$, this model is shown to be statistically significant. When looking at the analysis before controlling for demographic information, the model had an R^2 value of .008. Within the variables it was found that the component of joint effort would strongly predict job satisfaction, with a Pearson's Correlation of .718. It was also found that between the four independent variables, joint effort, and two-way communication were strongly correlated, with a value of .76.

Summary

The intent of this study was to understand if the techniques of synergistic supervision (dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, and focus on competencies) had an impact on student affairs employee job satisfaction. The overall population that participated in this study consisted of 169 student affairs professionals, with the majority representing public institutions. Due to the low response rate from vice presidents, the survey was posted for five days on eight public student affairs discussion boards with the potential to reach more than 20,000 student affairs professionals across the country. This posting yielded 151 completed surveys out of the 169 that were initiated. A summary of the demographic information was presented, showing that 76% of respondents were female and more than 80% identified as

white. A multilinear regression was the chosen analysis and met all assumptions. After running the analysis, it was found that the components of synergistic supervision could explain 60% of an employee's job satisfaction and that the model was statistically significant.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Statement of the Problem and Purpose

As students enter college, it is important that they are supported holistically in all areas of growth. For many students, attending college might be the first time away from home with the ability to make choices and statements away and different from their parents. Student affairs administrators play an important role in college student learning outcomes; therefore, it is critical to understand how to support the student affairs administrator. While being a part of a helping profession can be very rewarding, these professions also tend to experience high levels of turnover because of burnout (Van den Broeck et al, 2017). When working with students who are going through challenging developmental times, a staff person can easily become emotionally invested and overwhelmed. The emotionally taxing and round-the-clock nature of the work can lead to fatigue, stress, and burnout. Furthermore, research indicates that staff members at higher education institutions often feel that they are not paid what they are worth (Bender, 2009; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Shupp and Arminio, 2012; Winston, Creamer, Miller & Associates, 2001). With the high potential for burnout, as well as the perceived lack of financial support in many cases, it becomes critical to provide systems of support and encouragement for staff members in student affairs. Satisfaction with one's supervisor has consistently been shown to be important to employees. Indeed, literature on employee turnover indicates that those who report being satisfied with their supervisor also are less likely to leave (Bender, 2009; Shupp and Arminio, 2012). Despite this, however, within student affairs there are limited trainings devoted to teaching an employee how to supervise (Hall-Jones, 2011; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Furthermore, there are limited opportunities for growth within the area of supervision.

Currently, there is a limited amount of literature on outcomes of using specific

supervision techniques within the division of student affairs, and an even smaller amount on synergistic supervision (Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Saunders, Cooper, Winston and Chernow, 2000; Shupp & Arminio, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to discover the effects (if any) that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This study will show the importance of defining and using synergistic supervision (a specific positive supervision technique) with student affairs employees. The main research question guiding this inquiry was: Is there a relationship between the use of synergistic supervision techniques (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focus on competencies) and the level of a person's job satisfaction when controlling for demographic information?

Findings from Research Question:

A multilinear regression was analyzed to understand the main research question, which asked if there is a relationship between the use of synergistic supervision techniques [a1] (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort and focus on competencies) and the level of a person's job satisfaction when controlling for demographic information. The analysis indicated that all together, the components of synergistic supervision significantly explains 62% of an individual's job satisfaction ($R^2 = .62$, $F(4,139) = 48.79$, $p < .001$; adjusted $R^2 = .59$). This result is consistent with the literature, as Tull, 2006, Janosik et. al, 2003, and Winston & Creamer, 1997, also found synergistic supervision to positively predict job satisfaction. The literature review and results of this study can add to the profession, specifically in the area of supervision within divisions of student affairs. Key stakeholders within the divisions could be informed from the results from this study in three main areas: 1) increasing the focus on supervision, specifically by creating training in synergistic supervision for all supervisors in the division, 2) creating and

supporting professional development opportunities centered around supervision, and 3) evaluating the current orientation process for newly hired employees.

In the current study, each element of synergistic supervision positively predicted job satisfaction; therefore, putting time, energy and resources into training would create more satisfied employees. As discussed in Chapter Two, more highly satisfied employees are more productive and will stay in positions longer (Shupp & Arminio, 2012). Also stated in Chapter Two, environment is likewise connected to job satisfaction; consequently, when a supervisor provides synergistic supervision it creates a positive environment in which supervisees are empowered to learn and grow while helping students to the best of their ability (Janosik et. al, 2003; Lombardi, 2013; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Tull, 2004; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Overall, this environment may encourage professionals, particularly young professionals, to stay in their position or at the institution longer. That would then lessen the turnover rate within the division, which would provide consistency for students and provide great service to students, which is the ultimate goal in the field (Janosik et al., 2003; Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Saunders, et al., 2000; Shupp & Arminio, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Based on the findings from this study and the review of the literature, the field of student affairs would benefit from creation of a training module/program on the synergistic supervision technique for stakeholders within the division of student affairs. This model would be centered around Winston & Creamer's (1997) staffing practices and the framework for this study. This would inform practice from the top down within the division, which would also demonstrate the importance of supervision to the employees. After division heads were trained, they then would lead trainings for department directors, who then could train their direct reports. By having each director lead training, they are becoming invested in the technique, which will then encourage

the investment from their reports as well (Janosik et al., 2003; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Saunders, et al., 2000; Shupp & Arminio, 2013). This would require a divisionwide shift of resources, most specifically time and energy of staff, to create an environment dedicated to synergistic supervision.

With an increased emphasis and in-depth trainings on supervision, other professional areas may also improve. For example, within the fourth component of synergistic supervision, the focus is on skills and knowledge needed to perform the job to the highest potential. A department would first need to understand exactly what skills and knowledge were needed, then an intentional training could be developed to ensure those areas were being addressed with all employees but particularly new employees. Moving further into the synergistic supervision model, there are methods for the supervisor to employ that may encourage continuous growth and communication on the job. This would ensure that other areas of positions are improving as well as developing a holistic student affairs professional (Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Shupp & Arminio, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

An example of this supervision-focused training model was used in previous years within the department of Housing and Residence Life at a large research institution in the Midwest. Synergistic supervision was discussed purposefully with all current and potential staff in all stages of employment, from the job interview to the exit interview. It was an expectation that the synergistic supervision technique was used by all supervisors from the director of the department to the graduate staff. This concept was instilled during new employee orientation for full-time staff as well as for student staff members. The department took time during that very busy period to focus on a specific style of supervision, indicating to all employees that supervision was an important element of growth within the department. To understand the

impact of the supervision technique, an evaluation component should be implemented at the end of each year and/or when employees leave the department. These data could then be further be examined at an individual employee level by looking at an individual's professional evaluation in comparison to their thoughts on synergistic supervision. By doing this process, one could see areas of improvement for not only the professional, but the supervisor and the supervision training model as a whole.

Discussion of Variables

In the current study, each of the four components of synergistic supervision (dual focus, two-way communication, joint effort, and focus on competencies) were analyzed as independent variables. Each was found to have an impact on job satisfaction.

Dual Focus

As discussed in the literature review, the dual focus component of synergistic supervision brings a personal element into the supervisee/supervisor relationship by focusing on the supervisee's goals while at the same time explaining and achieving the department's goals. This aspect sets apart supervision in student affairs from supervision in different settings (Janosik et al, 2003; Manne, 2008; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Creamer, 1998). The correlation between job satisfaction and the independent variable, dual focus, was .66, which was the second-highest correlation among job satisfaction and the independent variables. The survey questions within this section specifically focus on goals of the individual both personally and professionally as well as departmental goals. For example, a question on the survey was: My supervisor intentionally focuses on my short and long-term professional development goals (asks questions, provides opportunities, encourages growth). Fifty-five percent of participants answered that their supervisors never, seldom, or sometimes ask them

about their short- and long-term goals. When looking at the questions in the job satisfaction section of the survey that corresponded to this area, asking how satisfied the participant was with growth and development opportunities, 53% responded that they were never satisfied, seldom satisfied, or only sometimes satisfied. This means then that if a supervisor does not ask a supervisee their goals, they cannot provide opportunities to help that individual meet those goals, which could lead to job dissatisfaction for the supervisee. A key aspect in making synergistic supervision successful is for both the supervisor and the supervisee to understand the expectations each have of the other. This can be done by not only sharing goals but also creating statements of expectations. This way both the employee and the supervisor will create an opportunity for setting a clear understanding of expectations of each other and the department/division. Professional expectations should then lead into a conversation of both personal and professional goals of the supervisee and the department/division. If reviewed periodically throughout the year, this will promote continual growth and communication between both the supervisor and supervisee along with providing a sense of connection and belonging to the department (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Which leads to the second implication for practice which is to create and support professional development centered around supervision techniques for student affairs professionals. This should be done both at the department level as well as profession-wide through professional organizations. Based on the outcomes of this study and the literature review, it is recommended that using a specific supervision technique be an expectation that upper level administration have for all employees. This will require not only initial training as discussed above, as well as continual communication and training on supervision. As mentioned in the literature review, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National

Association of Personnel Administrators (NASPA) are the two key organizations that guide the profession. Although leading the profession with best practices, neither organization currently offers continuous and specific training on supervision or a specific supervision technique; however, each element of synergistic supervision can be connected to the foundation of both organizations. The mission of NASPA is “to be the principal source of leadership, scholarship, professional development, and advocacy for student affairs”; the first goal of the strategic plan is to “deliver dynamic, innovative, and timely professional development ... to build the leadership capacities and effectiveness of student affairs professionals” (NASPA, 2014). Similarly, the vision of ACPA is to “lead the student affairs profession and higher education community in providing outreach, advocacy, research, and professional development to foster college student learning” (ACPA, 2015). Keeping this in mind, there are similarities between the mission statements and in characteristics of the four core elements to synergistic supervision. For example, when looking at both the dual focus and the joint effort elements, the supervisor should take time and energy to build a relationship with the supervisee making them feel that they are a valuable part of the department. This will allow the supervisor to focus on the development of the professional by seeking open and honest communication creating a relationship that both parties can have success and learn from mistakes comfortably.

Two-way Communication

The two-way communication element is based on communication and trust between employee and employer. This section of the survey focused on not only direct communication between the supervisee and the supervisor but also within the daily tasks of the position. For example, a survey question was, if the participant spoke up during a departmental meeting, would the supervisor support them? These questions dig more deeply into the relationship

dynamic between the supervisor and supervisee. Within this study, two-way communication had a .61 correlation to a person's job satisfaction. Referring back to the survey questions that connected two-way communication and job satisfaction, 76% of participants feel always or often satisfied with their ability to make decisions and the individual control they have within their position. This is interesting due to the fact that half of the participants have been in the field between 5 and 10 years, with 60% filling mid-level positions. These findings may speak not only to the comfortability of the individual to speak up but also to the confidence level of that professional. The majority of participants are established within the field, have substantial knowledge of student affairs, their positions, and the division for which they work. This scenario was also congruent with the literature, which discussed the importance of environmental fit and job satisfaction. The more comfortable and confident an individual is in their position, the more satisfied they will be. As was also stated in Chapter Two, the more trust a supervisor has in their supervisee, the more confidence and commitment they will have in their position and institution (Janosik et. al, 2003; Lombardi, 2013; Petroc & Piercy, 2013; Tull, 2004; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

This leads to the third and final implication for practice, which is to re-evaluate divisional staffing practices. Although this study focused on supervision, which is only one aspect to the staff model, many of the questions within the survey addressed the other elements within the model. According to Winston and Creamer's (1997) staffing model, the five elements that create good staffing practices which are critical to a division of student affairs are; recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, and performance appraisal. Making these elements best practices within a division would improve the pool of candidates interested in vacant positions, ensure the best suited individuals are hired for positions, would encourage and

grow current employees, and improve the retention of employees (Tull, 2011; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Improving and maintaining a staffing model would improve the environment, the attitude of the professionals, and therefore improve the student experience, which is returning to the purpose of the student affairs profession.

Joint Effort

The independent variable, joint effort, had the highest Pearson's correlation (.718) to job satisfaction. This demonstrates that a supervisor's use of elements of the joint effort component is a high predictor of job satisfaction. Furthermore, when looking at the individual survey questions that make up the joint effort section of the survey, the nature of the questions involves a sense of supervisor trust and an equal partnership. The actions within the joint effort component are the foundation for other elements within the synergistic supervision technique and as discussed in Chapter Two, this is the component that truly makes the model synergistic. Joint effort means that two individuals are working together to achieve multiple outcomes. Each person should be equally invested and involved not only in the relationship but in the overall goals. In this case, it would mean the professional is working toward their own goals while improving the department and division as well as the supervisor working to help the supervisee achieve their professional goals while not losing site of the larger departmental goals.

Another connection between the joint effort element of synergistic supervision and the student affairs profession is that many of the questions asked in this section pertain to the supervisor showing care and concern for the supervisee. In fact, Question 4 states: "My supervisor shows they care about me as a person." This connects with the caring foundation of the profession and furthermore links back to the concept of synergistic supervision being caring and group process by definition (Winston & Creamer, 1997). When a supervisor shows care and

concern for a supervisee, that supervisee is more likely to show investment not only in the department but the university as a whole.

Focus on Competencies

This element of synergistic supervision correlated least to the dependent variable of job satisfaction, with .57. This could be explained by the makeup of this element. As described by Winston & Creamer (1997), the component focus on competencies is centered around skills and understandings within the position, which makes this element more concrete and task-oriented than relationship-focused. This finding is supported by previous studies on job satisfaction, which found that fit and personal relationships have a more significant connection to a person's job satisfaction than do the features of the actual position (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito & Morree, 2000; Bender, 2009; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Spector, 1997).

Correlation of Variables

When looking at all independent variables, joint effort was strongly correlated with two-way communication with .76, as well as dual focus with .77. All three sections (joint effort, two-way communication, and dual focus) of the survey share caring and humanistic qualities. For example, a question in the dual focus section is: "My supervisor willingly listens to what I share, whether it is personal or professional," which is similar to this question found in the two-way communication section: "If I performed poorly in a particular job function area, my supervisor would first show personal support for my overall performance then work to design a strategy for future success." Both can be compared to this question taken from the joint effort section of the survey: "My supervisor shows they care about me as a person." Each question is putting the person first before the position or the division. To demonstrate this scenario, a supervisor must place importance on relationship building rather than on job performance alone. Because the

fourth variable, focus on competencies, is more skill- and knowledge-centered, it is understandable that it correlates least to the other variables, which deal with much more relational concepts.

Recommendations for Future Research

A review of the literature and completion of this study lead to six recommendations for future research.

A major recommendation for future research is to focus on why student affairs divisions are not training employees, particularly entry-level employees, about supervision techniques and, in particular, synergistic supervision. This study supports other findings throughout literature that synergistic supervision can predict job satisfaction and can lead to higher retention rates and a better experience for the student the professional is serving. A future study could focus on chief student affairs officers and key stakeholders within the division to discover why they are not putting more resources toward supervision training of employees.

Within this study, only the demographic information of the supervisee was collected. Future studies could delve further into the relationship between the demographics of the supervisee and the demographics of the supervisor. Specifically, there is a lack of research into the potential impact (if any) on job satisfaction of the race and gender of the supervisee compared to the supervisor.

A third recommendation for future research is to investigate whether there is a connection between graduate school curriculum and the use of synergistic supervision techniques. This could be looked at in two ways. First, in this study, participants were not asked if they had a degree in higher education and or student affairs. This question should be added to assess background knowledge of both the profession and supervision techniques. Another

recommendation would be to specify a graduate program and examine to what extent supervision and specific supervision techniques are covered to understand if there is a connection to execution of supervision in the participant's position.

A fourth recommendation is to focus on the area of employment of the supervisor within the division to better understand if synergistic supervision would work more effectively in a specific area of student affairs. Knowing which department would work most effectively with synergistic supervision could help overall department function. This could be accomplished by asking survey participants questions about their department and daily interactions.

A fifth recommendation is to analyze the supervision techniques used by supervisees who have experienced synergistic supervision. By studying the supervision patterns and techniques of employees who have been exposed to synergistic supervision, a trend of supervising could emerge. This trend could then be examined further. For example, a future question could be: What specific element or elements of synergistic supervision does an individual choose to carry on in their own supervising, and why? The results could explain long-term benefits of synergistic supervision, for which research is lacking.

A final recommendation for future research is to look closer at the specific aspects of job satisfaction and how they individually connect to supervision. In the current study, the commonly used eleven aspects of job satisfaction were scaled together as one variable, however by looking at the aspects individually, one could analyze and connect those individual aspects to important supervision techniques, furthering the understanding of how supervision impacts an employee's job satisfaction.

Final Conclusion

The division of student affairs was created at institutions of higher education to help develop the whole student. Student affairs professionals work to ensure that the student is growing in all areas of personal development as well as academically. Professionals within the field may become personally invested in the position, leading to a high burnout rate within the profession. This led to the current study, which researched the synergistic supervision technique and the effects on job satisfaction of student affairs employees. With an $n=151$ and an $R=.62$ the synergistic supervision technique was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. The findings inform key stakeholders within the profession that focusing on supervision with employees, specifically the synergistic supervision technique, employees would be more satisfied, provide better service to students, and stay in the position longer -- therefore increasing employee retention rates.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Survey Questions**Synergistic Supervision**

For each question, use the scale below to choose the response that most closely reflects your relationship with your current supervisor.

A = Never (almost never)

B = Seldom

C = Sometimes

D = Often

E = Always (almost always)

Dual Focus

1. My supervisor intentionally focuses on my short- and long-term professional development goals. (asks questions, provides opportunities, encourages growth)
2. My supervisor knows one of my short-term personal goals and shows interest.
3. My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution.
4. My supervisor shows interests in promoting my professional or career advancement.
5. My supervisor willingly listens to what I share, whether it is personal or professional.
6. My supervisor and I develop a yearly professional development plan that address my weaknesses or blind spots.

Joint Effort

1. If a conflict arose between my supervisor and myself, my supervisor would assume responsibility if necessary while finding common ground to achieve agreed upon goals.
2. My supervisor shares responsibility for the job with me and provides me with a sense of freedom to work.
3. My supervisory sessions with my supervisor occur regularly and systematically.
4. My supervisor shows they care about me as a person.
5. When problem solving, my supervisor expects staff to present and advocate differing points of view.
6. My supervisor works with me to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information they feel is important.
7. When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.

Two-way Communication

1. My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.
2. When faced with a conflict between an external partner (for example, parent) and staff members, my supervisor supports external partners even if they are wrong.
3. When faced with a conflict between a student staff member, my supervisor takes the student's side.
4. In departmental or divisional settings, my supervisor will allow things that aren't my fault to be blamed on me.
5. My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of their decisions.

6. If I performed poorly in a particular job function area my supervisor would first show personal support for my overall performance then work to design a strategy for future success.

Focus on Competencies

Use the scale above to answer the following question: How often are the topics below discussed in a supervisory session?

(A = Never (almost never), B = Seldom, C = Sometimes, D = Often, E = Always (almost always))

1. Personal skills (time management, public speaking)
2. Interpersonal relationships
3. Work attitudes
4. Professional skills (report writing, program evolutions)
5. Professional ethical issues
6. Values of the profession (human dignity, equity)
7. Skills used in supervision with student staff
8. Positional responsibilities (supervising staff, conduct issues, programs/events)

Job Satisfaction

For each question, use the scale below to choose the response that most closely reflects the level of satisfaction of your current position.

A = Never Satisfied (almost never)

B = Seldom Satisfied

C = Sometimes Satisfied

D = Often Satisfied

E = Always Satisfied (almost always)

Using the scale above please rate how satisfied you are in your current position with each factor listed below:

1. Nature of the job (content of your work/position)
2. Autonomy (ability to make decisions, individual control)
3. Growth and development opportunities (trainings)
4. Financial rewards (pay, benefits, job security)
5. Promotion opportunities (upward mobility)
6. Supervision (behavior and relationship)
7. Communication (internal and external)
8. Co-worker behavior and relationships (behavior and relationships)
9. Meaningfulness (perception of significance and value of positions/job)
10. Workload (time and resources)
11. Work demands (requirements and expectations)

APPENDIX B: INSTRUMENT APPROVAL

From: Adams-Manning, Michelle [Redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 5:41 AM
To: Diane L Cooper <dlcooper@uga.edu>
Subject: Synergistic Supervision

Hello Dr. Cooper

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Michelle Adams-Manning, I am a doctoral student at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. I am currently working in the dissertation phase of my degree. I am studying synergistic supervision and job satisfaction and I have to say, I couldn't be where I am without the work that you and your colleagues have already done. I appreciate your work to uncover more on synergistic supervision and to educate others on the benefits.

I would like to use the Synergistic Supervision Scale to help collect my data for my study. I wanted to reach out to see how I best go about gaining permission to do so.

Thank you in advance for any and all help/guidance. Again, I would not be working on synergistic supervision without the work that you and your colleagues have already done. Thank you again! Please let me know what you might need from me.

Have a good day

Michelle Redacted

810-599-3643

Diane L Cooper <dlcooper@uga.edu>
Thu 9/7/2017, 8:44 AM

We would be happy for you to use the instrument. We do ask that you send us a copy of the final document. OK?

APPENDIX C: COMMUNICATIONS

Request for Participation Email to VP:

Included in this email will be UNF IRB approval, conceptual framework, and PDF version of survey

Hello-

I hope this email finds you well. I am Michelle Adams-Manning, a doctoral student at the University of North Florida. I am in the research phase of writing my dissertation and I'm emailing requesting your help.

I am conducting a study on the effects of the synergistic supervision technique on job satisfaction of student affairs employees. The purpose of this study is to discover the effects (if any) that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This study will show the importance of defining, using and creating trainings on synergistic supervision (a specific positive supervision technique) with student affairs employees.

By studying job satisfaction within the division in connection with supervision, I am hoping to gain insight on the influence the type of supervision received and the effects on overall job satisfaction. This could then impact turnover rates within position as well as overall job productivity.

I am focusing on employees who work at large, state institutions that have a large, established student affairs division. I would like to ask your help in emailing my survey to your student affairs professionals who work with students directly as their main position. This survey will take between 10 and 25 minutes to complete and would be completely voluntary. All responses would be **anonymous** with no way of linking the participant to a specific supervisor, position or division unless disclosed by choice. This research has been approved by the UNF IRB. (approval attached)

If you would be willing to help with my survey, I ask you to reply back with a confirmation email. At that point, I will send you a pre-written email from me as the researcher for you to forward on to your staff. The email will include the link to the survey. From that point, your staff will have two weeks to complete the survey. I will send reminder emails at one week and 24 hours.

Your support is greatly appreciated and could greatly impact my response rate. Research has shown that if an email is sent from a known and respected senior staff member within the division, such as a VP, the response rate is much higher than if it were sent directly from the unknown researcher.

I appreciate your consideration. Please let me know if you would like your division to participate. If you decide that you would not like to help with the survey, please reply back to this message as well. If you have questions, please contact me directly and I would be happy to help in any way possible. Please see my contact information below. Also, if you have further questions about your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact the chair of the UNF Institutional Review Board by calling 904-620-2498 or by emailing irb@unf.edu. __

Thank you,

Michelle R. Adams-Manning
University of North Florida
Doctoral Candidate-Educational Leadership

Redacted

Redacted

Request for Participation Email to Participant:

*Forwarded from VP *

Hello-

Thank you again for helping me complete my research. Please forward this email to your student affairs professionals within your division. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thanks Again,
Michelle Adams-Manning

Redacted

Hello-

I hope this email finds you well. I am Michelle Adams-Manning, a doctoral student at the University of North Florida. I am in the research phase of writing my dissertation and I'm emailing requesting your help.

I am conducting a study on the effects of the synergistic supervision technique on job satisfaction of student affairs employees and would like you to participate by taking a survey. The purpose of this study is to discover the effects (if any) that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This study will show the importance of defining, using and creating trainings on synergistic supervision (a specific positive supervision technique) with student affairs employees.

This survey will take between 10 and 25 minutes to complete and would be completely voluntary. All responses would be **anonymous** with no way of linking the participant to a specific supervisor, position or division unless disclosed by choice. This research has been approved by the UNF IRB. The survey will be open for two weeks from today.

Link to participate: http://unf.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9vG0AqaBOWqPDX7

Although there is no direct benefit to you as a participant, I am hoping to gain insight on the influence the type of supervision received and the effects on overall job satisfaction. This, could then impact turnover rates within position as well as overall job productivity. This survey is **voluntary** and can be stopped at any time once started. Your decision to complete the survey (or not) will not be connected in any way to your current position or division.

I appreciate your consideration in completing the survey. If you have questions, please contact me directly and I would be happy to help in any way possible. Please see my contact information below. Also, if you have further questions about your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact the chair of the UNF Institutional Review Board by calling 904-620-2498 or by emailing irb@unf.edu.

Link to participate: http://unf.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9vG0AqaBOWqPDX7

Thank you,
Michelle R. Adams-Manning
University of North Florida
Doctoral Candidate-EducationaRedacted

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Reminder #1-Request for Participation Email to Participant:

*Forwarded from VP *

Hello-

Thank you again for forwarding my survey to your student affairs professionals. Please forward the reminder email below as the survey will only be active for one more week. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thanks Again,

Michelle Adams-Manning

Redacted

Hello-

I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to send you a quick reminder about a survey that you were recently asked to participate in. There is only **one week left** to complete the survey! If you have already taken the survey, **thank you!** Please disregard this email. For all others, please see the details below.

I am conducting a study on the effects of the synergistic supervision technique on job satisfaction of student affairs employees and would like you to participate by taking a survey. The purpose of this study is to discover the effects (if any) that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This study will show the importance of defining, using and creating trainings on synergistic supervision (a specific positive supervision technique) with student affairs employees.

This survey will take between 10 and 25 minutes to complete and would be completely voluntary. All responses would be **anonymous** with no way of linking the participant to a specific supervisor, position or division unless disclosed by choice. This research has been approved by the UNF IRB. The survey will be active for one more week!

Link to participate: http://unf.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9vG0AqaBOWqPDX7

Although there is no direct benefit to you as a participant, I am hoping to gain insight on the influence the type of supervision received and the effects on overall job satisfaction. This, could then impact turnover rates within position as well as overall job productivity. This survey is **voluntary** and can be stopped at any time once started. Your decision to complete the survey (or not) will not be connected in any way to your current position or division.

I appreciate your consideration in participating. If you have questions, please contact me directly and I would be happy to help in any way possible. Please see my contact information below. Also, if you have further questions about your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact the chair of the UNF Institutional Review Board by calling 904-620-2498 or by emailing irb@unf.edu.

Link to participate: http://unf.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9vG0AqaBOWqPDX7

Thank you,

Michelle R. Adams-Manning

University of North Florida

Doctoral Candidate-Educational Leadership

Redacted Redacted

Redacted

Reminder #2-Request for Participation Email to Participant:

*Forwarded from VP *

Hello-

I hope you are doing well. I appreciate you help in forwarding my messages to your staff in an effort to complete my research. The survey will be closing in 24 hours. Please forward the last reminder blow.

Thanks Again,
Michelle R. Adams-Manning
University of North Florida
Doctoral Candidate-Educational Leadership
Redacted
Redacted

Hello-

I hope this email finds you well. This is a final request to participate in a research study detailed below. **The link to the survey will be closing in 24 hours.** If you have already taken the survey, **thank you!** Please disregard this email. For all others, please see the details below.

I am conducting a study on the effects of the synergistic supervision technique on job satisfaction of student affairs employees and would like you to participate by taking a survey. The purpose of this study is to discover the effects (if any) that synergistic supervision techniques have on student affairs employees' job satisfaction. This study will show the importance of defining, using and creating trainings on synergistic supervision (a specific positive supervision technique) with student affairs employees.

This survey will take between 10 and 25 minutes to complete and would be completely voluntary. All responses would be **anonymous** with no way of linking the participant to a specific supervisor, position or division unless disclosed by choice. This research has been approved by the UNF IRB. The survey will be active for one more week!

Link to participate: http://unf.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9vG0AqaBOWqPDX7

Although there is no direct benefit to you as a participant, I am hoping to gain insight on the influence the type of supervision received and the effects on overall job satisfaction. This, could then impact turnover rates within position as well as overall job productivity. This survey is **voluntary** and can be stopped at any time once started. Your decision to complete the survey (or not) will not be connected in any way to your current position or division.

I appreciate your consideration in participating. If you have questions, please contact me directly and I would be happy to help in any way possible. Please see my contact information below. Also, if you have further questions about your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact the chair of the UNF Institutional Review Board by calling 904-620-2498 or by emailing irb@unf.edu.

Link to participate: http://unf.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9vG0AqaBOWqPDX7

Thank you,
Michelle R. Adams-Manning
University of North Florida
Doctoral Candidate-Educational Leadership
Redacted

Thank you Email

*Forwarded from VP *

Hello-

As you might know, my survey is officially closed, and I have begun the final stages of my research analysis. I have one final thank you email for you to forward to your staff however, I wanted to take a second and thank you for allowing your staff to participate in my study. Without you forwarding messages out, it would not have happened.

Please know that with this research I sincerely hope to add knowledge of the Synergistic Supervision technique to the profession making it a better place to work. Also know, you had a part in making that happen!

Thank you again for your support. Please see email below to be sent to your staff.

Michelle R. Adams-Manning
University of North Florida
Doctoral Candidate-Educational Leadership
Redacted

Hello-

I wanted to take time to say thank you for taking the time to participate in my survey. As a past Residential Life professional, I understand how 10 minutes not spent on your daily tasks can feel like a lifetime.

Please know that with this research I sincerely hope to add knowledge of the Synergistic Supervision technique to the profession making it a better place to work. Also know, you had a part in making that happen!

Thanks again!

Michelle R. Adams-Manning
University of North Florida
Doctoral Candidate-Educational Leadership
Redacted dacted

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