

DISSERTATION

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED LEVEL OF
SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND KEY JOB PERFORMANCE
INDICATORS WITHIN MIDDLELEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED LEVEL OF SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND KEY JOB PERFORMANCE INDICATORS WITHIN MIDDLELEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS

Midlevel administrators working at colleges and universities in the United States and holding membership in NASPA rated the degree to which they perceived their supervisor to exhibit behaviors. They also responded to questions regarding their self-concept and commitment to their supervisors. The relationship between perceived Synergistic Supervision and key performance indicators were examined and indicated that a significant positive correlation existed. Several demographic characteristics were also examined to identify if differences existed related to the perceived level of synergistic supervision received.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is designed to add to the knowledge base and understanding of the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and two key indicators of job performance—supervisor commitment and core self-evaluation. This chapter contains background information on the topic, the statement of the problem, the significance and purpose of the study, and the research questions. A few key definitions as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study will also be contained in this introductory chapter.

Background

Supervision has been identified as an essential management component within the field of student affairs (Winston & Creamer, 1997). In their book, *Improving Staffing Practices in Student Affairs*, Winston and Creamer call supervision the “linchpin of the staffing model” (p.181) as it has a significant impact on an organization and is one of the more difficult activities that student affairs professionals are asked to perform. Supervisors are tasked by their superiors with maintaining order, providing leadership, being accountable and predictable, promoting the values of the organization, and demonstrating fiscal responsibility (Bunker & Wijnberg, 1988). Supervisors must also respond to the needs of their supervisees and balance several competing interests as they make decisions and take action. These decisions and actions have a significant impact on employee retention and satisfaction (Lane, 2010, Randall, 2007; Tull, 2004).

Both the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) have identified possessing effective supervision skills as a core professional competency (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010). Quality supervision can lead to increased efficiencies, cost savings, entrepreneurial ideas, and

greater communications within organizations (Kanter, 2004; Rosser, 2000). Unfortunately, poor supervision leads to severe consequences for some organizations, such as increased turnover rates, greater employee grievances, and decreased productivity (Lovell & Kosten, 2000).

Not only do supervisors play an important role on college campuses, but the supervisory functions that are preformed account for the majority of a supervisor's time at work (Dalton, 2003). Dalton asserts that to be a successful supervisor, one must understand how to effectively manage staff and resources. Unfortunately, many student affairs administrators are not trained in these areas and are unable to identify where their supervision skills were learned (Armino & Creamer, 2001). Many administrators base their supervision behaviors on the supervision they received from past supervisors. Administrators tend to copy and mimic supervisors' behaviors that are viewed as good, and avoid those behaviors that are viewed as bad (Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Given the noted significance of supervision, it is surprising how little research has been conducted on supervision in student affairs; it is also surprising that no formalized training programs on the topic have been established (Dalton, 2003).

The recent research that has been completed on supervision within student affairs has focused on a specific approach of supervision known as synergistic supervision (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Tull, 2004; White, 2008; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Winston and Creamer (1997) created the synergistic supervision approach specifically for student affairs practitioners. Synergistic supervision is defined as a management function intended to promote the achievement of the institution's goals and to enhance the personal capabilities and performance of staff (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Synergistic supervision is an on-going process that requires effort on the part of both the supervisor and supervisee, allowing for supervisors to clarify expectations and provide informal evaluation through open communication and goal setting

(Tull, 2004; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Saunders, Cooper, Winston, and Chernow (2000) created the Synergistic Supervision Scale as a way to measure the extent to which staff members perceive that their supervisor focuses on the two areas of advancement: the institutional mission and goals and the personal and professional goals of individual staff members.

While there has been some valuable work conducted in recent years regarding supervision in student affairs, none of the research has examined the relationship between supervision and performance. This study adds to the small body of research that has focused on the population of midlevel administrators. As the field of student affairs is often associated with the characteristics of synergistic supervision, this study provides important information to student affairs administrators regarding the role of the supervisor. This study adds to the growing amount of research related to supervision and fills a gap in the literature related to the connection between synergistic supervision and performance.

Statement of the Problem

Supervision has been identified as an essential management component and core professional competency that consumes a considerable amount of time for many student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010). Research indicates that supervision has a significant impact on employee retention and satisfaction (Tull, 2004). Additionally, increased job performance has implications for institutions as it has been shown to have a positive impact on many employment-related issues (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Tull, 2004; White, 2008).

Increased job performance is a critical area of focus within higher education institutions. Job performance has been shown to have a positive impact on employee turnover rates, customer satisfaction, and product development (Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Mojza, 2010; Zimmerman &

Darnold, 2009). Colleges and universities spend considerable time and money looking for ways to increase job performance because they recognize that performance matters. Performance evaluations, performance plans, and professional development activities are examples of the efforts organizations make to increase job performance (M. Dougherty, personal communication, October 1, 2013). Unfortunately, there is a significant lack of research related to supervision in higher education and student affairs (Cooper, Saunders, Howell, & Bates, 2001). No research literature has specifically addressed the connection between supervision received and performance within student affairs. It is beneficial to conduct research on supervision and performance to understand the relationship between the two. Core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment are two constructs that have been shown to positively impact job performance in supervisees (Judge, Locke, & Dunham, 1997; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) and should be examined related to the synergistic supervision approach.

While it can be difficult to identify a direct connection between performance and supervision, the use of these constructs may allow for an indirect relationship to be identified. If a relationship is shown, then institutions could focus training and development efforts on supervision practices that are related to improved job performance factors.

Significance of the Study

There is limited research on supervision within the field of student affairs (Cooper et al., 2001). This study is significant as it adds to the limited body of knowledge that currently exists. There are a large number of midlevel administrators on college campuses around the country and a significant amount of time is spent supervising these individuals (Ackerman, 2007).

In recent years, several studies have been conducted regarding synergistic supervision (Randall, 2007; Tull, 2004; White, 2008) and midlevel administrators (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane,

2010). However, there is still an overall lack of research that has examined the relationship between synergistic supervision and job performance factors with midlevel administrators. No research has been conducted that has explored whether a relationship exists between synergistic supervision and key performance indicators such as core self-evaluation or supervisor-related commitment.

This study follows up on the work of Tull (2004), Shupp (2007), Randall (2007), White (2008), Lane (2010), and Hall-Jones (2011) in exploring synergistic supervision. It not only adds to the research literature on this topic, but also begins to shed some light on the connection between synergistic supervision and performance indicators. It opens the door to further research that examines this relationship in greater detail. With a better understanding of this relationship, institutions could use the Synergistic Supervision Scale to assess employee perceptions and take advantage of results to enhance the working environment for all employees.

Midlevel administrators “have the greatest potential of any group of administrators to effect collaboration and change in an institution” (Young, 2007, p. 4). Unfortunately, there has been little training focused on effective supervision. These employees are too great in number and too valuable to be overlooked. Midlevel administrators were selected to be studied as they make up the vast majority of administrative employees on college campuses, and because they serve very important roles related to supervision (Ackerman, 2007).

While supervision remains an important management function, only limited research has been conducted on supervision within the field of student affairs (Carpenter, Torres, & Winston, 2001; Stock-Wark & Javorek, 2003). Cooper, Miller, Saunders, Chernow, and Kulic (1999) recommended rigorous research be conducted to examine the relationships between positive supervision, productivity, longevity in the profession, and organizational effectiveness. Cooper et

al. (2001) believed that supervision will become a more important area of study as the need to retain qualified professionals increases.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship that exists between job performance factors and the perceived level of supervision received by midlevel administrators in student affairs. Specifically, the study examined perceived levels of synergistic supervision received by midlevel administrators and two key job performance factors: core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment. This study enhances the understanding of the perceptions held regarding the supervision received by midlevel administrators and provides insight on ways to proactively improve management functions.

Research Questions

Based on a review of literature from the fields of higher education, student affairs, psychology, and business management, the following research questions were created to accomplish the purpose of the study and direct the data analysis.

- Q1 To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators?
- A. To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
 - B. To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
 - C. To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

- Q2 What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation?
- A. To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
 - B. To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
 - C. To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
- Q3 What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment?
- A. To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
 - B. To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
 - C. To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

Definition of Key Terms

Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO): the individual responsible for the overall direction

and operation of the Student Affairs Division on a campus (NASPA, 2014). The CSAO typically holds the position of vice president and reports directly to the president or chancellor.

Core Self-Evaluation (CSE): the fundamental evaluations individuals have about their capabilities, competence, and self-worth (Judge et al., 1997).

Midlevel Administrators: Individuals with at least five years of experience as a full-time student affairs professional and responsible for the direction and oversight of one or more student affairs functions and supervise one or more professional staff members as a part of their role on campus. (NASPA, 2014). These individuals typically hold the title of director or associate director and report to the CSAO (Ackerman, 2007).

Supervisor-Related Commitment: a measure describing an employee's level of commitment to a supervisor. It contains two dimensions: one that describes identification with the supervisor and another that describes internalization of the same values with the supervisor (Fields, 2002).

Synergistic Supervision: a management function intended to “promote the achievement of the institutional goals and to enhance the personal and professional capabilities of staff” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 42). Characteristics of the synergistic style of supervision include (a) having a *dual focus* on both the organization and the individual; (b) *joint effort* between the supervisee and supervisor; (c) *two-way communications* between the supervisee and supervisor; (d) *concern with competence* in the areas of knowledge, work-related skills, personal and professional skills, and attitudes; (e) *growth orientation* focusing on talents, abilities, and needs of employees; (f) *proactivity* and early identification of problems; (g) *goal-based*; (h) *systematic and on-going* supervisory sessions that are a routine part of one's professional life; and (i) *holistic* view that looks at the whole person (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Delimitations

The delimitation of this study is that only individuals with membership in one higher education organization (NASPA) were invited to participate in the study. Other student affairs midlevel administrators who are not members of this organization were not included in the pool of participants. This sample may not reflect the overall view of midlevel administrators. Those midlevel administrators who belong to NASPA may indicate a greater commitment to the profession and to their own personal development than those who are not members.

Additionally, some midlevel administrators may only be members of the regional NASPA organization, or may be members of an organization that represents a specific field (residence life, career services, student activities, etc.) in place of joining the national NASPA organization.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the Synergistic Supervision Scale instrument used in the study measures perceptions. The perceptions provided by the participants may not be accurate, as the participants may not have provided honest answers when discussing their supervisors due to concerns that their candid answers could have negative consequences. Additionally, as indicated by Saunders et al. (2000), perceptions “do not necessarily mirror reality” (p.191) and that, regardless of the findings, readers cannot assume that high levels of synergistic supervision will lead to increased performance in all cases. Second, the study focused on only one half of the supervisory dyad—the individual being supervised. The researcher asked about the supervisors, but did not ask questions directly to that population. Third, since the survey participants self-identified as midlevel administrators within their NASPA profile, an assumption was made that the individual met the criteria for midlevel administrators outlined earlier in the paper and were actually members of that population.

Finally, the focus of the study was supervision and participants were told this upfront. Therefore, it is possible that those participants who completed the survey might have done so because they have a positive relationship with their supervisor. These skewed representations may have impacted the results.

Researcher Perspective

This topic is one of great importance to me as a significant amount of my time and energy is spent engaged in supervision-related practices. I have a desire to better understand supervision practices to be able to improve and better serve others. Admittedly there is bias towards the synergistic supervision approach as I believe it to be an effective model of supervision and I am currently implementing it in my current supervisory role.

I also believe that the task of supervision is often overlooked and minimized in job descriptions. I feel that one's ability to supervise should be one of the key factors when hiring and promoting staff. I completely agree with Winston and Creamer's (1997) belief that the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision are synonymous with quality supervision. As the literature shows, there are several benefits of this type of supervision and it is critical for student affairs professionals to increase the level of training and development that is dedicated to improving supervision skills.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature related to supervision in higher education, specifically student affairs. The chapter begins by defining supervision within student affairs then provides a review of the research that has been conducted on supervision in student affairs. The role of midlevel administrators and specific experiences of these individuals are also reviewed. Finally, concepts and constructs including organizational commitment, core self-evaluation, synergistic supervision, job performance, and the supervisor-supervisee relationship are examined.

Supervision in Student Affairs

It has also been noted that staff supervision ranks as one of the most important skills needed in student affairs and practitioners will spend a major part of each day performing management duties (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Supervisory activities are said to require a considerable amount of time for most student affairs practitioners (Saunders et al., 2000). Supervision is defined in many ways in the research literature. The following two sections address the various definitions, tasks, functions, and types of supervision in student affairs.

In its simplest form, supervision is viewed as a helping process designed to support staff (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Mills (2000) viewed supervision broadly as a way of accomplishing goals by working through other people. Schuh and Carlisle (1991) defined supervision as the process of one staff member providing another staff member with opportunities, structure, and support. They added that supervision involves relationships in which one person provides leadership, direction, information, motivation, evaluation, and support to one or more persons (Schuh & Carlisle, 1991).

Winston and Creamer (1997) viewed supervision as a management function designed to achieve the institution's goals and enhance the skills and abilities of the staff. Stock-Ward and Javorek (2003) added that supervision implies directing others, watching over their work, and evaluating their performance to ensure that quality services are being provided. According to Saunders et al. (2000), the role of the supervisor is "to figure out how to tap into an employees' potential and enhance motivation and thus, their performance" (p. 182). Rowley and Sherman (2006) added that supervisory management was a collection of general characteristics that included leading others, managing human resources, planning, organizing, evaluating, and providing feedback. More recently, Scheuermann (2011) defined a supervisor in student affairs as "a student services professional who has one or more staff members reporting to him or her and for whose performance the supervisor shares responsibility" (p. 6). McNair (2011) added that supervision involves teaching, coaching, counseling, and advising.

Winston and Creamer (1997) explored the concept of supervision even further by examining the six functional components of supervision: articulate the unit's mission and needs up and down the organization, monitor and manage the work environment, foster individual development of staff, develop teamwork capabilities and resources, promote active problem solving, and coordinate work activities. Arminio and Creamer (2001) also described supervision by discussing the important functions. They believed it involved holding regular meetings, involving staff members in the planning process, utilizing face-to-face time, communicating consistently, and introducing challenges to staff members.

Dalton (2003) described the four primary tasks of supervision as helping employees fulfill the responsibility for which they were hired; helping employees master the specific competencies necessary for success in assigned duties; helping employees understand and cope

with the culture and requirements of the work environment; and, helping employees engage in continual learning, professional development, and personal renewal.

Models of Supervision

To truly understand the role of supervision in student affairs it is important to discuss the types or models of supervision that have been identified in the literature. Many models of supervision are identified, however few are connected to student affairs work. Those models that are most relevant to the work of student affairs and higher education include Winston and Creamer's general approaches to supervision, the Integrated Development Model, the Discrimination Model, and Situational Leadership.

Winston and Creamer (1997) identified four general approaches to supervision in higher education and categorized them as authoritarian, laissez faire, companionable, and synergistic. Authoritarian supervision is based on the belief that the performance of the staff member is ultimately the responsibility of the supervisor and that staff members are undependable and immature and therefore require constant attention. Laissez faire supervision is based on the desire to allow staff members the freedom to accomplish job tasks and responsibilities without much guidance or oversight. Companionable supervision is based on a friendship-like relationship in which the supervisor seeks to be liked and create harmony at all costs. Finally, synergistic supervision is a cooperative effort between the supervisor and staff members to achieve organizational, professional, and personal goals. The synergistic style of supervision will be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Stock-Ward and Javorek (2003) also identified a model of supervision used in student affairs entitled the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM). IDM is a model that is taken from the field of psychology, but whose constructs can easily be applied to student affairs. This model

describes three main development levels of employees and strategies that supervisors can use for working with each. Level one supervisees are usually unfamiliar with responsibilities, dependent on others, easily discouraged, and lack confidence. It is important for supervisors of level one employees to provide close supervision and modeling, direct information, detailed instructions, and specific feedback. Level two supervisees will often shift between autonomy and dependence, which provides a challenging task for a supervisor. The supervisor of level two employees must be prepared with a large portfolio of approaches and a great deal of flexibility. Supervisors must be willing to ask lots of questions, provide a few suggestions, and brainstorm with the supervisee. The level three supervisees are described as independent, collaborative, and collegial. They are further along in their professional development, have increased confidence, and need less guidance. The challenges for supervisors of level three employees include providing appropriate challenge and stimulation for the supervisee and trusting in the skills and abilities of the supervisee (Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003).

Another model of supervision borrowed from the field of psychology is the Discrimination Model, originally created by Janine Bernard in 1979. This model is comprised of three emphases for supervision (intervention, conceptualization, and personalization) and three supervisory roles (teacher, counselor, and consultant; Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). The supervisor responds to the supervisee from one of nine possible ways (three roles by three emphases). The supervisor may take on the role of teacher while focusing on a specific intervention used by the supervisee. Likewise, the supervisor may take on the role of counselor while focusing on the supervisee's conceptualization of the work. It is important for the supervisor to adapt the supervision to appropriately match the needs of the supervisee. To do so,

the supervisor determines the supervisee's ability within an area, and then selects the appropriate role from which to respond (Bernard, 1979).

Similar to the Discrimination Model is the concept of situational leadership. Situational leadership is a practical method of management that looks to manage people, time, and resources in an effective manner (Blanchard, 1987). The model or theory, originally developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, states that instead of using just one style of leadership, successful supervisors should change their style based on the maturity and development of the people they are leading and on the details of the task (Blanchard, 1987). This model requires great flexibility on the part of the supervisor as they are focused on adapting one's practice to best meet the needs of the supervisee (Blanchard, 1987).

Supervision Research

Research shows that supervisors have a significant impact on employee retention and job satisfaction (Lane, 2010; Randall, 2007; Tull, 2004). Lunsford (1984) stated that chief student affairs officers (CSAO) identified staff supervision as the area of expertise most important in their preparation for the position. Lunsford collected data from 147 CSAOs who worked at four-year institutions with enrollment greater than 2,000 students. The study examined the obstacles and challenges that individuals faced on their way to becoming the CSAO at their respective institutions.

Fey and Carpenter (1996) surveyed 177 midlevel student affairs administrators holding membership in the Texas Association of College and University Student Personnel Administration to determine the importance of various skills associated with midlevel college student affairs administration. The findings revealed that midlevel administrators ranked management skills, such as supervision, as the most important skill category for their positions.

Cooper and Miller (1998) examined the nature and characteristics of people who have had a significant impact on the professional development of student affairs practitioners. The study of almost 400 student affairs administrators with membership in NASPA found that 55% of individuals surveyed identified a supervisor as a top personal influence in their career (Cooper & Miller, 1998).

In a working paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research, Lazear, Shaw, and Stanton (2012) collected data from a large service-oriented company to examine the effects of bosses on their workers' productivity. The study found that good supervisors are significantly better than poor supervisors. While this in itself is not surprising, the authors added that replacing a supervisor from the bottom 10% with one from the top 10% was like adding an additional staff member to a team. The authors also added that replacing a bad boss with a good one increased productivity of each subordinate by more than 10%. This increase in output was attributed to the supervisor being able to teach better work methods to the staff members being supervised (Lazear et al., 2012).

Importance and Impact of Supervision

Stock-Ward and Javorek (2003) discussed the need of quality supervision in an article describing ways that developmental psychological supervision literature can be applied to student affairs. The authors noted that supervision is a powerful way to enhance employee personal growth and professional development, and that employees have a strong desire to receive quality supervision. According to Winston and Creamer (1997), "all staff members deserve regular, thoughtful supervision" (p. 212). Winston and Creamer believed that even though supervision changed based on one's experience, time in the position, skill set, and performance, it should always reflect a collaboration between supervisor and supervisee in

meeting the organization's goals while helping the supervisee meet personal and professional goals.

The student affairs profession has recognized that it is critical for practitioners to be skilled in management, administration, and supervision if they are to be successful (NASPA/ACPA Professional Competencies, 2010). Supervision skills are mentioned in the competencies of motivation, coaching, and developing performance plans. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has also recognized the importance of supervision. The CAS Standards frequently note that appropriate supervision should be provided in the completion of many student affairs duties (CAS, 2009).

Not only is supervision an important skill, it can also have a financial impact on an institution. Student affairs' greatest resource is human capital and a large portion of an institution's budget is spent on personnel (Barr, Desler, & Associates, 2000; Hirt & Collins, 2004; Winston & Creamer, 1997). To take full advantage of this resource, it is imperative to provide effective supervision as it can impact staff turnover and increase retention. While staff turnover does provide some benefits, it is easily outweighed by the disadvantages that include recruitment costs, lack of expertise, lost stability, and increased training costs (Johnsrud, Heck, & Roseer, 2000).

Some negative aspects related to supervision were also identified in the literature. It was noted that supervision was often perceived as an insult and viewed as something only important when there were employee problems (Winston & Creamer, 1997). While supervision is a major responsibility of student affairs professionals, most supervisors in student affairs often perform their duties with minimal training in the area of supervision (Dalton, 2003; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003; Woodard & Komives, 1990). In a 2001 qualitative study involving 25 individuals

identified as high quality supervisors, Arminio and Creamer (2001) found that many student affairs professionals do not believe they receive adequate supervision and this lack of adequate supervision was one of the most significant complaints of staff members.

Demographic Factors and Supervision

Demographic characteristics such as gender, length of the supervisory relationship, and geographic area of employment, are important factors to consider when conducting research on supervision as they impact the perceptions that individuals have regarding the supervision that is received. The research findings noted below regarding these demographic factors and their connection to supervision provide rationale for their inclusion in this study.

Gender is an important factor to study as it relates to student affairs and supervision. It has been found that the differences in the gender make-up of a supervisory dyad were related to lower effectiveness and increased role ambiguity (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). Varma and Stroh (2001) studied approximately 60 supervisors in four separate organizations to examine how supervisors rate the performance of subordinates of the same and opposite gender. The authors found that both male and female supervisors rated staff of the opposite gender more favorably than they rated staff of the same gender. They also suggested that organizations should continue to examine this issue and work with supervisors to understand these bias issues.

One might assume the length of the supervisory relationship would have an impact on the perceptions regarding the supervision received. Unfortunately, limited research was found regarding length of supervisory relationships and performance. The research that does exist (George & Jones, 2000; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995) is unclear and only encouraged further investigation to better understand the impact of length of the supervisory relationship on supervisee perceptions.

In their discussion of the factors that influence the student affairs staffing model, Winston and Creamer (1997) identified geographic location as an important factor. They believed that culture as well as regional norms and customs play an important role for supervision. Dungy (2003) discussed that geographic location and type of institution have a significant impact on the work done on college campuses. A historically black college in the southeastern United States is going to present some difference from a tribal college in the Southwest, or a religiously affiliated college in the Northeast. The differences based on the location may even show up in the perceptions related to supervision and it is essential that these be researched to better understand the impact (Dungy, 2003).

Midlevel Administrators in Student Affairs

The role of the midlevel administrator in student affairs is complex and changes from institution to institution (Mills, 1993; Young, 1990). In defining the midlevel position, Young (1990) defined a midlevel manager as “one who manages professional staff and/or one or more student affairs functional areas” (p.10). Two common elements found in midlevel professionals—education and length of time in the field—were identified to help define the position further (Mills, 2000). Mills (2000) went on to state that a midlevel manager in student affairs will often possess a master’s degree in college student personnel and have at least three years of experience working in higher education (Mills, 2000). Rosser and Javinar (2003) defined midlevel managers as support personnel with higher education organizations that report to senior-level administrators; their positions are differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experience. Mills (2009) said that midlevel managers are those who manage people, money, information, and programs and whose work bridges that of the entry-level professional and the senior student affairs officer.

Young (2007) identified three competencies of the midlevel manager. The author believed that midlevel professionals should be able to (a) describe issues, problems, and opportunities inherent in a given student affairs division so that they can properly re-allocate resources and staff toward student learning and development; (b) model communication and collaboration with all levels of internal and external stakeholders; and (c) demonstrate the academic mission of the institution to enhance student learning and development.

Midlevel managers may possess various titles within student affairs—director, associate director, or assistant director. Midlevel managers provide support services, supervise programs, and supervise staff (Mills, 1993). They are responsible for policy implementation and interpretation, relationships with staff, and decision-making. As the title suggests, they are “stuck” in the middle—linking vertical and horizontal levels within the organization. They are concerned with their own professional issues and challenges, while also attending to the professional development needs of those they supervise (Mills, 2000; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Fey and Carpenter (1996) noted that mid-level professionals also report directly to the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) or occupy positions one level directly removed from the CSAO, which presents its own set of challenges.

Midlevel managers comprise the largest administrative group on college campuses and represent the largest segment of membership within the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (Ackerman, 2007). Midlevel professionals have the “greatest potential of any group of administrators to effect collaboration and change in an institution” (Young, 2007, p. 4). This group of administrators provides a strong resource for knowledge creation, breakthrough thinking, and change management (Young, 2007). Rosser (2004) and Young (2007) indicated that midlevel managers exhibit a great deal of professionalism, exist in large

number within student affairs, and have high attrition in the field.

Some literature has shown that midlevel managers can also be difficult to supervise. When staff members have reached a point in their career in which they have no higher aspirations, when employees have lost enthusiasm for their work, or when advancement is limited, supervision is much more difficult (Winston & Creamer, 1997). These midlevel professionals become ineffective and simply “go through the motions.”

As with supervision in student affairs, midlevel managers received little attention in research (Young, 2007). Lovell and Kosten (2000) synthesized 30 years of research related to successful student affairs administration and noted that studies focusing on midlevel managers did not appear until the 1980s and have been limited since that time. The lack of research combined with the importance of their roles and responsibilities suggest that studying and collecting data on midlevel professionals is important, even essential, to the field of student affairs.

Supervisor-Related Commitment

One way to examine an employee’s commitment to an organization is to study their commitment to their direct supervisor. One’s connection to a supervisor often provides useful information regarding the employee’s performance (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996).

Definitions of organizational commitment include an attitude or an orientation that links the identity of the person to the organization, an involvement with a particular organization, a process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become congruent, and the normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational goals (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Organizational commitment has also been characterized as a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on

behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in an organization (Mowday et al., 1979). Meyer and Allen (1997) added that organizational commitment reflects three key themes: commitment that reflects an affective orientation toward the organization, recognition of costs associated with leaving the organization, and moral obligation to remain with an organization.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) described organizational commitment as more than loyalty to an organization, but as an active relationship in which an employee invests in and contributes to the organization. Three motives of organizational commitment have been identified: compliance, identification, and internalization (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Compliance refers to the attitudes and behaviors that are adopted to gain specific rewards. Identification reflects an individual's acceptance of his/her influence to establish and maintain relationships within the organization. Internalization occurs when an individual accepts influence because the attitudes and beliefs that are encouraged are congruent with his/her own values (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991).

Research indicates that organizational commitment can be divided into three components to characterize an employee's commitment. These components, or psychological states, are labeled as affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). *Affective commitment* is an employee's liking for an organization and includes identification with and involvement in the organization. Employees that have high affective commitment stay with an organization because they want to do so (Cohen, 1993). *Normative commitment* refers to an employee feeling obligated to continue with the organization. Employees with strong normative commitment feel that they ought to continue employment as they have a duty to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1997). *Continuance commitment* reflects one's understanding of the costs related to

leaving the organization. Employees that stay with an organization because of a need to do so are said to have high continuance commitment (Fields, 2002).

Considerable research has been done over the last 15 years on the impact of organizational commitment on an organization and it is clear that it can have a significant positive impact (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday et al., 1979; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Organizational commitment influences almost any behavior that is beneficial to the organization, such as satisfaction, attendance, motivation, and staying with the organization (Ricketta, 2002). Employees with higher levels of organizational commitment receive higher performance ratings, stay with the organization longer, and work to make the organization more successful (Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2004). Business management researchers found that motivation and satisfaction were enhanced when an employee's personal needs and values matched the organizational goals (Cropanzano, James, & Citera, 1993).

In a study of student affairs professionals, Boehman (2006) suggested that student affairs organizations should be set up to encourage organizational commitment in the form of increased support, flexible schedules, reflective time at work, and promotion of work-life balance. It has also been suggested that organizations should focus on communications, joint goal setting, and increased interpersonal interaction to build organizational commitment (M. Dougherty, personal communication, October 1, 2013).

Organizational commitment is associated with many desirable outcomes such as increased satisfaction and decreased absenteeism (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979). Research examining organizational commitment and job performance has seen mixed results (Becker et al., 1996). While the research results have varied,

it has been noted that when individual foci and bases of commitment were distinguished, there appeared to be a large association between commitment and performance (Becker et al., 1996). Specifically, factor analysis suggested that both identification and internalization commitment to a supervisor has been shown to be positively related to performance ($r = .16, p < .05$; Becker et al., 1996; Field, 2002).

To further examine employee commitment to a supervisor, Becker et al. (1996) developed the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale. This instrument consists of nine statements regarding one's supervisor and examines two separate dimensions. The first dimension describes identification with a supervisor and another describes internalization of similar values with that supervisor. Responses are obtained using a 7-point Likert-type scale (Fields, 2002).

Core Self-Evaluation

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is an important construct for supervisors to consider. It has been linked to a variety of important outcomes such as job satisfaction, engagement, popularity, and job performance within employees (Chang, Ferris, Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012). CSE refers to a construct composed of the fundamental evaluations individuals have about their capabilities, competence, and self-worth (Judge et al., 1997). This construct has been widely referenced in academic literature and its popularity has grown considerably since its introduction in 1997 (Chang et al., 2012). CSE theory originated with Edith Packer (1985), who believed that fundamental appraisals, identified as core evaluations, affected the assessments of certain situations. Judge et al. (1997) expanded on this concept and argued that core evaluations of self were the most fundamental evaluations that individuals hold and that these appraisals of self impact all other beliefs.

Judge et al. (1997) proposed that CSE is established in traits that adhere to three attributes: evaluation focus, fundamentality, and scope. Evaluation focus refers to the amount a trait involves self-evaluation rather than description. Fundamentality refers to the extent to which traits are central to the self-concept. Scope addresses the breadth and depth of a trait (Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge et al., 1997).

Using these criteria, Judge et al. (1997) identified four dispositional traits to include in CSE. The four traits are self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability (originally titled neuroticism), and locus of control, which was added later. Self-esteem refers to people's general assessment of themselves and has been defined as "the overall value that one places on oneself as a person" (Judge et al., 1997, p. 160). Self-esteem is a broad and fundamental self-evaluation that answers questions regarding one's worth and value. Self-efficacy has been described as an assessment of one's ability to perform in, cope with, and adjust to various situations (Bandura, 1982; Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). Simply stated, self-efficacy is an individual's belief in themselves to be successful. Emotional stability, or low neuroticism, is the ability to feel secure, calm, and confident in various situations. Finally, locus of control is the feeling that one can control a wide assortment of factors in his/her life (Judge & Bono, 2001). It is the belief that desired outcomes result from one's behavior rather than by fate.

Despite the significant amount of research related to core self-evaluation and its importance to supervision, this personality trait composite was not directly measured until the development of the *Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES)* in 2003 (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). In developing the scale, Judge et al. (2003) compared the data collected using their instrument to data collected using four separate instruments that were specific to each of the four core traits (self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control). The authors also

collected data on several outcome measures such as satisfaction and performance (Judge et al., 2003). The final instrument contained 12 items addressing the four core evaluations and used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement (Judge et al., 2003). The results of the study “indicated that the 12-item CSES was reliable, displayed a unitary factor structure, correlated significantly with job satisfaction, job performance, and life satisfaction, and had validity equal to that of an optimal weighting of the four specific core traits” (Judge et al., 2003, p. 303).

Synergistic Supervision

Winston and Creamer (1997) found that student affairs professionals desire effective supervision. However, many were unsure of what constituted quality in supervision and few believed they received it. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Winston and Creamer (1997) identified a form of quality supervision they called Synergistic Supervision. Based on their research, the authors believed this style of supervision had the greatest impact on student affairs work. It has been noted that most student affairs practitioners “endorsed synergistic supervision as being most descriptive of how they approach this important management task” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 196). Synergistic supervision emphasizes the cooperative nature between the supervisor and supervisee and allows the joint impact of working together to exceed the simple combination of efforts (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The authors offered a mathematical equation of “ $1+1 = 3$ ” to describe the concept of synergy in supervision.

The synergistic style of supervision is characterized as having a *dual focus* on both the organization and the individual, in which there is effort to achieve organizational goals and objectives while also supporting the staff member in achieving personal and professional goals

(Winston & Creamer, 1997). Other key characteristics of the synergistic supervision style include:

- *Joint Effort* – supervision is not something done to staff, but rather in cooperation with staff
- *Two-way Communications* – trust and the ability to give and receive honest feedback
- *Concern with Competence* – competence in the areas of knowledge & information, work-related skills, personal and professional skills, and attitudes
- *Growth Orientation* – career development of employees focusing on talents and abilities, motives and needs, and attitudes and values
- *Proactivity* – early identification of problems and development of strategies to lessen the effects
- *Goal-Based* – both supervisor and supervisee need to have a clear understanding of expectations and work together to develop and achieve goals
- *Systematic and on-going* – supervisory sessions that are a routine part of one's professional life
- *Holism* – looking at the whole person (Winston & Creamer, 1997)

Synergistic supervision offers a contrasting approach from the other styles noted earlier in this chapter. The synergistic approach to supervision is described as “essentially a helping process” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 194). It is designed to provide support for staff members as they achieve the goals of the organization as well as advance their own professional development. It involves equal participation and involvement from both the supervisor and supervisee: “Both parties must be willing to invest time and energy in the process” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 198).

The work of Winston and Creamer was followed by Saunders et al. (2000) who found that synergistic supervision was associated with discussions of exemplar performance, discussions of long-term career goals, discussions of inadequate performance, frequent informal

performance appraisals, and discussions of personal attitudes. Tull (2004) studied 435 student affairs practitioners who were members of ACPA and had worked in the field for less than five years. Tull found that synergistic supervision was positively correlated with job satisfaction and negatively correlated with intent to turnover. It should be noted, however, that synergistic supervision is not appropriate to use with all employees. This style “rests on the assumption that the staff being supervised yearn to serve students, want to enhance their own development and learning, and are professionally motivated” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 214).

Saunders et al. (2000) used the findings from a study of 380 staff members working in student affairs at 15 different institutions in the southeastern United States to create the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS). The SSS measures the extent to which staff members perceive that their supervisor focuses on the advancement of the institutional mission and goals and the personal and professional advancement of individual staff members (Saunders et al., 2000). This scale was “designed to assess staff members’ perceptions of various aspects on their current supervisory relationship and activities” (Saunders et al., 2000, p. 183). The authors indicated that the scale measures perceptions of several supervisory behaviors, such as equitable staff treatment, cooperative problem solving with staff, systematic goals setting, and concern about staff members’ career development.

Since the creation of the synergistic supervision scale, there have been a handful of student affairs studies regarding the synergistic approach. A few studies (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Randall, 2007; Shupp, 2007; Tull, 2004; White, 2008) have attempted to explore the relationship between synergistic supervision and some other variable. Again, Tull (2004) studied 435 new student affairs professionals to identify that higher rates of perceived synergistic supervision had a positive correlation to levels of job satisfaction within new student affairs

professional. In a portraiture qualitative study of five entry-level professionals working at institutions in Pennsylvania, Shupp (2007) found that synergistic supervision behaviors were desired among employees. Randall (2007) used a mixed-methods study of 237 student affairs professionals working in Michigan to identify that synergistic supervision had a positive impact on one's commitment to the profession of student affairs. White (2008) conducted a research study of 114 new professionals in student affairs to understand the new professionals' perceptions of the synergistic supervision effort of their supervisors. Lane (2010) found that there is a significant relationship between synergistic supervision and organizational support in a quantitative study of 337 midlevel managers that had membership in NASPA. Finally, Hall-Jones (2011) researched 367 midlevel managers working at colleges and universities in Ohio to explore the relationship between synergistic supervision and leadership attributes. Each of these studies helped to lay a foundation for the present study.

Summary

As this review of literature has shown, there is a significant lack of research related to synergistic supervision in student affairs and midlevel student affairs professionals. Additional research is needed to understand this concept and population. The work of Winston and Creamer (1997) and Saunders et al. (2000) have provided a framework for this additional research, but little has been done over the last 13 years. Both the supervisory relationship and midlevel professionals can have a significant impact on an organization. It is imperative that further research be conducted on these important aspects of student affairs.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship that exists between the perceived level of supervision received and job performance factors within midlevel professionals in student affairs. Specifically, the study examined perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and two key job performance factors: core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment. This chapter reviews the methodological procedures used in this study. The chapter focuses on the research design, research questions, population, data collection instruments, and statistical methods for data analysis.

Studies have been conducted regarding synergistic supervision (Randall, 2007; Tull, 2006; White, 2008) and others have been conducted on midlevel administrators (Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010). However, there is still an overall lack of research that has examined the perceptions that midlevel administrators have of their direct supervisor. Additionally, no research has been conducted that has explored whether a relationship exists between synergistic supervision and key performance indicators such as core self-evaluation or supervisor-related commitment.

For this study, midlevel administrators were defined as those staff members that manage professional staff and one or more student affairs functional areas, have at least three years of experience working in higher education, and report directly to the chief student affairs officer (CSAO). Criteria for participation in the study included being a midlevel administrator working at an institution in the United States and being willing to complete a self-administered questionnaire over the Internet.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- Q1 To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators?
- A. To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
 - B. To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
 - C. To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
- Q2 What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation?
- A. To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
 - B. To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
 - C. To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
- Q3 What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment?

- A. To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
- B. To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
- C. To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

Research Design

A quantitative research design was utilized for this study as this type of research examines the relationship among variables that can be measured so that numbered data can be analyzed (Creswell, 2014). This cross-sectional, correlational study used a survey design to help answer the research questions. The study was cross-sectional as it measured attitudes at a single point in time across a population of midlevel administrators. Correlational studies describe the extent of a relationship between two or more variables (Creswell, 2014). Predictions can be made following a correlational study that finds a significant relationship between variables (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

A survey was the preferred data collection method as it provided a way to identify attributes of the larger population of midlevel administrators from a smaller subset of the population (Creswell, 2014). A survey provided the best way to obtain information to answer the research questions posed in this study. The quick turn-around and low cost of surveys provide additional rationale for this data collection method. As it would be timely and cost-prohibitive to

personally interview midlevel administrators throughout the selected population, the use of the quantitative survey was deemed the most appropriate collection technique. Finally, the ability to make inferences about how the perceived level of synergistic supervision received is related to core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment supported the use of this methodology.

Population and Sample Identification

The population for this study consisted of all midlevel student affairs administrators that have a membership in the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA). NASPA is one of the leading student affairs associations in the United States with a membership of approximately 10,000. This association represents student affairs administrators from a wide variety of institution types, positions categories, and geographic areas (NASPA, 2013). Using membership from the association is believed to provide a fair representation of the population of student affairs midlevel administrators.

Midlevel administrators were selected as the focal point of this study for three reasons: the lack of research related to this population, the large size of the population, and the potential influence that exists for the population. As stated earlier, there is an absence of research related to midlevel administrators, especially regarding supervision and performance. This population makes up the largest administrative group in higher education institutions (Ackerman, 2007). These administrators are “the knowledge professionals of student affairs programs and have an important influence on each student’s development and that of the staff members who will be the professional leaders of the next generation” (Mills, 2009, p. 369). Midlevel administrators are in a position to effect a considerable amount of change on a college campus (Young, 2007). Given this lack of research, the large numbers of midlevel administrators within student affairs, and the

critical roles that these individuals play at their institutions, it is important to examine and study this population (Young, 2007).

Sampling Plan

The researcher requested an Excel spreadsheet from NASPA of members that have self-identified as midlevel administrators. The membership list included the member's name, title, and institution name. Upon receipt of the membership list, the researcher deleted all those with titles that typically correspond with senior-level administrators, such vice president.

Additionally, any members identified with job classifications of graduate student or faculty member were not invited to participate, as they would likely not meet the definition of midlevel administrator. The same was true for members working outside of a college or university.

Finally, the researcher used the NASPA on-line directory to look up individual e-mail addresses for all individuals still remaining on the list.

Sample Size

Sample size is an important factor to consider in planning a research study. Using a simple sample size calculator found on-line (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>), it was determined by the researcher that an appropriate sample size for this study would be approximately 330. This sample size provides a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of 5. In order to obtain a sample size of at least $n= 330$, the researcher offered participants an incentive to enter in a drawing for 30 gift certificates valued at \$10. Additionally, the survey was issued during the late spring/early summer, when midlevel administrators might have more time available to complete such a survey.

Human Subjects Review

Prior to the start of the study, the researcher submitted the necessary documentation for research involving human subjects to the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board. Approval to conduct this study was granted and the approval form has been added to the Appendix section (Appendix A).

Variables

Correlational regression research measures the relationship between one or more variables. In this study, synergistic supervision was most often used as the independent variable, with scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) being used to operationalize the variable in most research questions. The dependent variable changed based on the question. Research Question 2, regarding Core Self-Evaluation, used the scores on the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) as the dependent variable to examine the relationship between Core Self-Evaluation and synergistic supervision. Research Question 3 regarding Supervisor Related Commitment, used scores on the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale (SRCS) as the dependent variable to examine the relationship between it and synergistic supervision. Additionally, all questions featured certain demographic characteristics as the independent variable and examined how the characteristics were associated with scores on the SSS, CSES, and SRCS.

Instrumentation

Three previously established instruments were used in this study. The Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) was used to determine the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by survey participants. The Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) was utilized to determine one's assessment of their self-worth and capabilities. Finally, the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale (SRCS) was employed to examine employee commitment to their supervisor.

Appropriate permissions to use all three instruments have been obtained from the respective authors (Appendix B&C).

Synergistic Supervisory Scale

The Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) was designed to assess the perceptions that employees have regarding the behaviors of their immediate supervisor. It included 22 items that “assess the degree to which a supervisor was perceived to demonstrate synergistic supervisory behaviors” (Saunders et al., 2000, p. 183). Participants rated the frequency of identified behaviors based on their perceptions of the relationship with their direct supervisor. The SSS was operationalized using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never or almost never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always or almost always). The sums of the items were collected to reflect the overall level of perceived synergistic supervision received by the participant.

The SSS was tested for internal consistency reliability by calculating a Cronbach’s alpha co-efficient. An alpha co-efficient of .94 was found for the scale (Saunders et al., 2000). Correlations were found for the item totals that ranged between .44 and .75. Additionally, correlating scores on the SSS to scores on the Index of Organizational Reaction (IOR; Smith, 1976) and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Porter & Smith, 1970) tested the validity of the SSS. The survey authors found the Pearson product-moment correlation between the IOR and SSS was .91 ($n=275, p < .001$) and between the OCQ and SSS was .64 ($n=275, p < .001$; Saunders et al., 2000).

Core Self-Evaluation Scale

The Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES), developed by Judge et al. (2003), was designed to provide a direct measure of core self-evaluation, not a composite score from other instruments. The final CSES instrument contained 12 items addressing the composite personality

traits of the four core evaluations of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. The CSES was operationalized using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements (Judge et al., 2003). The sum scores of the 12 items were collected to represent the overall value the participants had of themselves. Gardner and Pierce (2010) examined the core self-evaluation construct by comparing the CSES to the composite measure of the four traits and confirmed the practical use of the CSES instrument. The researchers believed CSES performed well as a scale and the short length would be more practical and better for research in which participant time was limited (Gardner & Pierce, 2010).

The validation of the CSES stems from four independent samples: two field studies and two samples of undergraduate students (Judge et al., 2003). Strong internal consistencies, with alpha coefficients greater than .80, were reported, test-retest reliability of .81 demonstrated good stability, and convergent and discriminant validity was displayed in strong correlations with the four core traits: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (Gardner & Pierce, 2010; Judge et al., 2003). Additionally, the CSES showed empirical validity in correlating with job satisfaction and performance (Judge et al., 2003).

Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale

To further examine employee commitment to the organization, Becker et al. (1996) developed the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale (SRCS) to assess commitment to a supervisor. This instrument consists of nine statements regarding one's direct supervisor and examines two separate dimensions. The first dimension describes identification with a supervisor and another describes internalization of similar values with that supervisor. Responses are obtained using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; Fields,

2002). Research examining organizational commitment and job performance has seen mixed results (Becker et al., 1996). While the research results have varied, it has been noted that when individual bases of commitment were distinguished, there appeared to be a strong association between commitment and performance (Becker et al., 1996). Specifically, factor analysis suggested that both identification and internalization commitment to a supervisor has been shown to be positively related to performance ($r = .16, p < .05$; Becker et al., 1996; Field, 2002). Validity and reliability of the SRCS instrument is supported by prior research (Fields, 2002; Polito, 2010). Coefficient alpha was .85 for supervisor-related commitment based on identification and .89 based on internalization (Fields, 2002).

Data Collection

Survey data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The researcher selected the Campus Labs Baseline program for data collection because of the significant benefits it provides. This internet-based survey development tool provided time savings, maximized response rate, data entry ease, error-reduction, and cost savings. An e-mail invitation/consent form (Appendix D) was distributed to the population by e-mail to encourage participation in the study. The e-mail invitation briefly explained the purpose of the study, described the incentives involved for participation, asked participants to access and complete a self-administered questionnaire via the Internet, and provided the estimated time to complete the survey. Additionally, contact information for both the researcher and the advisor directing the research study was provided. The electronic survey development tool was used to collect and organize the data. Participants were given 16 days to complete the survey, although the survey deadline was never actually shared with participants. A second e-mail invitation was sent to all members of the population on the eighth day following the activation of the online survey. This

e-mail asked recipients to complete the survey if they have not already done so. The e-mail was sent as a way to increase response rates and include the explanation of the purpose, incentives, contacts, and instructions for completing the survey.

Participants accessing the survey were shown the informed consent page providing an overview of the study as well as a consent and confidentiality statement. Incentives were offered in the form of \$10 Amazon gift certificates for 30 randomly selected participants. Prizes were offered as a strategy to increase the response rate. The use of incentives requires that survey participants be provided with the option to give their name and e-mail address at the completion of the survey if they are interested in receiving a prize. The incentive process was described in detail on the informed consent page and was not connected to the actual data submitted. Participation in the incentive program was voluntary and completely separate from the survey process.

After providing informed consent, participants were asked a series of demographic questions to provide the researcher with a more detailed perspective on the study participants. Questions regarding demographic variables such as gender, geographic area of employment, years reporting to supervisor, supervisor's position level, institution type, and functional area of employment will be asked. Following the demographic section, participants were asked to complete the SSS, CSES, and SRCS. A total of 50 questions were asked on the survey (Appendix E). The estimated time to complete the entire survey was shared with the respondents in advance and a status bar indicating completion percentage was shown while participants responded. This format and length of the survey was believed to improve the overall response rate.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 21.0 statistical analysis package. The researcher reviewed the data to ensure accuracy, check for any missing data, and test various assumptions. After this initial analysis was completed, descriptive statistics and frequency counts were calculated. These included measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode), variability (spread), and position (comparison to other scores).

Research Question #1: To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators? This question was answered by examining the means for each of the 22 behaviors on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS). The researcher reviewed the mean scores to determine the perceived frequency of the behaviors among the supervisors. If a behavior receives an average score of 4 or above, it could be concluded that the behavior is perceived to be practiced at a meaningful rate.

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation? To answer this question, Pearson correlation coefficients of the means of the composite scores of the SSS and CSES were computed to determine if a relationship exists between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. Correlation coefficients range in value from -1 to +1, in which -1 equals a strong negative relationship, +1 equals a strong positive relationship, and 0 indicates no relationship. As the direction of correlations was unknown prior to the study, the researcher used a two-tailed test for the data analysis. If there was statistical significance ($p < .05$), then it was confirmed that a significant relationship existed between the perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation.

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment? Similar to question #2, Pearson correlation coefficients of the means of the composite scores of the SSS and SRCS were computed to determine if a relationship exists between synergistic supervision and supervisor related commitment. Again, as the direction of correlations was unknown prior to the study, the researcher used a two-tailed test for the data analysis. If there was statistical significance ($p < .05$), then it was confirmed that a significant relationship existed between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and supervisor related commitment.

Additionally, parts A, B, and C of all three research questions examined how certain demographic variables (length of the relationship, gender composition of the dyad, and geographical area of employment) were associated with synergistic supervision, or the relationship between synergistic supervision and one of the performance indicators. To answer these questions, the researcher isolated a particular variable and broke it down into subcategories. Correlation coefficients were then used to determine if a significant relationship existed for each of the subcategories. If significance ($p < .05$) was reached, it was concluded that a significant relationship existed for the sub-category of the identified variable.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- Q1 To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators?
- A. How is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

- B. How is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
 - C. How is the geographic area of employment associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
- Q2 What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation?
- A. How is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
 - B. How is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
 - C. How is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
- Q3 What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment?
- A. How is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
 - B. How is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
 - C. How is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology to be used in addressing the research questions being explored regarding the relationship between synergistic supervision and performance indicators in midlevel administrators in student affairs. A correlational design using a survey has been chosen for this study. Three research questions were created to measure this relationship. Midlevel administrators with membership in either NASPA or ACPA were surveyed using an on-line format. The on-line survey consisted of demographic questions as well as three existing instruments.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter presents the data analysis of a survey conducted during the summer of 2014 that examined how midlevel student affairs administrators perceive the behavior of their supervisor, and how that perception is related to factors of job performance. The survey was administered to 704 midlevel student affairs professionals who are also members of NASPA. The study examined whether the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) were positively correlated with Core Self-Evaluation and Supervisor-Related Commitment, which have been shown to be predictors of job performance (Becker et al., 1996; Judge & Bono, 2001).

This chapter includes four main sections that provide detailed results from the survey. The first section highlights the data collection and response rate information. The second section provides demographic information on the survey participants. The third section includes information on the reliability of the scales that were used in the survey and the statistical assumptions that were made. The final section includes the data analysis and is divided into several subsections used to address each of the research questions.

Data Collection and Response Rate

Data for this study were collected through the use of a 50-question online survey consisting of three previously validated instruments. The Synergistic Supervision Scale (22 questions), the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (12 questions), and the Supervisor Related Commitment Scale (9 questions) were provided to participants to complete. Seven additional demographic questions were asked of each participant. Appendix E contains the instructions and questions that were provided to the participants. An online survey format was selected for this

national study as it provided an efficient way to increase participation and yield a strong response rate.

The researcher requested from NASPA a list of members that self-identify as midlevel administrators. The researcher was provided with a list of approximately 2,510 individuals. The information that was provided also included the individuals' titles and places of employment. After receiving the list, the researcher removed the names of all individuals who were not directly working for a college or university, did not work in the United States, or had a title typically associated with senior level administration, such as vice president. As a result, 194 names were removed from the list.

The researcher, via his NASPA membership, accessed the NASPA online directory to obtain the e-mail addresses of the individuals still remaining on the list. The Campus Labs Baseline program was then utilized to send the remaining 2,316 individuals on the list an e-mail invitation (Appendix D) to participate in the study. This e-mail invitation was sent on June 3, 2014, and described the details of the study. A link to the survey was provided in the invitation as well as consent and incentive information. A reminder e-mail invitation was sent on June 10, 2014, to those individuals that had not yet completed the survey and included similar information to that which was contained in the original e-mail invitation. The survey link closed on June 16, 2014, at 5:00 PM after being open for two weeks.

Of the 2,316 midlevel administrators who were invited to participate in the study, a total of 770 individuals accessed and responded to the survey. This resulted in a 33.3% response rate. The data were then screened to ensure accuracy and completion. The researcher examined the data to make sure all cases had values and items were coded properly. Descriptive statistics were computed to verify that all means and standard deviations seemed realistic. Of the 770 survey

responses, 64 were eliminated as they were incomplete and two more were removed as outliers related to gender. The gender outliers included one person that identified as transgender and one that identified as other. These individuals were removed as it is believed that a subgroup containing only one person is too small to have any significance. The final count of useable surveys was 704 and the final response rate was 30.3%.

The higher than expected response to the survey could be attributed to a variety of factors. The use of an online survey provided a format that was easy to access and utilize for the participants. Another factor that could have impacted the response rate was the survey length. The participants were told upfront that the survey consisted of only 50 questions and could be completed in less than 10 minutes. A third contributing factor may have been the time of year that the invitation was sent. The invitation was sent at the beginning of the summer, which is believed to be a time when many midlevel administrators have more time to commit to responding to surveys. A fourth contributing factor may have been the decision to offer several small incentive prizes in place of one larger incentive prize. After all responses were received the research held a random drawing of all participants to award the incentive prizes. The researcher believed it would be more enticing to provide the participants with a greater overall opportunity to win smaller prizes than to decrease the odds by offering one larger prize.

In addition to the positive response rate, the researcher received several personal e-mail messages from participants expressing interest in the results of the survey and excitement about the topic in general. While these messages did not impact the quantitative results of the survey itself, they did provide the researcher with insight into the participants' interest in the topic and shaped at least one of the recommendations for future research.

Demographics

Demographic information regarding the participants of the study, as well as their individual supervisors, is included in this section. Regarding gender, a majority ($N = 474$; 67.3%) of the 704 study participants indicated they were female, leaving 230 (32.7%) participants indicating to be male. Regarding institution type, more than half of the participants ($N = 404$; 57.4%) claimed to work at 4-year public institutions, while another 36.2% ($N = 255$) claimed to work at 4-year private institutions. The remaining 6.4% ($N = 45$) worked at 2-year institutions.

When examining the student enrollments of the colleges where the participants were employed, those working at institutions with enrollments greater than 20,000 made up the largest group ($N = 246$; 34.9%). An additional 25% ($N = 178$) worked at institutions with enrollments between 10,000 and 20,000. Information regarding the enrollments for the participants' institutions can be found in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Participants' Institutional Enrollments

Enrollment	N	%
1999 and under	58	8.2
2000 – 4999	118	16.8
5000 – 9999	104	14.8
10000 – 20000	178	25.3
Over 20000	246	34.9

Of the 704 participants, the largest group ($N = 150$; 21.3%) identified their place of employment to be in the Mid-Atlantic states. Three other geographic areas that had large numbers were: Southeast ($N = 133$; 18.9%), Midwest ($N = 109$; 15.5%), and Pacific West ($N =$

99; 14.3%). A complete listing of the geographic regions of employment can be found in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Participants' Geographic Area of Employment

Geographic Region	N	%
Mid Atlantic (DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA, VA, WV)	150	21.3
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN)	133	18.9
Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	109	15.5
Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	99	14.1
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	65	9.2
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	58	8.2
Heartland (IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD)	49	7.0
Mountain West (CO, ID, MT, NV, UT, WY)	41	5.8

Participants were also asked about the functional area for which they have primary job responsibilities. No single functional area accounted for more than 18% and 25 separate areas were identified, with 16 areas having representation from at least 10 participants. The largest groups were found to be working in Residence Life ($N = 126$; 17.6%) and Student Activities ($N = 96$; 13.6%). Table 4.3 provides a complete listing of the participants' functional work areas.

Table 4.3

Participants' Functional Area of Responsibility

Functional Area	N	%
Residence Life	126	17.9
Student Activities	96	13.6
Other	85	12.1
General Student Affairs	45	6.4
Multicultural Student Services	38	5.4
Judicial Affairs	34	4.8
Academic Support Services	32	4.5
Advising	31	4.4
Health/Drug and Alcohol Education	26	3.7
Leadership Development	25	3.6
Assessment/Research	22	3.1
Greek Life	21	3.0
Career Planning/Placement	19	2.7
Orientation	16	2.3
Disabled Student Services	16	2.3
Admissions/Enrollment Management	15	2.1
Student Center/Union	14	2.0
Service Learning	11	1.6
Counseling	6	0.9
LGBT Student Services	5	0.7
Adult Learner Services	4	0.6
International Student Services	4	0.6
Religious Programs	4	0.6
Campus Recreation/Intramural Sports	3	0.4
Commuter Services	3	0.4
Financial Aid	3	0.4

The last two demographic questions that participants were asked had to with characteristics of their direct supervisor. Regarding the length of time that participants had reported to their direct supervisor, 36.6% ($N = 258$) noted the length of the relationship to be one year or less. Thirty-two individuals (4.5%) indicated that they had reported to the direct supervisor for 10 or more years. Table 4.4 provides additional details regarding the years that participants have reported their supervisor.

Table 4.4
Years Participants Have Reported to Supervisor

Time	N	%
Less than 1.5 years	258	36.6
1.5 – 3.4 years	249	35.4
3.5 – 7.4 years	144	20.4
7.5 or more years	53	7.5

The final demographic question asked about the perceived gender of the direct supervisor. Similar to the gender demographics of the participants, a majority of the respondents ($N = 405$; 57.5%) reported to work for a female supervisor and the remaining participants reported to work for a male supervisor ($N = 299$; 42.5%).

Scale Reliability

A common measure of reliability is Cronbach’s alpha, which is used to assess the internal consistency reliability of a set of scores (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2011). Alpha coefficients were calculated using the data collected during this study. Alpha coefficients should be positive and greater than .70 to ensure the reliability of the instrument (Morgan et al., 2011). It is important to report the alpha coefficients for each of three instruments that were used to provide good support for the internal consistency reliability. Before data analyses were

conducted, the researcher reverse coded applicable items as instructed by the authors of the various instruments.

The Synergistic Supervision Scale asked participants to rate their supervisor regarding the perceived frequency of certain behaviors. The participants rated the frequency of the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never or almost never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always or almost always). The alpha coefficient for the Synergistic Supervision Scale was .936. Additional information regarding the results of the Synergistic Supervision Scale can be found in Table 4.5.

The Core Self-Evaluation Scale asked participants to rate themselves regarding their self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. The scale consisted of twelve items and was operationalized using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with the twelve statements. The alpha coefficient for the Core Self-Evaluation Scale was .830. Additional information regarding the results of the Core Self-Evaluation Scale can be found in Table 4.6.

The Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale asked participants to respond to nine statements regarding one's direct supervisor. Responses were obtained using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree). The alpha coefficient of the Supervisor Related Commitment Scale was .889. Additional information regarding the results of the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale can be found in Table 4.7.

Table 4.5

Synergistic Supervision Scale - Descriptive Statistics (N = 704)

Question	Mean	SD
My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.	4.16	1.015
My supervisor works with me to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information he/she feels is important.	3.96	1.049
My supervisor criticizes staff members in public. (R)	4.29	.945
My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution.	3.83	1.079
My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal or professional.	4.23	1.013
My supervisor shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement.	3.87	1.192
My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions. (R)	3.87	1.143
My supervisor shows that she/he cares about me as a person.	4.08	1.078
My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution.	4.09	1.031
My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat". (R)	3.33	1.146
My supervisor has favorites on the staff. (R)	3.19	1.363
My supervisor breaks confidences. (R)	4.15	.975
My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.	3.43	1.002
When faced with a conflict between external constituents (for example parent or donor) and staff members, my supervisor supports external constituents even if they are wrong. (R)	3.84	.977
My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.	3.73	1.058
If I'm not careful, my supervisor may allow things that aren't my fault to be blamed on me. (R)	4.20	1.022
My supervisor rewards teamwork.	3.50	1.160
When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.	3.46	1.143
My supervisor looks for me to make a mistake. (R)	4.51	.857
My supervisor and I develop yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses or blind spots.	3.13	1.341
When problem solving, my supervisor expects staff to present and advocate differing points of view.	3.52	1.097
In conflicts with staff members, my supervisor takes students' sides (even when they are wrong). (R)	4.05	.986

Response options: 1 = never or almost never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always or almost always.
 (R) = Reversed items - these items were changed before computations.

Table 4.6

Core Self-Evaluation Scale - Descriptive Statistics (N = 704)

Question	Mean	SD
I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.	3.80	.859
Sometimes I feel depressed. (R)	3.12	1.204
When I try, I generally succeed.	4.33	.558
Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless. (R)	3.38	1.159
I complete tasks successfully.	4.38	.544
Sometime, I do not feel in control of my work. (R)	2.77	1.153
Overall, I am satisfied with myself.	4.12	.746
I am filled with doubts about my competence. (R)	3.85	1.010
I determine what will happen in my life.	3.91	.807
I do not feel in control of the success in my career. (R)	3.80	.996
I am capable of coping with most of my problems.	4.26	.656
There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me. (R)	3.94	1.064

Response options: 1 = never or almost never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always or almost always.
(R) = Reversed items - these items were changed before computations.

Table 4.7

Supervisor Related Commitment Scale - Descriptive Statistics (N = 704)

Question	Mean	SD
When someone criticizes my supervisor, it feels like a personal insult.	3.49	1.819
When I talk about my supervisor, I usually say “we” rather than “they”.	4.33	1.786
My supervisor’s successes are my successes.	4.51	1.707
When someone praises my supervisor, it feels like a personal compliment.	3.73	1.758
I feel a sense of “ownership” for my supervisor.	4.07	1.867
If the values of my supervisor were different, I would not be as attached to my supervisor.	4.66	1.731
My attachment to my supervisor is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by my supervisor.	4.47	1.773
Since starting my job, my personal values and those of my supervisor have become more similar.	3.84	1.668
The reason I prefer my supervisor to others is because of what he or she stands for, that is, his or her values.	4.52	1.852

Response options: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = neutral; 5 = slightly agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree.

Statistical Assumptions

Assumptions are made in inferential statistics to provide guidance for the researcher. “Assumptions explain when it is and isn’t reasonable to perform a specific statistical test” (Morgan et al., 2011, p. 55). One assumption is that data are normally distributed. However this is not always the case and often data are skewed. This was the case in this study. Descriptive statistics were run to test the skewness for each variable. The test of skewness helped the researcher determine which types of statistical analyses were appropriate for this data set. Results indicated skewness was found for the independent variable, scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale. Since the data were skewed, or not normally distributed, the nonparametric Spearman rho statistic was used and reported most often in this study.

Data Analysis

Two main research questions were created to examine the relationship between the variables, with several supplemental questions exploring the impact of the demographic characteristics on the relationship. Table 4.8 shows the answers to the two main associational questions that were asked in this study. Both were found to be positively correlated and statistically significantly.

Table 4.8

Statistically Significant Associations for Two Main Research Questions

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	(r)	(p)	Effect Size
Synergistic Supervision	Core-Self Evaluation	.314	< 0.01	Medium
Synergistic Supervision	Supervisor Related Commitment	.632	< 0.01	Large

The supplemental questions were asked and the data were analyzed to determine if the variables would result in stronger relationships based on certain demographic characteristics.

Research Question 1:

To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators?

Information was obtained by examining the 704 scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale as well as the mean scores for all 22 behaviors on the scale. Overall, each of the 22 behaviors scored well and were perceived to be practiced at meaningful levels. All the behaviors reported mean scores above 3.0 (sometimes), with all but five having mean scores above 3.5. Additionally, nine behaviors had mean scores above 4.0 (often). Table 4.5 provides information on the mean scores of all 22 behaviors. Additionally, the overall mean score on the Synergistic Supervision Scale was 84.39 ($N = 704$), which equates to an average behavior score of 3.84. Other data regarding the scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale include a median of 87 and a mode of 97. Considering all the mean information and data on central tendency, it appears that most of the supervisors of the midlevel administrators are perceived to practice the behaviors associate with synergistic supervision at considerable frequencies. Additional information regarding the scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale as well as the other two scales used can be found in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Measures of Central Tendency for the Three Scales Used in the Study

Scale	Mean	Median	Mode	High	Low
Synergistic Supervision Scale	84.39	87	97	30	110
Core Self-Evaluation Scale	45.65	45	45	19	60
Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale	37.61	39	39	9	63

Mann-Whitney *U* tests comparing the scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale were performed to examine the differences between genders. The tests indicated that there were higher mean ranks for females but no statistical significance existed. Female supervisors received higher overall mean scores (84.75) on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) than male supervisors (83.91). Data also indicated that female administrators provided higher overall mean scores (85.04) for their supervisors than the male administrators provided (83.06). Tests also found that those relationships featuring a male reporting to another male had the lowest reported overall mean score on the SSS (82.15) and those relationships featuring a female reporting to another female had the highest overall mean score on the SSS (85.32).

The 22 behaviors can be divided into two categories based on the wording of the statements. There are 14 behaviors that are viewed as positive while eight are viewed as negative. The eight negatively worded questions correspond with the questions that required the responses to be reversed.

A few of the positive behaviors that were perceived to be practiced most frequently included: supervisors listening to employees (mean = 4.23) and supervisors including their employees in the decision making process (mean = 4.16). The negative behaviors that were perceived to be practiced least frequently included: criticizing employees in public (reversed mean = 4.29) and looking for employees to make mistakes (reversed mean = 4.51).

A few of the positive behaviors that were perceived to be practiced least frequently included: developing yearly professional development plans (mean = 3.13) and using negative evaluations of programs and staff to make improvements (3.43). The negative behaviors that were perceived to be practiced most frequently included: supervisors having favorites on staff

(reversed mean = 3.19) and supervisors expecting employees to fit in with accepted norms (3.33).

Research Question 1A:

To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

To answer research question 1A, the researcher looked at the mean scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale. The analysis consisted of sorting the respondents into four separate groups based on the length of time the participants had reported to their direct supervisor (Question 4 on the survey). After sorting the respondents into groups, the researcher compared the mean scores between the four groups. As indicated in Table 4.4, the four groups were divided as follows: Group 1 = under 1.5 years ($N = 258$); Group 2 = 1.5 to 3.4 years ($N = 249$); Group 3 = 3.5 to 7.4 years ($N = 144$); and Group 4 = 7.5 years and longer ($N = 53$). The respondents in Group 3 reported the highest mean score on the Synergistic Supervision Scale at 85.54. The second highest mean score was 85.09 reported for the respondents in Group 1 followed by Group 4 with a mean score of 83.79. The lowest mean score of the four groups was Group 2, which reported a mean score of 83.06. A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to examine the difference between the groups, but no statistically significant differences were found.

Research Question 1B:

To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

To answer research question 1B, the researcher sorted the respondents into four groups and reviewed the mean scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale. This time the four groups were based on the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad. The first group consisted of females that report to female supervisors ($N = 273$). The second group contained female

employees that report to male supervisors ($N = 201$). The third group consisted of males that report to female supervisors ($N = 132$). The final group contained males reporting to other males ($N = 98$). The two groups containing female employees reported the highest mean scores on the scale. The group with females reporting to other females reported a mean score of 85.32. Females reporting to males reported a score of 84.67. The third highest mean score was the group containing male employees and females supervisors. This group reported a score of 83.58. The group scoring the lowest, with a mean score of 82.15, was the group with males reporting to other males. A Mann-Whitney U test was performed to examine the difference between the groups, but no statistically significant differences were found.

Research Question 1C:

To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

Similar to the analysis of the previous two questions, the researcher answered this question by sorting the respondents into groups and reviewing the mean scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale. The respondents were sorted into eight groups reflecting the reported geographic areas of employment. Information regarding the size of each group can be found in Table 4.2 above. The geographic area with the highest mean score on the scale was the group from the Heartland states. This group reported a score of 86.71. The second highest was the group from the Southeast states, which reported a score of 85.24. The group from the Pacific West states reported a score of 84.79. The group from the Mid-Atlantic states reported a score 84.68. The fifth group reported a mean score of 84.43 and hailed from the Southwest. The group from the Mountain West reported a mean score of 84.07. The final two groups, from the Midwest and New England areas, tied for the lowest mean score at 82.69. A Kruskal-Wallis test

was performed to examine the difference between the groups, but no statistically significant differences were found.

Research Question 2:

What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation?

As the data for the scores on the inventories were negatively skewed, the researcher used nonparametric statistics for the analysis of all parts of this question. Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and core self-evaluation scale were calculated. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2009).

The analysis found a positive correlation ($r = .314, p < .01$) between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation in midlevel administrators in student affairs. Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the effect size is considered medium or typical. This finding indicates that scores on the synergistic supervision scale are associated with scores on the core self-evaluation scale. This correlation supports the idea that individuals who perceived their supervisor to practice the skills associated with synergistic supervision were also more likely to score higher on the core self-evaluation scale.

Research Question 2A:

To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?

The researcher separated the data into four groups based on the length of time that the participants had reported to their current supervisor. Similar to question 1A, the four groups were divided as follows: Group 1 = under 1.5 years ($N = 258$); Group 2 = 1.5 to 3.4 years ($N = 249$); Group 3 = 3.5 to 7.4 years ($N = 144$); and Group 4 = 7.5 years and longer ($N = 53$). Spearman

Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and core self-evaluation scale were then used to answer this question. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed.

The analysis indicated positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation in the midlevel administrators in all four groups. The respondents in Group 3 reported the largest effect size ($r = .439$). Data on the effect sizes for all four groups can be found in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the Four Timespan Groups Related to the Correlation between Synergistic Supervision and Core Self-Evaluation

Length of Supervisory Relationship	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Under 1.5 years	.261	< 0.01	Medium
1.5 – 3.4 years	.250	< 0.01	Medium
3.5 – 7.4 years	.439	< 0.01	Large
Over 7.5 years	.395	< 0.01	Medium to Large

Research Question 2B:

To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?

The researcher separated the data into four groups based on the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad. Similar to question 1B, the first group consisted of females that report to female supervisors ($N = 273$). The second group contained female employees that report to male supervisors ($N = 201$). The third group consisted of males that report to female supervisors ($N = 132$). The final group contained males reporting to other males ($N = 98$). Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and core self-evaluation scale were then used to answer this question. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher

concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation.

The analysis indicated positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation in the midlevel administrators in all four groups. The respondents in Group 4 reported the largest effect size ($r = .469$). Data on the effect sizes for all four groups can be found in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the Four Gender-based Dyad Groups Related to the Correlation between Synergistic Supervision and Core Self-Evaluation

Gender Make-up of the Dyad	(r)	(p)	Effect Size
Female Employee with Female Supervisor	.288	< 0.01	Medium
Female Employee with Male Supervisor	.297	< 0.01	Medium
Male Employee with Female Supervisor	.356	< 0.01	Medium
Male Employee with Male Supervisor	.469	< 0.01	Large

Research Question 2C:

To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?

The researcher sorted the data into eight groups based on the geographic location of a participant's place of employment. The eight groups were divided as follows: Mid-Atlantic states ($N = 150$), Southeastern states ($N = 133$), Midwestern states ($N = 109$), Pacific West states ($N = 99$), New England states ($N = 65$), Southwestern states ($N = 58$), Heartland states ($N = 49$), and the Mountain West states ($N = 41$). Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and core self-evaluation scale were then used to answer this

question. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation.

The analysis indicated positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation in the midlevel administrators in many of the groups. The respondents from the New England and Southwestern states reported the largest effect size ($r = .459$ and $.450$ respectively). Data on the effect sizes for all eight groups can be found in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the Eight Geographic Groups Related to the Correlation between Synergistic Supervision and Core Self-Evaluation

Geographic Region	(r)	(p)	Effect Size
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	.459	< 0.01	Large
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	.450	< 0.01	Large
Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	.338	< 0.01	Medium
Heartland (IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD)	.287	< 0.05	Medium
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN)	.274	< 0.01	Medium
Mid Atlantic (DE, MD, NJ, NY, PN, VA, WV)	.269	< 0.01	Medium
Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	.255	< 0.05	Medium
Mountain West (CO, ID, MT, NV, UT, WY)	Not significant		

Research Question 3:

What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment?

Again, the data for the synergistic supervision scale were negatively skewed, which caused the researcher to report the non-parametric Spearman Rho correlation coefficients for the

analysis of this question. The researcher examined the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and supervisor-related commitment scale. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment.

The analysis found a positive correlation ($r = .632, p < .01$) between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment in midlevel administrators in student affairs. This positive correlation indicates that scores on the synergistic supervision scale are positively associated with scores on the supervisor-related commitment scale. Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the effect size is considered large or larger than typical. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .399$) indicates that these variables share almost 40% of variance with each other. This correlation supports the idea that individuals who perceived their supervisor to practice the skills associated with synergistic supervision were also more likely to score higher on the supervisor-related commitment scale.

Research Question 3A:

To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

To answer research question 3A, the researcher separated the data into four groups based on the length of time that survey participant had reported to their current supervisor. Again, the four groups were divided as follows: Group 1 = under 1.5 years ($N = 258$); Group 2 = 1.5 to 3.4 years ($N = 249$); Group 3 = 3.5 to 7.4 years ($N = 144$); and Group 4 = 7.5 years and longer ($N = 53$). Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and supervisor-related commitment scale were then examined. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment.

The analysis indicated large positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment in the midlevel administrators in all four groups. The respondents in Group 3 reported the largest effect size ($r = .723$). Data on the effect sizes for all four groups can be found in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the Four Timespan Groups Related to the Correlation between Synergistic Supervision and Supervisor-Related Commitment

Length of Supervisory Relationship	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Under 1.5 years	.607	< 0.01	Large
1.5 – 3.4 years	.594	< 0.01	Large
3.5 – 7.4 years	.723	< 0.01	Very Large
Over 7.5 years	.639	< 0.01	Large

Research Question 3B:

To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

The researcher separated the data into four groups based on the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad. The four groups were similar to the groups created for questions 1B and 2B. The first group consisted of female employees that report to female supervisors ($N = 273$). The second group contained female employees that report to male supervisors ($N = 201$). The third group consisted of male employees that report to female supervisors ($N = 132$). The final group contained male employees reporting to male supervisors ($N = 98$). Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and supervisor-related commitment scale were then examined to answer the question. If $p < .05$ was reached, the

researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment.

Once again, the analysis indicated large positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment in the midlevel administrators in all four groups. The respondents in Group 3 reported the largest effect size ($r = .650$). Data on the effect sizes for all four groups can be found in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the Four Gender-based Dyad Groups Related to the Correlation between Synergistic Supervision and Supervisor-Related Commitment

Gender Make-up of the Dyad	(r)	(p)	Effect Size
Female Employee with Female Supervisor	.620	< 0.01	Large
Female Employee with Male Supervisor	.622	< 0.01	Large
Male Employee with Female Supervisor	.650	< 0.01	Large
Male Employee with Male Supervisor	.627	< 0.01	Large

Research Question 3C:

To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

For the final question, the researcher again sorted the data into eight groups based on the geographic location of the participant's place of employment. Similar to questions 1C and 2C, the eight groups were: Mid-Atlantic states ($N = 150$), Southeastern states ($N = 133$), Midwestern states ($N = 109$), Pacific West states ($N = 99$), New England states ($N = 65$), Southwestern states ($N = 58$), Heartland states ($N = 49$), and the Mountain West states ($N = 41$). Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the synergistic supervision scale and supervisor-related commitment scale were then examined to answer the question. If $p < .05$ was reached, the

researcher concluded that a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment.

Table 4.15

Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the Eight Geographic Groups related to the Correlation between Synergistic Supervision and Supervisor-Related Commitment

Geographic Region	(r)	(p)	Effect Size
Mid-Atlantic (DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA, VA, WV)	.665	< 0.01	Large
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN)	.660	< 0.01	Large
Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	.649	< 0.01	Large
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	.628	< 0.01	Large
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	.616	< 0.01	Large
Mountain West (CO, ID, MT, NV, UT, WY)	.596	< 0.01	Large
Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	.572	< 0.01	Large
Heartland (IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD)	.555	< 0.01	Large

The analysis indicated large positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment in the midlevel administrators for all of the groups. The respondents from the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern states reported the largest effect sizes ($r = .665$ and $.660$ respectively). Data on the effect sizes for all eight groups can be found in Table 4.15.

Summary

This chapter presented descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of survey data from a research study that was conducted to explore midlevel administrators and the relationship between their perceived level of synergistic supervision received and two indicators of job

performance—core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment. The chapter also provided information on the how three demographic characteristics impacted the relationship.

Three main research questions were created to examine the variables of synergistic supervision, core self-evaluation, and supervisor-related commitment. Several subquestions were created to examine the impact of certain demographic characteristics on the variables or the relationship between variables. Seven hundred and four midlevel administrators participated in the study. The responses were obtained from the population of more than 2,300 midlevel administrators with membership in NASPA. This represented a 30.3% response rate. Each participant completed an online survey containing demographic questions and three instruments: Synergistic Supervision Scale, Core Self-Evaluation Scale, and Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale.

The first research question examined the perceived frequency of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors. The study found that most of the behaviors were perceived to be practiced at high frequencies. The overall mean score on the synergistic supervision scale for all 704 participants was 84.39. The supervisory relationships between 3.5-7.4 years in length reported the highest overall mean scores (85.54) on the synergistic supervision scale. Additionally, the supervisory relationships consisting of female supervisees and female supervisors reported the highest overall mean scores (85.32) on the synergistic supervision scale. Finally, administrators working in the Heartland states reported the highest overall mean scores (86.71) on the synergistic supervision scale

The second research question examined the relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. The study found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The length of the supervisory relationship was found to influence the

relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation such that a relationship was strongest after the employee and supervisor had been together for at least 3.5 years. The gender make-up of the supervisory dyad was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation such that a relationship was stronger for male employees than female employees. The geographic area of employment was found to influence the relationship between both synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation such that a relationship was stronger than normal for those working in the Midwest area of the United States.

The third research question examined the relationship between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. The study found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The length of the supervisory relationship was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment such that a relationship was strongest after the employee and supervisor had been together for at least 3.5 years. The gender make-up of the supervisory dyad was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment such that a relationship was stronger for male employees than female employees. The geographic area of employment was found to influence the relationship between both synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment such that a relationship was stronger than normal for those working in the Midwest area of the United States.

Chapter Five will discuss the conclusions reached by the researcher and compare the results to the results obtained by previous researchers regarding synergistic supervision. The next chapter will also provide recommendation and suggestions for future research studies on the

topic. Additionally, based on these survey results, recommendations for utilizing the synergistic supervision model for training employees will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the current study, a discussion regarding the major findings from the study, and recommendations for future research. The summary section includes an overview of the study's purpose, design, and collection methods. The discussion section reviews the study findings, identifies the similarities and differences those findings have from prior research on the topic, and also presents several implications for the profession of student affairs. The final section includes recommendations for future research related to synergistic supervision as well as the population of midlevel administrators.

Summary of the Research Study

This study was conducted to explore the frequency of synergistic supervision behaviors of student affairs administrators as perceived by their midlevel supervisees and how those perceptions are related to two key job performance indicators: core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment. The current study was designed to enhance the understanding of supervision received by midlevel administrators and provide insight on ways to improve management functions. A review of literature revealed little research regarding the connection between synergistic supervision and performance. Based on the lack of specific research on the topic, three main research questions were explored:

1. To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators?
2. What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation?

3. What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment?

Additionally, three subquestions for each main question were developed to explore the impact of three demographic characteristics—the length of the relationship for the supervisory dyad, the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad, and the geographic area of employment of the supervisory dyad. The subquestions explored for each question were:

Question 1:

- A To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
- B To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?
- C To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

Question 2:

- A To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
- B To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?
- C To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?

Question 3:

- A To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
- B To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?
- C To what extent is the geographic area of employment associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

A quantitative design was utilized and data were collected using three pre-existing instruments. The Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES), and the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale (SRCS) were combined with seven demographic questions to form a 50-item survey. The study participants were midlevel administrators working at institutions throughout the United States and holding membership in the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) professional organization. Approximately 2,300 midlevel administrators were invited to participate in the study by completing the survey. Responses from 704 administrators (30.3% response rate) were included in the study.

The collected data were analyzed by examining the means of perceived synergistic supervision behaviors and by calculating Spearman rho correlation coefficients to determine the presence and strength of relationships between synergistic supervision and both of the job performance indicators. The data revealed a significant positive relationship between the

perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment as well as a significant relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation, which lead to the conclusion that synergistic supervision has positive correlations with the two previously confirmed indicators of performance.

Limitations and delimitations of the study were discussed in Chapter one, however a few additional items arose during the data collection and analysis portion of the study. One limitation of the study involves the e-mail addresses that were used. It is possible that some of the e-mail addresses obtained for the study were inaccurate or messages were delivered to someone that was “out-of-the-office.” By using the automated Campus Labs system it is unknown if any of the invitations did not reach the intended individuals or if the recipient was out of the office and unable to respond. The response rate may have been higher if that information would have been available. An additional delimitation involves the phrasing of the demographic questions regarding gender on the survey. Based on feedback received during the data collection period, at least three individuals were confused about the intent of the question. One question asked for the participants’ gender and another asked for the perceived gender of the direct supervisor. In hindsight, these two questions should have asked for “sex” of the participant and “gender identity” of the supervisor. While it is unknown how much this impacted the data or response rate, it needs to be mentioned. A final delimitation of the study was the elimination of responses from two participants that identified as transgendered. A group of two participants representing this demographic characteristic was considered too small to produce meaningful results.

The findings in this study support the beliefs of Winston and Creamer (1997) that supervision is an essential management function that has a significant impact on an organization and the individuals in the organization. The findings also support Shupp (2007) who said that

improvements in supervision strategies could not occur overnight. The information and findings presented in this chapter provide evidence of the importance and impact of supervision, but it takes commitment on the part of the supervisor to develop the synergistic behaviors and tailor their approach to meet the individual needs of each employee. The remainder of this chapter discusses the findings from the current study and provides recommendations for future practice and research.

Discussion of Major Findings

The primary findings—which arose from this study of perceived synergistic supervision behaviors— both support and challenge prior studies and add to the growing literature confirming the positive impact of synergistic supervision. This section presents the major findings of the study and discusses the similarities and differences between the findings of the current study and those discussed in the review of literature.

Perceived Frequency of the Behaviors associated with Synergistic Supervision

One broad similarity to the prior research is the perception regarding supervision behaviors of student affairs professionals. The results from the current study indicate that the midlevel student affairs administrators surveyed believe they receive supervision that is consistent with the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision. On a scale from one to five, all of the 22 items on the Synergistic Supervision Scale received mean scores of 3.13 or greater. Almost half of the behaviors received mean scores over 4.0 and the mean score for all the behaviors was 3.84. This finding confirms what Saunders et al. (2000), Randall (2007), Lane (2010), and Hall-Jones (2011) found to be true about the perceived levels of synergistic supervision behaviors received. Although many of these reports did not provide mean scores for the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision, all of the prior studies did report that the

behaviors were practiced at high frequency rates. In the Hall-Jones (2011) study of middle managers in student affairs, the mean score for the behaviors of 3.85 is practically identical to the mean score of 3.84 found in the current study.

There are some clear similarities between this study and the original study on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000) regarding the perceived frequency of behaviors. The four most-frequently perceived behaviors in the Saunders et al. (2000) study were the top four most-frequently perceived behaviors in the current study. Likewise, three of the five least frequently perceived behaviors in the Saunders et al. study were among the bottom five in the current study. See Tables 5.1 and 5.2 for a review of the similarities between the two studies regarding the most and least frequently perceived behaviors.

Table 5.1

Similarities with Saunders et al. (2000) Study - Most Frequent Behaviors

Rank in Current Study (out of 22)	Behaviors	Rank in 2000 Study (out of 22)
1	My supervisor looks for me to make a mistake. (Reversed)	2
2	My supervisor criticizes staff members in public. (Reversed)	1
3	My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal or professional.	4
4	If I'm not careful, my supervisor may allow things that aren't my fault to be blamed on me. (Reversed)	3
5	My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my responsibilities.	11 - Tied
9	In conflicts with staff members, my supervisor takes students' sides even when they are wrong. (Reversed)	5

Table 5.2

Similarities with Saunders et al. (2000) Study – Least Frequent Behaviors

Rank in Current Study (out of 22)	Behaviors	Rank in 2000 Study (out of 22)
22	My supervisor and I develop yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses or blind spots.	22
21	My supervisor has favorites on the staff. (Reversed)	19
20	My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, “don’t rock the boat”. (Reversed)	16
19	My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.	11
18	When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.	18
10	My supervisor works with me to gather information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information he/she feels is important.	21
17	My supervisor rewards teamwork.	20

The negative supervisory behaviors that were similarly perceived in the two studies to occur less frequent include *criticizing staff in public*, *blaming others*, and *looking for mistakes*. The negative supervisory behaviors that were similarly perceived to occur more frequent were *having favorites on staff* and *expecting staff to fit in with accepted ways of doing things*. The positive supervisory behavior that was similarly perceived to occur more frequent was *listening to staff*. The positive supervisory behaviors that were similarly perceived to occur less frequent include *devising ways to remove system barriers* and *developing professional development plans*. These similarities support the original work by Saunders et al. (2000) and provide additional validity for the Synergistic Supervision Scale instrument.

Synergistic Supervision and Performance Indicators

The second and third research questions revealed significant positive relationships between synergistic supervision and the two indicators of performance. As indicated in Chapter Four, Spearman rho correlation coefficients were calculated to answer these two questions. The data showed a significant positive correlation between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment as well as a significant positive correlation between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation. These findings lead to the conclusion that synergistic supervision has a positive impact on the two previously confirmed indicators of performance. These findings neither support nor challenge any prior research, but do add to the body of knowledge that exists regarding the positive impact of synergistic supervision in student affairs. These items will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Synergistic Supervision and Gender

The findings of this study support the results of White (2008) who found that synergistic supervision is not exclusive to one gender and the approach can be employed by both female and male supervisors and used with female and male supervisees. Interesting results were found in this study when exploring the perceived frequency of the behaviors based on the gender of the participating midlevel administrators and the gender of the participant's direct supervisor. The results indicated that female supervisors received higher overall mean scores (84.75) on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) than male supervisors (83.91). Data also indicated that female administrators provided higher overall mean scores (85.04) for their supervisors than male administrators (83.06). Given this information, it makes sense to find that those relationships featuring a male reporting to another male had lowest reported overall mean score

on the SSS (82.15) and those relationships featuring a female reporting to another female had the highest overall mean score on the SSS (85.32). Males are often identified as goal-oriented, competitive, and focused on outcomes, while females are often identified as team-oriented, nurturing, and focused on relationships. As synergistic supervision is focused on developing relationships, participants may have rated females as displaying the synergistic behaviors simply based on these stereotypical beliefs about gender. This perception may account for some of the difference in scores.

Synergistic Supervision and Length of the Supervisory Relationship

While there were differences in the overall mean scores based on the length of supervisory relationship, there was no statistically significant correlation with the perceptions of synergistic supervision behaviors. This finding supports the findings of Tull (2006) and White (2008) who learned that the length of the relationship did not influence the perceptions regarding supervision behaviors. While not significant, it should be noted that the differences between the mean scores based on the length of the relationship were noticeable. Those relationships between 1.5–3.4 years reported the lowest overall mean (83.06) while those relationships between 3.5–7.4 years reported the highest overall mean (85.54). It should also be noted that the group reporting to their supervision between 3.5-7.4 years showed some interesting results compared to the other groups that should be explored in future research.

Additionally, the findings of this study support earlier work by Fey and Carpenter (1996) as well as Stock-Ward and Javorek (2003) regarding the length of the relationship and the developmental needs of midlevel professionals. They believed that midlevel student affairs professionals require the type of personal interaction from supervisors that is a principle of the synergistic supervision approach. It is clear from the findings in this study that midlevel

administrators benefit from the synergistic approach, but it is unknown if they appreciate or desire such an approach.

Additional Findings

This section provides information on other findings from the study that fill a gap in the literature, but are not directly comparable with past studies. The section includes information on the connection between synergistic supervision and the indicators of performance as well as information on the remaining demographic characteristic that was explored.

The Relationship between Perceived Level of Synergistic Supervision and Core Self-Evaluation

The researcher believed that there would be a positive relationship found between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation. To investigate if there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables, a correlation was computed. Synergistic supervision data were skewed, therefore a Spearman rho statistic was calculated, $r = .314$, $p = < 0.01$. Using Cohen's (1998) guidelines, the effect size was medium or typical. These results indicated that a statistically significant relationship existed between the perceived level of synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. The direction of the correlation was positive, which means that as the perceived level of the synergistic supervision behaviors increased, there was a similar increase in core self-evaluation scores. This increase in core self-evaluation is important for supervision practices as it should lead to improved job satisfaction, employee engagement, and job performance, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The researcher was intrigued by the results regarding how the length of the supervisory relationship impacted the correlation between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. It was believed by the researcher that as the length of the relationship increased, so would the relationship between the two variables. The current study supports this to some extent as it

revealed that the strongest correlation was for those supervisory dyads that had existed between 3.5 and 7.4 years. Those relationships over 7.5 years saw a small decline in the strength of the correlation, but that could be due to the smaller numbers of those with long relationships that participated in the study.

The researcher was also interested to see the results regarding the impact of gender on the relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. The study results indicated that the largest relationship between the two variables was for dyads consisting of two males and the smallest relationship was for those consisting of two females. The results also indicated that, overall, the stronger relationships were found for those featuring at least one male employee, either as supervisor or supervisee. These findings support some prior research (Varma & Stroh, 2001; Jones & Komives, 1999) that suggested there are substantial differences between male and females within the supervisory environment. However, these findings also contradict the work of White (2008) and Tull (2006) that found little to no difference between gender groups in supervisory relationships. The differences between males and females could be attributed to stereotype beliefs about self-confidence and personality that exist for men and women.

The Relationship between Perceived Level of Synergistic Supervision and Supervisor-Related Commitment

As discussed in Chapter Two, the increase in supervisor-related commitment is beneficial for employees as well as institutions as it should lead to longevity with the organization, improved attendance, and enhanced job performance. The researcher believed there would be a positive relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment. To determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between the variables, a correlation was computed. Again, synergistic supervision data were skewed so a Spearman rho statistic was calculated, $r = .632$, $p = < 0.01$. The effect size of this

correlation was larger than typical, based on Cohen's (1998) guidelines. These results indicated that a statistically significant relationship did exist between the perceived level of synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. The direction of the correlation was positive, which means that as the perceived level of the synergistic supervision behaviors increased, there was a similar increase in supervisor-related commitment scores. This finding supports those in White (2008) regarding the correlation between organizational commitment and synergistic supervision. It also supports the findings in Lane (2010) regarding the role that supervisors can play in helping employees recognize the supportiveness of the organization.

The results of the current study somewhat support the beliefs of the researcher regarding how the length of the supervisory relationship impacts the correlation between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. It was believed that as the length of the relationship increased, so too would the relationship between the two variables. The study results indicated the strong correlations between the variables for all for time-span groups, but the largest effect was for those supervisory dyads that had existed between 3.5 and 7.4 years. There was no evidence that the relationship between the variables grew with time.

Synergistic Supervision and Geographic Area of Employment

The researcher was interested to learn if the geographic area of employment would impact the perceptions of the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision. It was believed by the researcher that certain parts of the country would place greater value on the synergistic supervision behaviors and that supervisors might display those behaviors more often. The study did not find any statistically significant correlation between the administrators' perceptions and their geographic area of employment. The mean scores on the SSS for the eight geographic areas ranged from 82.69 to 86.71, but no significance was found. The Heartland geographic region

(IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD) scored the highest and the New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT) and Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI) geographic regions scored the lowest.

This section provides support for the use of the synergistic supervision approach. The findings of the current research reveal a strong correlation between synergistic supervision and two indicators of performance—core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment. Based on the findings, student affairs administrators should use of the synergistic supervision approach as a way to increase the performance of staff.

Implications and Recommendations for Student Affairs Practice

The findings of this study provide additional evidence and awareness of the positive impact of the synergistic supervision approach. The results of this study confirm that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between the perceptions that mid-level administrators have regarding synergistic supervision and the two indicators of job performance (core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment). These findings add further support to the importance of effective supervision and provide evidence that synergistic supervision is an effective management approach for increasing the noted indicators of performance. A few implications and recommendations for the profession of student affairs are highlighted in this section.

Development of Supervisory Relationships

“The student affairs profession has as one of its explicit values to enhance the development of staff as well as students” (Saunders et al., 2000, p. 188). Winston and Creamer (1997) supported this belief and add that supervisors are tasked with identifying professional aspirations of staff and determining the skills and knowledge needed for the staff member to advance professionally. Combining these beliefs with what has been found in this study,

supervisors of midlevel administrators should make a commitment to those they supervise. Supervisors need to be intentional about displaying the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision. This initiative on the part of the supervisor starts by developing strong relationships with those they supervise. Creating open lines of communication that allow for honest feedback, taking time to discuss personal and professional development plans, spending time together on both work and nonwork tasks, understanding the needs and desires of staff, and providing work assignments that are meaningful and rewarding are actions that supervisors can take to increase the performance of those they supervise.

Individuals being supervised should also recognize their role in the supervisory process. They should be involved in the development of the relationship and understand the benefits associated with participation in a synergistic partnership. Similar to the role of the supervisor, this starts with having strong lines of communications and being comfortable talking openly about responsibilities, objectives, desires, past experiences, and performance. The supervisee must feel comfortable and be willing and able to share information and give feedback if a synergistic relationship is to exist. Therefore it is critical that supervisors and their supervisees spend an appropriate amount of time together to develop and maintain a trusting and open supervisory relationship.

Commitment to Supervisor Training

The benefits of the synergistic supervision approach have been examined in the current study as well as the others that have been mentioned in this report. The results have shown positive connections between synergistic supervision and increased performance, job satisfaction, staff retention, and commitment to the profession. Although none of the studies provide cause and effect evidence, the results do suggest strong connections between the

synergistic approach and the desired outcomes. The next step is to incorporate staff training efforts on this topic into the operations within student affairs units. Before supervisors can appropriately utilize the synergistic supervision approach, time needs to be committed by colleges and universities to training staff members on the principles associated with synergistic supervision. The training could include a review of the various approaches of supervision as well as the behaviors and principles associated with synergistic supervision.

Time could also be allocated to discussing the benefits of such an approach, reviewing how the behaviors might be demonstrated, and providing opportunities to practice the behaviors and create actions plans for implementation. Additional time could be dedicated to assessing one's current behaviors through the Synergistic Supervision Scale and strategizing ways to increase less frequent behaviors while continuing more frequent ones.

Time is not the only requirement to institute such a training effort. Appropriate funding also needs to be allocated to bring in qualified presenters and resources. This minimal investment of time and money would be rewarded by the creation of happier and more productive employees.

This supervisory training model described above could also be incorporated into graduate school preparation programs. For many individuals, a student affairs graduate school program will provide an array of information on the past, present, and future of student affairs work. It will also provide essential material on student development theory, legal issues, and current trends. Many programs also allow for students to practically apply the information that has been learned in real-world situations. One experience that is often missing is the opportunity to learn about supervision and how to be an effective supervisor. Most students learn this skill by talking to mentors and watching the behavior of others. It would be beneficial for student affairs

preparation programs to make an intentional effort to include supervision skills in the curriculum. By following a similar training program to the one mentioned above, the programs would be providing their students with useful information that will enable them to become more effective at supervision.

Creation of a Prescriptive Assessment Tool

The results of this study confirm the use of the Synergistic Supervision Scale as an effective tool for assessing the behaviors exhibited by a supervisor. The scale allows a supervisor to receive feedback regarding how staff members perceive them to practice the synergistic supervision behaviors. The scale does not confirm whether or not someone is “synergistic,” but it does provide quality information from which staff members can grow and develop their supervision skills.

It could be helpful to use the Synergistic Supervision Scale to develop a tool that actually rates an individual’s level of synergistic supervision. It could be a 360-degree assessment that combines information obtained from peers, subordinates, and one’s own supervisor to create a Synergistic Supervision Score. Based on the score, it could provide prescriptive steps that could be taken to enhance or improve a person’s skill set related to synergistic supervision.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several authors (Dalton, 2003; Saunders et al., 2000; Winston & Creamer, 1997) have raised attention to the lack of academic research in this area and called for additional studies to be conducted. This study is an attempt to respond to that call. The study has provided some answers, but it has also generated several questions. The impact of synergistic supervision on staff members and the organization as a whole warrants further investigation from a research perspective. Additional research is needed to confirm the findings of the past and identify new

support for the use of the synergistic supervision approach. The results of such research could prove beneficial in enhancing supervisory relationships, improving the work experiences for employees, and, ultimately, transforming campus culture. The recommendations are directly connected to the results of the study, however, a few of them are re-statements of prior recommendations made by researchers that still seem relevant given the findings of the current study.

Greater Understanding of the Experience through Qualitative Data

The quantitative survey design that was conducted in this study was prudent given the nature of the study, however, qualitative research must be conducted to provide greater meaning to the data that has been collected. Questions regarding the impact of synergistic supervision and what staff members expect and desire from their supervisors would be helpful information to collect and may only be accurately obtained through more qualitative type research methods. In the current study, the researcher did not ask how participants feel about their supervisor or the supervision they receive. A supervisor may demonstrate the synergistic supervision behaviors, but they may not be appreciated or desired by employee. It could have been beneficial to collect that information to be able to connect the desires of employees with the positive outcomes related to performance.

Examine Additional Indicators of Performance

Further research should be conducted to connect synergistic supervision with other indicators of performance. This could be achieved through a quantitative study that examines annual staff evaluations or appraisals and compares them to levels of perceived synergistic supervision received. It could also be achieved through a qualitative approach that includes observations of employees and discussions regarding their performance with the staff member

and that individual's direct supervisor. These strategies are more subjective in nature, but it might be possible to find a relationship between levels of performance with perceived levels of synergistic supervision received.

Compare Supervision Received versus Supervision Provided by Midlevel Administrators

The findings of this study provide useful information on the supervision that midlevel administrators receive, but provide no information on the supervision they provide to others. As Lane (2010) indicated, it would be interesting to investigate whether there is any consistency between what midlevel administrators receive and the supervision they provide. It would be fascinating to learn whether or not those administrators, who report having a supervisor that exhibits synergistic supervision behaviors, also provide such supervision to their direct reports.

Supervisee Perceptions versus Supervisor Perceptions

Further study should be conducted to examine the supervisory relationships in greater detail and from multiple viewpoints. The current study, as well as many others, focused on the perceptions that administrators have about their direct supervisor. Examining the relationship from the point of view of the supervisor could prove useful in supporting the claims of earlier research. As Randall (2007) indicated, it would be interesting to learn if the perceptions supervisors have regarding their approach to supervision is consistent with the perceptions of those they supervise.

Examine Additional Demographic Characteristics

The current study selected to review three demographic characteristics—length of the supervisory relationship, gender make-up of the supervisory dyad, and geographic location of employment. The examination of these factors provided valuable information, but additional research could be conducted to explore other variables and how they impact perceptions of

synergistic supervision. The researcher encourages an examination of such variables as institution type, institution size, as well as difference between those hired by the supervisor and those inherited by the supervisor. As indicated earlier, the responses of those that identified as transgendered were removed because the population was too small. It would be interesting to conduct a study on those that identify as transgender to examine how they perceive synergistic supervision behaviors.

Compare Synergistic Supervision to other Supervision Approaches

The recent studies that have been conducted have all addressed the relationship that synergistic supervision has with certain desired outcomes (performance, satisfaction, etc.). It would be interesting to examine the other approaches to supervision (Authoritarian, Laissez-faire, Companionable) to determine they have an impact on the indicators of performance or other measures. Similar studies to those already conducted could be done using one of the other approaches to determine if synergistic supervision achieves greater desired outcomes than the other approaches.

Conclusion

The researcher surveyed midlevel student affairs administrators who were members of NASPA to explore the relationship between synergistic supervision and indicators of performance. The study further examined the impact of demographic characteristics on the relationship between synergistic supervision and the performance indicators. This research is essential for the profession as it highlights the important role that supervision has on employees.

The findings reveal that there is a strong connection between the synergistic supervision approach and indicators of performance. This chapter provides support for the use of the synergistic supervision approach in student affairs. Student affairs supervisors should look to

include the various behaviors associated with synergistic supervision into their practice, as it is clear from the current findings that this may increase a staff member's job performance.

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APPENDIX A:

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL EMAIL



Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office
Office of Vice President for Research
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2011
(970) 491-1553
FAX (970) 491-2293

DATE: April 29, 2014

TO: Sharon Anderson, Education
Derek Morgan, Education

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janell Barker".

FROM: Janell Barker, IRB Coordinator
Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office

TITLE: An Examination of the Relationship Between Perceived Level of Synergistic Supervision Received and Key Job Performance Indicators within Midlevel Student Affairs Administrators

IRB ID: 077-15H

Review Date: April 29, 2014

This project is valid from three years from the review date.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Coordinator has reviewed this project and has declared the study exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1): Research conducted in established or commonly accepted education settings, involving normal education practices, such as a) research on regular and special education strategies, or 2) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. The IRB determination of exemption means that:

- **This project is valid for three years from the initial review.** After the three years, the file will be closed and no further research should be conducted. If the research needs to continue, please let the IRB Coordinator know before the end of the three years. You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.
- You must carry out the research as proposed in the Exempt application, including obtaining and documenting (signed) informed consent if stated in your application or if required by the IRB.
- Any modification of this research should be submitted to the IRB through an email to the IRB Coordinator, prior to implementing any changes, to determine if the project still meets the Federal criteria for exemption.
- Please notify the IRB Coordinator if any problems or complaints of the research occur.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review by the IRB. **Only the IRB or designee may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a similar study in the future.

APPENDIX B:

PERMISSION FOR USE OF THE SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION SCALE

May 7, 2013

Dear Mr. Morgan,

Please be advised that you have my permission as lead author to use the Synergistic Supervision Scale (published reference: Saunders, S. A., Cooper, D. L., Winston, R. B., Jr., & Chernow, E. (2000). Supervising staff in student affairs: Exploration of the synergistic approach. *Journal of College Student Development*. 41, 181-192).

I ask that you share with me the results from your study.

Sincerely,

Sue A. Saunders, Ph.D.
Extension Professor

APPENDIX C:

PERMISSION FOR USE OF THE SUPERVISOR-RELATED COMMITMENT SCALE

From: Becker, Thomas E [beckert@udel.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2014 9:04 AM
To: Derek Morgan
Subject: RE: Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale

Hi Derek,

I'm glad to hear that the scale may be of some use to you! I believe it is in the public domain so that, legally, you don't need my permission to use it. However, I am happy to hereby grant my permission - needed or not - for you to use the scale in your research.

Best of luck with your dissertation,

Tom

Thomas E. Becker, Ph.D.
Professor, Dept of Business Administration
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19716-2710
Phone: (302) 831-6822

APPENDIX D:

E-MAIL INVITATION MESSAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Dear Student Affairs Professional,

My name is Derek Morgan and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at Colorado State University. I am currently conducting a research study to examine the relationship between synergistic supervision and indicators of job performance within midlevel student affairs administrators. I am working with Dr. Sharon Anderson in the College of Education on this research project. The research study examines perceived behaviors of student affairs supervisors and the relationship between those perceptions and job performance factors. The information will be used to better understand the role of the student affairs supervisor and to identify competency areas regarding supervision.

We are requesting your participation in this anonymous online study. Participation will involve completing the Synergistic Supervision Scale, the Core Self-Evaluation Scale, the Supervisor Related Commitment Scale, as well as a few demographic questions. The survey consists of 55 multiple-choice questions and should take approximately 8 minutes to complete. The survey is confidential to the extent allowed by law. Although the results of this survey may be published, no study participants will be identified. All information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential and be used to gain more knowledge on supervision practices.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any point during the study without penalty. The completion and submission of this survey implies your consent for participation in this study.

The researcher is offering thirty \$10 Amazon gift cards as incentive prizes for participation in this study. Entry into the drawing for incentive prizes will require you to provide your name and email at the end of the online survey. If you chose to enter the drawing your name and contact information will remain confidential. The incentive prizes will be awarded randomly following the closing of the survey.

No risk is anticipated by participating in this study. To indicate your consent and participate in this research study, please access the survey below. <LINK>

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or your participation, please call me at 303-807-7647 or email me at derek.e.morgan@gmail.com. For information about your rights as a participant you can contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board Coordinator at RICRO_IRB@colostate.edu or 970-491-1553.

Sincerely,

Derek Morgan

APPENDIX E:
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender:

- *Female*
- *Male*
- *Transgender*
- *Other*

2. Please identify the functional area with which you have primary responsibility:

- *Academic Support Services*
- *Advising*
- *Admissions/Enrollment Management*
- *Adult Learner Services*
- *Assessment/Research*
- *Campus Recreation/Intramural Sports*
- *Career Planning/Placement*
- *Commuter Services*
- *Counseling*
- *Disabled Student Services*
- *Financial Aid*
- *Food Services*
- *General Student Affairs*
- *Greek Life*
- *Health/Drug and Alcohol Education*
- *International Student Services*
- *Judicial Affairs*
- *Leadership Development*
- *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Student Services*
- *Multicultural Student Services*
- *Orientation*
- *Religious Programs*
- *Residence Life*
- *Service Learning*
- *Student Activities*
- *Student Center/Union*
- *Other*

3. Please identify the geographic area of the United States in which you work?

- *Pacific West*
- *Mountain West*
- *Southwest*
- *Midwest*
- *Mid Atlantic*
- *Southeast*
- *Northeast*
- *Other*

4. How many years have you reported to your direct supervisor?

Please round to the nearest whole number. If under one year, please indicate 1.

5. What do you perceive to be the gender of your direct supervisor?

- *Female*
- *Male*
- *Transgendered*

6. What is the FTE enrollment at your institution?

- *1999 and under*
- *2000-4999*
- *5000-9999*
- *10,000-20,000*
- *Over 20,000*

7. What category best describes your institution?

- *2-year private*
- *2-year public*
- *4-year private*
- *4-year public*

Below are several statements about the behaviors of your current direct supervisor. For each item, please use the scale below to indicate the frequency with which your supervisor displays each behavior.

1 = Never or almost never

2 = Seldom

3 = Sometimes

4 = Often

5 = Always or almost always

8. My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
9. My supervisor works with me to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information he/she feels is important.
10. My supervisor criticizes staff member in public.
11. My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution.
12. My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal or professional.
13. My supervisor shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement.
14. My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions.
15. My supervisor shows that she/he cares about me as a person.
16. My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution.
17. My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat".

18. My supervisor has favorites on the staff.
19. My supervisor breaks confidences.
20. My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.
21. When faced with a conflict between external constituents (for example parent or donor) and staff members, my supervisor supports external constituents even if they are wrong.
22. My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.
23. If I'm not careful, my supervisor may allow things that aren't my fault to be blamed on me.
24. My supervisor rewards teamwork.
25. When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.
26. My supervisor looks for me to make a mistake.
27. My supervisor and I develop yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses or blind spots.
28. When problem solving, my supervisor expects staff to present and advocate differing points of view.
29. In conflicts with staff members, my supervisor takes students' sides (even when they are wrong).

Below are several statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate your agreement or disagreement with each item.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

30. I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.
31. Sometimes I feel depressed
32. When I try, I generally succeed.
33. Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless.
34. I complete tasks successfully.
35. Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work.
36. Overall, I am satisfied with myself.
37. I am filled with doubts about my competence.
38. I determine what will happen in my life.
39. I do not feel in control of my success in my career.
40. I am capable of coping with most of my problems.
41. There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me.

Below are several statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate your agreement or disagreement with each item.

1 = *Strongly Disagree*

2 = *Disagree*

3 = *Slightly Disagree*

4 = *Neutral*

5 = *Slightly Agree*

6 = *Agree*

7 = *Strongly Agree*

42. When someone criticizes my supervisor, it feels like a personal insult.
43. When I talk about my supervisor, I usually say “we” rather than “they”.
44. My supervisor’s successes are my successes.
45. When someone praises my supervisor, it feels like a personal compliment.
46. I feel a sense of “ownership” for my supervisor.
47. If the values of my supervisor were different, I would not be as attached to my supervisor.
48. My attachment to my supervisor is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by my supervisor.
49. Since starting my job, my personal values and those of my supervisor have become more similar.
50. The reason I prefer my supervisor to others is because of what he or she stands for, that is, his or her values.