

SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION AND THE
STUDENT AFFAIRS MID-LEVEL MANAGER:
A SOCIAL EXCHANGE PERSPECTIVE

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Doctor of Education

by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION AND THE STUDENT AFFAIRS MID-LEVEL
MANAGER: A SOCIAL EXCHANGE PERSPECTIVE

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A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education,

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

To my partner, Cody, thank you for all of your love, support, and encouragement during
this journey.

To my Mom, Sue, and my Dad, Tom, thank you for always being there for me, for
helping me recognize from an early age the value of being an educated person, and for
helping me achieve my educational goals.

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ABSTRACT

The researcher implemented quantitative research methods to investigate to what extent perceived synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) received by mid-level student affairs professionals was related to the professional's perceptions of such social exchange (Blau, 1964) factors as the quality of the supervisory relationship and the professional's perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. Additionally, the study examined the reliability of subscales developed by the researcher from thematic items in the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000). For this study, a random sample of mid-level student affairs professionals completed an on-line survey consisting of three existing instruments: the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000), the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and the eight-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986).

Data analysis revealed high reliability for the four synergistic supervision subscales of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development*, *supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others*, and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*. Pearson correlations (r) showed a statistically significant, positive relationship between synergistic supervision and the social exchange factors of leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived supervisor support (PSS), and perceived organizational support (POS).

Multiple regression analyses found synergistic supervision to be predictive of LMX and PSS, with all four synergistic supervision subscales serving as significant predictors in the final regression model, and *exhibiting interest in employee's*

personal/professional development being the strongest predictor within the model. *Decision-making inclusiveness* and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* formed a significant model for predicting POS. Backward deletion multiple regression also revealed LMX and PSS as significant predictors of synergistic supervision, with POS removed to improve the regression model. Additionally, LMX and PSS were significant predictors of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*, and *fair and equitable treatment of others*. All three social exchange factors formed a significant model for predicting *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*.

The study's findings have implications for both mid-level student affairs professionals and their supervisors by highlighting the importance for supervisors to develop a better understanding of the mid-level professional's developmental needs and interests and for professionals to articulate needs and interests to supervisors. Additionally, student affairs professionals should engage in reflective conversation regarding developing skill sets necessary for synergistic supervisory relationships.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

Background

One of the most important relationships in the work environment is between the supervisor and those supervised. When such relationships work well and are mutually beneficial for the supervisor and supervisee, the work environment is enhanced through increased employee commitment toward the supervisor and organization (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tertrick, 2002). Such increased employee affective commitment toward one's organization and supervisor has been found to be related to increased work performance, less absenteeism, and a greater willingness on behalf of the employee to engage in positive behaviors that go above and beyond the job description (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Highlighting the importance of supervision within an organization, a Gallup survey of over a million employees and spanning twenty-five years asked "What do the most talented employees need from their workplace?" (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). The research found that "talented employees need great managers" (p. 11) and that employee productivity could often be determined by the relationship with their immediate supervisor (Buckingham). Describing what constitutes a "great" manager, Buckingham and Coffman metaphorically compared the great manager to a "catalyst" who "creates performance in each employee by speeding up the reaction between the employee's talents and the company's goals, and between the employee's talents and the customers' needs" (p. 59).

Though much has been written about effectively supervising staff in the corporate arena, the topic has received less attention regarding supervision within higher education institutions (Rowley & Sherman, 2004). Viewing supervision in a higher education environment, Rowley and Sherman (2004) wrote supervising others “is the responsibility of developing and using human resources to provide quality education, support for students, service to the academic and local communities, and to support the creation of knowledge” (p. 1). In discussing how administrators in non-academic units should supervise non-academic staff members, the authors stated such employees, due to level of education and motivation, “normally require only general guidance and expect to be given great independence in terms of carrying out their tasks” (Rowley, p. 30).

Within recent student affairs literature, the topic of supervision is described less as the laissez-faire approach advocated by Rowley and Sherman (2004) but, rather, as a more holistic, developmental task reflecting an engaged partnership between supervisor and supervisee (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Specifically within the field of student affairs, supervision is listed as an essential competency to develop (ACPA, 2007) for staff members wanting to grow professionally. However, few student affairs professionals receive adequate supervisory preparation, and many student affairs staff members pay little attention to their role as supervisor (Schuh & Carlisle, 1991). Though often recognized as a helping profession, student affairs staff members with supervisory responsibilities may not have the competency required for effective staff supervision (Jackson, Moneta, & Nelson, 2009).

A challenge in understanding supervision within the student affairs context is the diverse pathways practitioners enter the profession from and the hybrid of disciplines

forming the roots of student affairs practice. For example, Carpenter (2003) stated “even the most senior of student affairs positions can be obtained with no student affairs education or experience” (p. 576). Such diverse educational backgrounds could result in approaching the supervisory role from a myriad of perspectives, depending upon the supervisor’s past training. Additionally, one’s supervisory approach could be informed by one of the multitude of disciplines that have played an important part in forming student affairs’ theory base, such as counseling, psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, or other fields (Carpenter). Given the profession’s diverse background and makeup, developing a firm understanding of how student affairs supervisors approach their role can be difficult.

Despite the call for student affairs professionals to further develop supervisory skills (Lovell & Kosten, 2000), the topic of supervision receives little attention within the profession’s research literature (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Recent literature does reflect a deepening understanding of the supervisory relationship’s complexity. For example, Schuh and Carlisle’s (1991) definition of supervision as “a relationship where one person has the responsibility to provide leadership, direction, information, motivation, evaluation, and support for one or more persons” (p. 497) reflects a traditionally conceived, top-down activity. Ten years later, Arminio and Creamer (2001) defined supervision more comprehensively as an “educational endeavor” (p. 42) dually focused on both individual and organizational needs and requiring “(a) synergistic relationships between supervisor and staff members, (b) ubiquitous involvement with and constant nurturing of staff members and (c) a stable and supportive institutional environment to be effective” (p. 42).

An enduring concept within the student affairs profession is the field's "consistent and persistent emphasis on and commitment to the development of the whole person" (Nuss, 2003, p. 65). This commitment to fostering environments conducive to the holistic, personal development of others is reflected in such student affairs foundational documents as *The Student Personnel Point of View* (ACE, 1949), *The Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1994), and *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). The two major student affairs generalist professional associations, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), have both reiterated the importance of holistic development as the foundation for the profession's core values, stating "our beliefs about higher education serve as the foundation for our commitment to the development of "the whole person"; our collective values are derived from that commitment" (ACPA & NASPA, 1997).

Congruent with the student affairs profession's commitment of fostering personal development, Winston and Creamer (1997) took a holistic approach regarding supervising staff members through the introduction of the "synergistic supervision" approach. The authors, making a significant contribution to the student affairs research literature on supervision, described synergistic supervision as a "helping process" (p. 194) designed to support staff as they work to achieve organizational goals and develop as professionals (Winston & Creamer). In contrast from authoritarian and laissez faire approaches to staff supervision, the authors offered an approach for synergistic supervision consisting of (a) a dual focus on organizational goal accomplishment and supporting staff in accomplishing their personal and professional goals, (b) a joint effort

and two-way communication between supervisor and supervisee, (c) an emphasis on competence, personal and professional growth, and proactive problem solving, (d) clearly stated goals and expectations, and (e) a systematic and on-going process occurring throughout the supervisory relationship (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Reflecting a developmental, holistic approach toward employees, synergistic supervision “concentrates on helping staff become more effective in their jobs and personal lives, and supports them in their quest for career advancement” (p. 211).

Since the introduction of the synergistic supervision approach, a few studies have empirically examined its relevance within student affairs (Randall, 2007; Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Shupp, 2007; Tull, 2006). Saunders et. al.,(2000) developed the Synergistic Supervision Scale, designed to measure staff perception regarding how much a supervisor is attending to organizational goals and supervisee personal and professional advancement (Saunders, et. al., 2000). However, despite the development of a scale measuring perception of synergistic supervision received, few studies have attempted to quantitatively explore relationships between synergistic supervision and other variables. Tull (2006) found synergistic supervision helped new student affairs professionals avoid factors leading to job dissatisfaction. Arminio and Creamer (2001), in a qualitative study of 25 supervisors, found themes describing quality supervision encompassed synergistic supervision components. Congruent with Arminio and Creamer’s (2001) findings, Shupp (2007), in a qualitative study of five new student affairs professionals, found that desired behaviors from supervisors mirrored synergistic supervision components. Randall (2007), in a mixed-methods study, found that synergistic supervision allowed professionals to demonstrate their commitment to the

student affairs profession. The current study extended the quantitative research of synergistic supervision by exploring the relationship, if one exists, between the synergistic approach and the supervisee's perception of organizational and supervisor support, and the quality of their supervisory relationship.

Much of the existing student affairs research on supervision emphasizes the importance of the supervisory relationship on supporting and retaining new student affairs professionals (Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, & Cooper, 2003; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Shupp, 2007; Tull, 2006). Little can be found in the student affairs literature that offers insight into the relationship between the mid-level student affairs professional and his or her supervisor (Ackerman, 2007; Gordon, Strode, & Mann, 1993; Marsh, 2001; McClellan & Stringer, 2009; Sermersheim & Keim, 2005; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2007; Young, 1990).

As the student affairs mid-level manager is often responsible for supervising new professionals, it is important to develop a better understanding how mid-level managers themselves are being supervised. This study adds to the still developing student affairs research literature regarding mid-level professionals and the activity of supervision within the profession by examining the applicability of the synergistic approach toward this specific population.

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

A primary focus of this research was whether the quality of supervision received by a student affairs mid-level manager is related to how the manager perceives the quality of the relationship with his or her supervisor and also to how supportive the manager perceives his or her organization and supervisor to be toward them. Additionally, this

study examined if mid-level managers who report receiving supervision consistent with Winston and Creamer's (1997) synergistic approach also report a higher quality relationship with their supervisor and a higher level of support from their organization and supervisor.

At its core, supervision requires a relationship between two people, the supervisor and the supervisee. However, more than simply consisting of an economic exchange where the employee trades his or her labor solely for monetary gain, the employment relationship can also be viewed as having more intangible, less direct exchanges (Coyle-Shapiro, Shore, Taylor, & Tetrick, 2004). For example, an employee may be induced to contribute to one's own position beyond what is required by a job description in exchange for receiving tasks from a supervisor that the employee believes will further his or her professional aspirations.

In his book, *Emotional Intelligence at Work*, Hendrie Weisinger (1998) stated "people enter into relationships for the purpose of having one or more of their needs met" (p. 152), and the key to establishing and maintaining a "solid, productive relationship is reciprocity: you each strive to meet the other's needs" (p. 152). Complementing Weisinger's description of the reciprocal process supporting relationships, Bolman and Deal's (2003) human resource frame, used to analyze organizations, rests on four assumptions reflecting a reciprocal arrangement between organization and employee. The frame assumes (a) that organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the reverse, (b) that people and organizations need each other (e.g., organizations need ideas, energy, and talent whereas people need careers, salaries, and opportunities), (c) if the fit between individual and organization is poor, one or both suffer, and (d) a good fit benefits both

organization and individual in that individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations receive talent and energy for success (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Rather than focusing on the monetary rewards of employment, such as salaries and fringe benefits in return for employee effort, the current study is concerned with social exchanges (Blau, 1964) between supervisor and employee. Specifically, the study will examine whether receiving supervision considered synergistic (a work condition that is social, rather than economic, in nature) is somehow related to two other organizational variables considered to be important for increasing positive employee contributions such as leader-member exchange (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997) and organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986).

Synergistic Supervision

Synergistic supervision is consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2003) human resource frame due to its individualized, holistic, and developmental approach toward employees while also being concerned with the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives. Winston and Creamer (1997) emphasized the human resources focus, stating "synergistic supervision concentrates on helping staff become more effective in their jobs and personal lives, and supports them in their quest for career advancement" (p. 211).

Insight as to why synergistic supervision may be a more effective approach than other supervisory approaches (such as authoritarian, laissez-faire, or companionable) can be found in Winston and Creamer's (1997) discussion of the approach's dual focus on both the personal and professional welfare of staff, and the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives. The authors stated that due to synergistic

supervision's attention to staff members' personal and professional growth, "staff are much more likely to show loyalty to the supervisor and the institution and unit when they perceive that the supervisor is sincerely interested in them as individuals and is able and willing to assist them in accomplishing personal and professional objectives" (p. 198). This statement indicates a reciprocal aspect to synergistic supervision whereby increased employee loyalty and commitment is exchanged for the supervisor showing and acting upon concern for employee personal and professional well-being. As such, this study uses social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) as a lens through which to view the synergistic supervisory relationship.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a dominant theoretical framework used by researchers seeking to better understand the employment relationship, and how that relationship influences employee attitudes and behaviors (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2004). Defining the social exchange that occurs between two people, Blau (1964) wrote:

A person for whom another has done a service is expected to express his gratitude and return a service when the occasion arises. Failure to express his appreciation and to reciprocate tends to stamp him as an ungrateful man who does not deserve to be helped. If he properly reciprocates, the social rewards the other receives serve as inducements to extend further assistance, and the resulting mutual exchange of services creates a social bond between the two. (p. 4)

Social exchange theory is premised upon the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) which conveys people should help those who have helped them and that people should not injure those who have helped them. According to Gouldner (1960), reciprocity

serves as a stabilizing force in social relationships whereby one is morally obligated to return benefits received. The reciprocity norm “safeguards powerful people against the temptations of their own status; it motivates and regulates reciprocity as an exchange pattern, serving to inhibit the emergence of exploitative relations” (p. 174). Gouldner stated when one benefits another, an obligation occurs, causing a “shadow of indebtedness” (p. 174) on behalf of the person receiving the benefit. The cyclical occurrence of indebtedness and repayment serves as “a kind of all-purpose moral cement” (p. 175) for social structures.

Social exchange theory has particular relevance to those within a hierarchical relationship, such as supervisor and supervisee, due to the differential in power between the two roles. Emphasizing the role power plays in social exchange theory, Blau (1964) stated:

Power over others makes it possible to direct and organize their activities.

Sufficient resources to command power over large numbers enable a person or group to establish a large organization. The members recruited to the organization receive benefits, such as financial remuneration, in exchange for complying with the directives of superiors and making various contributions to the organization.

(p. 29)

Two prominent research threads have emerged from social exchange theory: leader-member exchange and organizational support theory. Leader-member exchange is concerned with “the quality of exchange between the employee and the manager and is based on the degree of emotional support and exchange of valued resources” (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002, p. 590), whereas perceived organizational support is

focused “on the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization (p. 590).

Though few studies have explored leader-member exchange or perceived organizational support specifically within a student affairs environment (Corral, 2009; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Danserau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), both would appear to be appropriate variables to measure given the profession’s history and values. For example, as leader-member exchange is concerned with the relationship quality between people (specifically, supervisor and those supervised), student affairs as a profession has also placed an important emphasis on relationship-building, both with students and other university community members (Astin & Astin, 2000; Rogers, 2003). Additionally, as developing and fostering supportive environments for student success has been a student affairs hallmark (ACE, 1949; NASPA, 1987; ACPA, 1994; ACPA & NASPA, 1997), measuring organizational and supervisor supportiveness from a student affairs staff member’s perspective would be congruent with this professional value.

Leader-Member Exchange

Leader-member exchange, or LMX, describes “the role-making processes between a leader and each individual subordinate and the exchange relationship that develops over time” (Yukl, 2006). According to its initial theoretical conception, a leader develops a high-exchange relationship with a few trusted employees by providing favorable outcomes to employees at the leader’s discretion (e.g., greater authority and responsibility, access to information, increased status and visibility, participation in decision making) in exchange for increased work effort and commitment on the employee’s behalf (Yukl; Danserau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Later development of the

theory resulted in a more prescriptive approach, whereby leaders were encouraged to establish and develop high-quality relationships with many subordinates rather than just a few trusted ones (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) due to the positive effects such relationships were found to have within organizations.

Organizational Support Theory

In contrast with leader-member exchange, which is concerned with the quality of the exchange relationship between leader and follower, organizational support theory focuses on the employee's belief regarding how supportive one's organization and supervisor is toward the employee (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kottke & Sharifinski, 1988). Based upon the assumption that employees ascribe person-like characteristics to their organization, organizational support theory posits that employees develop beliefs "concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger et al., 1986) to determine how likely the organization will reward increased employee effort and satisfy the employee's need for praise and approval.

Several studies have measured levels of employee perceived organizational support (POS) and found positive, significant relationships between POS and such outcomes as affective organizational commitment (Allen, 1992; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001), socioemotional needs (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998), and job performance (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Additionally, studies have found that perceived supervisor support (PSS) also plays an important role in forming a more positive relationship between the employee

and the organization (Kottke & Sharifinski, 1988, Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003).

Synergistic supervision, with its emphasis on the supervisor providing opportunities to the employee for professional and personal growth, would seem to have a positive impact on both leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support as the approach is characterized by a commitment to the employee's well-being. Additionally, social exchange may be an appropriate framework to consider the utility of synergistic supervision as the approach seems to imply a give and take, reciprocal relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Winston and Creamer (1997) appeared to suggest this, stating "for a synergistic approach to be realized, the supervisor and each staff member need to establish a relationship based on trust, respect, openness, and mutuality" (p. 198).

Statement of the Problem

Student affairs professional associations have recognized the importance of providing quality, competent supervision to staff members (ACPA Professional Competencies, 2007; Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloane, 2006), yet professional staff members graduating from student affairs master's programs received little to no formal education regarding how to supervise other staff members (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). With the introduction of Winston and Creamer's (1997) synergistic supervision approach, interest in the topic of supervision has increased within the student affairs research literature. However, despite this recent interest, the literature on supervision within the student affairs profession is limited (Cooper, Saunders, Howell, & Bates, 2001; Saunders et al.,

2000; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Additionally, out of the hundreds of educational sessions offered at the 2010 NASPA annual conference, only one session title reflected the topic of supervising professional staff members (NASPA Conference, 2010).

Little empirical research exists within the student affairs literature specifically examining the supervisory relationship between the mid-level manager and his or her direct supervisor. Rather, the literature has primarily focused on the supervision of new professionals (Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, Cooper, 2003; Shupp, 2007; Tull 2006). Though Winston and Creamer (1997) stated “all staff members, no matter the length of their tenure in the field or experience, deserve regular, thoughtful supervision” (p. 212), scant research is available regarding the applicability of the synergistic approach with those responsible for the supervision of other student affairs staff, i.e., mid-level managers.

The Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) designed by Saunders et al., (2000) has been used with new professionals to measure the perceived level of synergistic supervision received, and found a significant, positive relationship between synergistic supervision and job satisfaction and a negative relationship with intention to turnover (Tull, 2006). Missing from the research is to what extent student affairs mid-level managers report receiving synergistic supervision from their supervisor, as measured by the SSS. Additionally, Saunders et al., (2000), in developing the SSS, found a significant, positive relationship between supervisor satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, no relationship has been investigated between synergistic supervision and two organizational variables found to be important in helping to explain the reciprocal nature of dyadic relationships, namely leader-member exchange and organizational and

supervisor support (POS and PSS). Thus, the purpose of this study is to further explore the utility of the synergistic supervision approach with student affairs mid-level managers and examine what relationship, if any, the synergistic approach has with the mid-level manager's level of perceived support from the organization and supervisor and the quality of the exchange relationship between the supervisor and mid-level manager.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between synergistic supervision received by mid-level student affairs professionals and the quality of their exchange relationship with their supervisor and their perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. Research exploring the relationship between synergistic supervision and variables derived from social exchange theory, i.e., LMX, PSS, and POS, would enhance understanding of the value and benefits associated with synergistic supervision.

As few quantitative studies have used the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000), this study attempted to add to the existing literature on the SSS by examining the reliability of subscales developed by the researcher to determine their reliability and usefulness in predicting other organizational outcomes. As the SSS is unidimensional, the researcher developed subscales for the instrument by hypothesizing common factors found among the scale's items.

Research Questions

The research questions explored in this quantitative study examined to what extent, if any, the amount of synergistic supervision received by mid-level student affairs professionals is related to the quality of the exchange relationship they report having with

their supervisor, their perceived level of supervisor support, and their perceived organizational support as measured through existing instruments. Research questions included:

1. What is the reliability of using the following subscales:
 - a) supervisor's decision-making inclusiveness
 - b) exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development
 - c) supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others, and
 - d) supervisor's support for divisional work unitdeveloped by researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000)?
2. For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and
 - a) leader-member exchange (LMX)?
 - b) perceived supervisor support (PSS)?
 - c) perceived organizational support (POS)?
3. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on
 - a) leader-member exchange (LMX)?
 - b) perceived supervisor support (PSS)?
 - c) perceived organizational support (POS)?
4. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of social exchange factors (leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support) on synergistic supervision?

Limitations, Assumptions, Design Controls, and Definition of Key Terms

Limitations and Assumptions

The limitations and assumptions for this study are listed below:

1. This study was limited in selecting participants from only one student affairs professional association, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
2. The study was limited in surveying only one half of the supervisory relationship, the mid-level manager being supervised. The supervisor's perceptions of the relationship were not included in the study due to the difficulty involved with matching responses.
3. All instruments used in the study measured perceptions that may or not accurately reflect reality, resulting in a study limitation. All instruments relied solely on supervisees reporting of data.
4. It was assumed study participants were honest when completing survey instruments and correctly interpreted instrument directions. As self-report bias may be likely in organizational research due to employee concern about the possibility of his or her employer gaining access to responses (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002), the use of self-reported data presents a study limitation.
5. It was also assumed all participants were mid-level student affairs professionals who reported directly to the chief student affairs office or one level below the CSAO and were employed by higher education institutions.

Design Controls

The researcher employed a primarily quantitative approach, reflecting a postpositivistic stance (Creswell, 2003) that an objective reality can be approached and understood through careful measurement. The study design selected was a cross-sectional, non-experimental survey design intended to generalize from a smaller sample to a larger population (Creswell). The study design is cross-sectional in that it measures attitudes in a sample from a population of student affairs mid-level managers at a single point in time (Creswell).

Research approval for the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). To address ethical considerations, the researcher informed participants of the study's purpose and shared confidentiality information via an electronic informed consent letter prior to participants accessing the survey. The consent document informed participants of the voluntary nature of the study and made participants aware they could withdraw participation at any time. Participants indicated consent by selecting an electronic link stating their agreement to participate in the study.

In addition to asking demographic information, the study used three previously existing survey instruments, the Synergistic Survey Scale (SSS), the LMX-7, and the eight-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS). Additionally, perceived supervisor support was measured using an altered version of the eight-item version of the SPOS by substituting the word *supervisor* for the term *work organization* (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Kottke & Sharifinski, 1988). Various researchers have examined the validity and reliability of the instruments used in the current study (LMX-7: Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995;

Hsuing & Tsai, 2009; SPOS: Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; SSS: Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Tull, 2006). Instrument validity refers to evidence the measure is operationalizing the construct it is intended to measure (Fields, 2002), whereas reliability describes the measurement's consistency (Fields).

Definition of Key Terms

Key terms and definitions used in this study are provided below. These terms and definitions are intended to provide the reader a firm understanding of important concepts included in this research study.

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment was defined as “the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they *want* to do so” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p.67).

Chief Student Affairs Officer. The chief student affairs officer (CSAO) was defined as the administrative head of an institution-level student affairs division at an institution of higher education. The CSAO may hold position titles such as vice president for student affairs, chief student affairs officer, chief student affairs administrator, and senior student affairs administrator (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001).

Leader-Member Exchange. Leader-member exchange was defined as a leadership theory describing how a leader develops an exchange relationship over time with subordinates as the two parties influence each other and negotiate the subordinate’s organizational role (Yukl, 2006). The theory posits that leaders develop either high or low-exchange relationships with subordinates. High-exchange relationships are characterized by the leader providing to the subordinate such valued outcomes as more

interesting and desirable tasks, increased responsibility, greater status, information sharing, career development opportunities, tangible rewards and benefits, and personal support and approval. In exchange for these outcomes, subordinates are expected to work harder, be more committed to tasks, exhibit increased loyalty to the leader, and share in the leader's duties. Conversely, low-level exchange relationships exhibit low levels of mutual influence between leader and subordinate (Yukl).

Mid-level Student Affairs Professional. Student affairs mid-level professionals provide support services and other administrative duties linking vertical and horizontal organization hierarchy levels within student affairs divisions (Young, 2007). Student affairs mid-level professional positions include directors and associate directors of such functional areas as admissions, residence life, counseling center, student center, alcohol education, and recreation (Mills, 2009). For this study's purpose, mid-level student affairs professionals were defined as those reporting directly to the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) or one level removed from the person reporting to the CSAO (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003).

Perceived Organizational Support. Perceived organizational support was defined as global beliefs employees develop about an organization regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986).

Perceived Supervisor Support. Perceived supervisor support was defined as the employee's general views of his or her supervisor's value of one's contribution and care about the employee's well-being (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Student Affairs. Student affairs was defined as the “institutional-level organizational unit responsible for dealing with the out-of-class lives of students” (Winston & Creamer, 1997) found at higher education institutions. Departments typically found within student affairs divisions include: (a) student activities, (b) health services, (c) international student services, (d) residence life, (e) judicial affairs, (f) career planning, (g) counseling services, (h) orientation, and (i) multicultural student services (Wheelan & Danganan, 2003).

Synergistic Supervision. Synergistic supervision was defined as a “management function intended to promote the achievement of institutional goals and to enhance the personal and professional capabilities of staff” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 42). Characteristics of synergistic supervision include (a) a dual focus by supervisor regarding organizational goal accomplishment and support of staff in accomplishing personal and professional goals, (b) a joint effort and two-way communication between supervisor and staff member, (c) a focus on competency, and the approach is (d) growth-oriented, (e) goal based, (f) systematic and ongoing, and (g) holistic (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Summary

Although the relationship between supervisor and those supervised is an important one, little research exists examining supervision within the student affairs environment, and professional staff members who are graduates from student affairs masters programs receive little to no formal education on how to supervise other staff (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Several studies focus on how the new student affairs professional experiences the supervisory relationship (Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, & Cooper, 2003; Shupp, 2007;

Tull, 2006), but few examine how the mid-level student affairs professional perceives the relationship with his or her supervisor. This study contributed to the research literature by adding to knowledge regarding supervision within student affairs, and provided a better understanding of how the mid-level professional experiences being supervised.

Additionally, this study added to the research literature regarding the usefulness of the Synergistic Supervision approach (Winston and Creamer, 1997) and Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000) by exploring the applicability of the approach and scale to mid-level student affairs professionals.

This study intended to examine the relationship between synergistic supervision received by student affairs mid-level managers and how mid-level managers report the quality of their exchange relationship with their supervisor, their reported levels of support from their supervisor, and their reported levels of support from their organization. Additionally, this study also examined the reliability of researcher-developed subscales for an instrument intended to measure synergistic supervision.

The supervisory relationship can be interpreted as a reciprocal exchange relationship between supervisor and supervisee (Blau, 1964; Coyle-Shapiro, Shore, Taylor, & Tetrick, 2004), and characterized by organizations and supervisors offering inducements to employees in exchange for their contributions. As such, this study used a social exchange framework through which to examine synergistic supervision, specifically exploring the relationship between the synergistic approach and two concepts derived from social exchange theory: leader-member exchange and organizational support theory.

A comprehensive review and synthesis of relevant literature on the mid-level manager's role in student affairs, supervision within student affairs, and social exchange in the employment relationship (with specific focus on leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support theory) is presented in Chapter Two. Research design, data collection methods, and a description of survey instruments used are presented in Chapter Three. Quantitative findings are presented and discussed in Chapter Four. A summary of findings and implications for future research are found in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Controversy exists within the arena of leadership studies regarding the difference between leadership and management (Yukl, 2006). Some leadership theorists argue the chasm between what the leader values (e.g., flexibility, innovation, and adaptation) versus managerial values (e.g., order, stability, and efficiency) is so great as to make the two roles incompatible with each other (Yukl). The often quoted phrase “managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 21) succinctly reflects this distinction. However, Yukl (2006) argued “associating leading and managing with different types of people is not supported by empirical research; people do not sort so neatly into these two extreme stereotypes” (p. 6). Within many of the activities traditionally considered to be managerial resides the opportunity to employ leadership qualities. Staff member supervision is one such activity that provides the opportunity for a person in a management position to exhibit leadership and foster the leadership growth in others.

Yukl (2006) defined leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 8). Supervisory interactions between leader and staff member provide numerous opportunities, both formal and informal, to influence others regarding organizational goals and objectives. The supervisor has a unique role in helping an organization realize its potential through regular one-to-one conversations with staff members supervised,

engaging in formal goal setting exercises, and providing developmental opportunities for staff members' personal and professional growth.

The student affairs profession has recognized that providing quality staff supervision is an essential competency for professional practice (ACPA Professional Competencies, 2007). Additionally, a survey of new student affairs professionals indicated that “adequate support from their supervisor” was the most desired professional development need (Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2007). However, despite the leadership potential found in supervising staff and the desire among student affairs staff to receive quality supervision, little empirical research has been conducted regarding student affairs supervision (Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Also scarce in the student affairs research literature is how those who are providing supervision to new professionals desiring quality supervision, specifically the student affairs mid-level manager, experience the supervisory relationship with their supervisor. Leadership theories that attempt to explain the nature of dyadic relationships within organizations, such as the one between supervisor and supervisee, may offer insight into the supervisory relationship experienced by the student affairs mid-level manager. One such theory that details the reciprocal relationship between leader and follower is social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which posits a give and take relationship between leader and follower characterized by organizational inducements and employee contributions (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2004).

A primary component of this study is the relationship between the type of supervision student affairs mid-level managers receive and their beliefs regarding how supportive their organization is towards them. Additionally, this study examined the

relationship between supervision received and the student affairs mid-level manager's perception of the quality of the relationship with his or her supervisor. The literature review included three areas of research: (a) student affairs mid-level managers, (b) supervision in student affairs, and (c) social exchange in the employment relationship (with specific focus on leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support theories).

Student Affairs Mid-level Managers

The student affairs mid-level manager, in contrast with the new professional entering the field or the veteran chief student affairs officer, has received sparse attention in the student affairs research literature (Young, 2007). Within the literature, such professionals have been metaphorically described as “lords, squires, and yeoman” (Scott, 1978) denoting their middle status in the academy, “the invisible leaders” (Young, 1990), and “the unsung professionals” (Rosser, 2004). These metaphors reflect a lack of appreciation or understanding from others regarding their contribution to the higher education enterprise.

Synthesizing thirty years of research related to successful student affairs administration, Lovell and Kosten (2000) noted empirical studies focusing on student affairs mid-level manager success did not appear until the 1980s. Out of the twenty-three studies reviewed, only three focused exclusively on middle managers as the population of interest. Rosser (2004) echoed this finding by stating that despite exhibiting professionalism, large numbers, and high attrition rate, mid-level managers continue to lack visibility within the academy, and have received little national attention from educational researchers. Young (2007) concurred, adding mid-level managers “still have

no place in the spotlight” (p. 6) resulting in a lack of current research focusing on this population.

Reflecting upon the paucity of research in the student affairs literature regarding mid-level managers, it is clear this population is one that deserves further study, especially when considering the scope of responsibilities these professionals are entrusted with in their divisions (Young, 2007). By reviewing how these professionals have been defined in the literature, examining their role within student affairs, and exploring the relationship these professionals have with their supervisor, a clearer picture of this student affairs role emerges.

Defining the Student Affairs Mid-level Manager

The research literature has defined the student affairs mid-level manager in various ways. For example, Young (1990) defined a mid-level manager as “one who manages professional staff and/or one or more student affairs functional areas” (p. 10). Mills (1993) expanded the definition, adding middle managers provide support services within student affairs, link vertical and horizontal levels within the organization; always supervise programs and may supervise staff, are responsible for policy implementation and interpretation but not creation, may not have direct student contact but have primary relationships with staff, and have considerable decision-making influence in matters directly relating to their area of expertise and responsibilities. Fey and Carpenter (1996) included reporting line in defining student affairs mid-level managers, denoting the position as reporting directly to the chief student affairs administrator (CSAA) or one level removed from the CSAA, in addition to directing and controlling one or more

student affairs functions or responsible for supervising one or more professional staff members. Rosser and Javinar (2003) defined such professionals as:

those academic or nonacademic support personnel within higher education organizations (e.g., directors and coordinators of student affairs, student housing, admissions, placement, registrar, counseling, financial aid). Usually they report to a senior-level administrator and their positions are differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experiences. They are rarely classified as instructional faculty. (p. 817)

W.W. Young (2007), rather than focusing on where the mid-level professional is found in the organizational hierarchy, used the Student Learning Imperative (ACPA, 1994) to develop a competency-based definition of the student affairs mid-level manager. According to Young, student affairs mid-level managers should be able to (a) describe issues, problems, and opportunities within student affairs so they can effectively 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 institution's academic mission to enhance student learning and development. Interestingly, this definition implies comfort and skill in research and evaluation, yet studies have listed such skills as ones student affairs mid-level managers reported needing the most development (Fey & Carpenter, 1996; Kane, 1982; Semersheim & Keim, 2005).

A succinct definition of the student affairs mid-level manager was offered by Mills (2009). He described the position as one who manages “people, money, information, and programs” (p. 356), and whose work “bridges that of the entry-level

professional and the senior student affairs officer” (p. 356) and classified directors and associate directors of functional departments, facilities, and programs such as admissions, residence life, counseling center, student center, alcohol education, and recreation as student affairs mid-level management positions. Capturing the limitations inherent within the student affairs mid-level manager position, Mills stated:

Middle managers frequently have significant responsibility but may not have the final authority. They implement policy but may not always feel an integral part of the decision-making process. They often supervise staff, but final decisions about staffing levels and compensation may be made by others. They are expected to empower students but may feel powerless themselves. They may have training in a professional specialty but not training for a broader supervisory role. Even with these limitations, the middle manager plays a vital role in the student affairs function on the campuses of institutions of higher education. (p. 355)

Each of the above definitions add clarity to the student affairs mid-level manager position by listing the various responsibilities these professionals hold within student affairs. Additional insight into the student affairs mid-level manager position can also be gained by closely examining how the role is discussed in the literature.

Role of Student Affairs Mid-level Managers

In an attempt to foster a deeper understanding of the student affairs mid-level manager position, much of the research literature has focused on the role such professionals perform on campuses. Scott (1978) stated mid-level managers served three functions: (a) acting as liaisons with external suppliers of human, financial, and material resources; (b) implementing internal resource allocation procedures and insuring

compliance with external requirements; and (c) helping students become familiar with college requirements, standards, and opportunities. Penn (1990) posited student affairs mid-level managers served three distinct roles: counselor, administrator, and student development educator. Though Scott (1978) asserted collegiate mid-level managers did not influence policy, later research (White, Webb, & Young, 1990) indicated student affairs mid-level managers did influence policy both within their division and institutionally. Mills (2009) stated mid-level managers often had influence in decisions directly influencing their areas of responsibility and expertise.

Several studies (Fey & Carpenter, 1996; Gordon, Strode, & Mann, 1993; Kane, 1982) found that mid-level managers ranked having leadership and personnel skills as having high importance to them. Identifying role issues to be resolved for effective performance, Mills (1993) included determining scope of authority, developing staff, and supervisory responsibilities, and later added strategic planning as a role issue to be resolved (Mills, 2009), reflecting the manager's role as "strategy ambassador," providing strategic information to front-line workers and bringing front-line organizational knowledge back to the institution's executive leadership. Emphasizing the role student affairs mid-level managers have in influencing the institutions culture, Mills (2009) stated "interaction with staff and students places student affairs professionals in a unique position to hear institutional myths and to shape institutional traditions" (p. 358).

Identifying a tension within collegiate mid-level managers, Scott (1978) stated these professionals are

oriented to serve faculty, committed to a career in the institution, and satisfied that they are competent and achieve desired results in challenging work. But they are

extremely frustrated by not being taken seriously, by the lack of recognition of their accomplishments, by low pay, by the lack of authority that accompanies their responsibility, and by the lack of direction given them.” (p. 9).

Reviewing the literature on higher education mid-level managers, Johnsrud (1996) echoed Scott’s (1978) findings, listing the mid-level nature of the role, lack of recognition for their contribution, and limited opportunity for advancement as three sources of mid-level manager frustration. Despite these frustrations, however, Grant (2006), in a survey of 1,943 student affairs mid-level managers, found that mid-level managers were satisfied with their positions.

In a national study of 4,000 mid-level collegiate leaders, Rosser (2004) found those mid-level leaders who more positively perceive the support for their career and developmental opportunities, the more satisfied they are with their position and are less likely to leave their organization. She added mid-level leaders “enjoy the trust, guidance, and constructive feedback on their performance from senior administrators, and they respond well to positive mentoring relationships” (Rosser, p. 331). Rosser (2004) also noted to retain mid-level professionals, institutions needed to “provide support for their professional activities and career development; recognize their skills, competence, and expertise” (p. 334).

Adding to Rosser’s (2004) findings, Semersheim and Keim (2005) recommended chief student affairs officers and supervisors “must make conscious efforts to engage these professionals in activities and projects that challenge their growth and support their future development” (p. 46) and should “strive to provide intentionally structured opportunities for those managers who are seeking advancement” (p. 47). Mills (2009)

added that including the mid-level student affairs managers in the organization's planning process produced beneficial results for both the manager and the organization as "the middle manager assumes a sense of ownership and is motivated by the challenge to provide critical, useful information, while the organization benefits because of improved quality of information" (p. 360).

As the literature cited above indicates, the role of the student affairs mid-level manager is enhanced, and the organization also benefits, by a positive, constructive relationship with his or her supervisor. Consequently, it is important to more closely examine the unique aspects of this supervisory relationship in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the student affairs mid-level manager.

The Student Affairs Mid-level Manager and the Chief Student Affairs Officer

As with most employment situations, the relationship between the student affairs mid-level manager and their direct supervisor (often the chief student affairs officer) can help determine how successful the manager will be in his or her role. Unfortunately, little empirical research exists that describes the unique characteristics of this relationship. For example, given the presumed difference in experience and skill sets, how is the supervisory relationship between the student affairs mid-level manager and chief student affairs officer (CSAO) different from the one between the mid-level professional and the entry-level staff member(s) the manager supervises? What expectations do mid-level managers and CSAOs have of each other and how are those expectations negotiated? Analyzing information gathered from interviews with middle managers and supervisors, Mills (2009) wrote "middle managers were mostly interested in knowing expected results and then being provided with the freedom to achieve those results without interference"

(p. 364). Yet, interestingly, Mills added that middle managers also expressed the desire to receive mentoring from supervisors. Winston and Creamer (1997) noted a potential barrier to developing strong supervisory relationships between mid-level managers and supervisors, stating:

These managers deserve close consultation and support from their supervisors as they discharge their duties. There is a reluctance, however, on the part of some staff at this level to request supervision because they are afraid that it may be perceived as incompetence or a means of transferring unpleasant tasks to the boss.

(p. 184)

In the qualitative study of eight senior level student affairs administrators, *Pieces of Eight*, Appleton, Briggs, and Rhatigan (1978) examined the CSAO role from the perspective of those holding the position for several years. Discussing the relationship between the CSAO and those supervised, the authors metaphorically described the supervisory role as

a conductor, not a violinist or a percussion virtuoso (although he may have banged one drum or another for years), nor is he or she implacably the boss. Control is not the game. Rather, our staff leaders enthuse, perceive the long future, challenge to staff to greater productivity, encourage when progress seems to lag. Without playing a note, the conductor uses skill to coordinate the various competencies of the staff upon a single important theme. (p. 74)

Sandeen (1991), in discussing the CSAO role as “manager, mediator, and educator” (p. 5), offered further insight regarding the relationship between CSAO and mid-level managers, stating the CSAO “must establish personnel practices that enable

them to perform their duties, participate in the decision-making process, and have opportunities for professional advancement and growth” (p. 5). Speaking of the student affairs staff in general, Sandeen added the CSAO must earn the support of staff by demonstrating competence, understanding higher education, accepting the time demands of the job, serving as a mentor and teacher to staff, demonstrating integrity, and listening to staff concerns.

Addressing the relationship between CSAO and mid-level manager specifically, Mills (2009) stated there must be “continual communication” (p. 365) between the two with the goal of avoiding surprises. Mills described a reciprocal relationship where middle managers keep supervisors up to date regarding relevant issues impacting the campus environment, and CSAOs keep middle managers informed about issues being discussed at the institution’s executive level so that they may share such information, when appropriate, with lower-level staff.

The research conducted on higher education mid level managers indicates the relationship between the manager and his or her supervisor is a valued one. Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser (2000), in a study of 1,293 mid-level administrators at a ten campus university system, found that worklife issues important to managers include “the quality of their relationships with supervisors and others, the opportunities available for career development and advancement, and the recognition they receive for work well done” (p. 54). Rosser and Javinar (2003), surveying 2,160 student affairs mid-level managers, also found worklife issues such as recognition of competence, department relations, and working conditions had a significant and positive impact on employee morale and job satisfaction. Given the importance of the supervisory relationship between supervisor and

student affairs mid-level manager, developing a better understanding of this relationship can help further understanding of the student affairs mid-level manager's unique role in addition to increasing the knowledge base regarding supervision within student affairs.

In reviewing the literature regarding how the student affairs mid-level manager is defined, the role this position encompasses, and the relationship between the position and its supervisor, it is clear the mid-level manager warrants further study given the critical function the mid-level manager has within the student affairs division. In light of the supervisory responsibilities the mid-level manager has by virtue of his or her position, it is also important to more closely examine how the activity of supervision is discussed within the student affairs literature.

Supervision in Student Affairs

Similar to the lack of research on student affairs mid-level managers, little empirical research has been conducted on the activity of supervision itself within student affairs (Carpenter, Torres, & Winston, 2001; Cooper, Saunders, Howell, & Bates, 2001; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). In addition to the paucity of research found in the student affairs literature regarding supervision, many student affairs practitioners are often inadequately prepared for supervisory responsibilities and pay little attention to this role (Schuh & Carlisle, 1991). Despite the lack of information regarding this important organizational activity, a 1998 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators survey of 921 student affairs administrators found that 55% of individuals surveyed listed supervisors as a top personal influencer in their professional life (Cooper & Miller, 1998).

At its essence, supervision embodies a human relationship between the supervisor and the employee being supervised. Schuh and Carlisle (1991) characterized this relationship as “the interaction that transpires as one staff member provides opportunities, structure, and support to another” (p. 497). Within the student affairs literature, supervision has been defined in various ways. Dalton (1996) described supervising others as “talent development” (p. 498) and included such activities as assessing employees skills and knowledge, creating performance objectives, focusing on performance improvement, rewarding and recognizing performance, providing leadership training to staff, and measuring employee developmental outcomes.

Emphasizing the relationship aspect between supervisor and supervisee, Schuh and Carlisle (1991) defined supervision as a “relationship where one person has the responsibility to provide leadership, direction, information, motivation, evaluation, and support for one or more persons” (p. 497). Keehner (2007) described supervision in terms of the supervisor’s function, stating “the supervisor defines roles, sets expectations, helps staff members connect with each other as well as the department and institution, and develops a relationship of trust and respect” (p. 104). Emphasizing the developmental component embedded in supervision, Arminio and Creamer (2001) stated:

Quality supervision is an educational endeavor demonstrated through principled practices with a dual focus on institutional and individual needs. It requires (a) synergistic relationships between supervisor and staff members, (b) ubiquitous involvement with and constant nurturing of staff members, and (c) a stable and supportive environment to be effective. (p. 42)

Despite an effort by various authors to portray supervision within student affairs as an important developmental activity, Winston and Creamer (1997) noted an incongruent perception regarding how frequently supervision actually occurs. The researchers' staffing survey data found that most student affairs practitioners reported providing supervision to staff every two to four weeks. However, when asked about the amount of supervision they themselves received, "respondents on average reported receiving supervision about half as often as supervisors reported providing it" (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 185). Saunders, Cooper, Winston, and Chernow (2000), in a later study, found similar results regarding frequency of supervisory sessions. Additionally, in case studies of eight different campuses, Winston and Creamer (1997) found that supervision training was either very basic or was not provided. Responding to the need for a more comprehensive approach to supervision within student affairs, Winston and Creamer (1997) offered a model of supervision that has sparked additional research within student affairs, i.e., synergistic supervision.

Synergistic Supervision

Describing the activity of supervision more comprehensively than previous student affairs researchers, Winston and Creamer (1997) stated supervision "is one of the most complex activities that student affairs professionals are called upon to perform" (p. 186) and to perform the activity well required broad knowledge of functional area responsibilities, detailed institutional knowledge, a caring attitude, and strong interpersonal relationship skills. The authors added supervision "frequently is intellectually challenging and emotionally demanding" (p. 186). In their book *Improving Staff Practices in Student Affairs*, Winston and Creamer (1997) offered an approach to

supervision within student affairs called “synergistic supervision” (p. 196), which they defined as a “cooperative effort between the supervisor and staff members that allows the effect of their joint efforts to be greater than the sum of their individual contributions” (p. 196). To emphasize the synergistic aspect of the definition, the authors offered a mathematical metaphor of “ $1+1=3$ ” (p. 196), whereby the joint effort of supervisor and employee working together creates something greater than either one could accomplish alone. Synergistic supervision is characterized as not only having a focus on achieving organizational goals and objectives, but also on supporting staff members in realizing their personal and professional goals (Winston & Creamer). Other important characteristics of the synergistic approach include “joint effort, two-way communication, a focus on competence, growth orientation, proactivity, goal-based, systematic and on-going processes, and holism” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 196).

Synergistic supervision offers a stark contrast from other supervisory approaches, such as authoritarian, laissez faire, and companionable (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The authoritarian supervisor is one who constantly and carefully monitors staff members due to a belief that employees are often immature, lazy, or undependable. Conversely, the laissez faire supervisor allows staff members great latitude in accomplishing their work, and offers supervision only when employees encounter difficulty. Winston and Creamer argued this approach to supervision results in staff members viewing supervision as “an admission of failure” (p. 195). The companionable supervisor is one who seeks to be liked by staff, shields staff from external conflicts, and attempts to achieve harmonious relationships by “being buddies with the staff they supervise and avoid confronting staff members about poor job performance or mistakes in judgment as long as possible”

(p. 195). Though employees are provided significant attention in the companionable approach, Winston and Creamer argued work life could be like “a roller coaster ride of pleasant highs and painful lows” (p. 195) as unpleasant situations among staff are not confronted in the hope members will work it out among themselves. Synergistic supervision, in contrast with the above supervisory approaches, is described as a “helping process, which is designed to support staff as they seek to promote the goals of the organization and to advance their professional development” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 194).

The synergistic supervision process is characterized by the dual focus of accomplishing institutional/unit goals and functional area duties alongside attending to staff members’ personal and professional needs. Reflecting the participatory leadership decision procedure of joint decision (Yukl, 2006), Winston and Creamer (1997) argued for staff participation in organizational goal setting as “staff members need to feel that they have a significant influence on selecting and defining goals and in devising strategies to accomplish them” (p. 197). Additionally, for synergistic supervision to succeed in addressing staff members’ personal and professional well-being, “the supervisor and each staff member need to establish a relationship based on trust, respect, openness, and mutuality” (p. 198) and is developed through two-way communication. In contrast from earlier definitions found in the student affairs literature that described supervision predominantly as a one-way activity on behalf of the supervisor (Dalton, 1996; Schuh & Carlisle, 1991), synergistic supervision is a “cooperative activity in which each party has an important contribution to make” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 198), and requires significant time and energy on both parties to achieve success.

Winston and Creamer's (1997) discussion of synergistic supervision's growth orientation has particular relevance for the supervisors of mid-level managers. The authors provided a useful table containing general issues, life tasks to be faced, and career/professional tasks segmented into approximate age groups and based upon various adult development theories (p. 204). For example, according to the table (p. 204), student affairs professionals in their thirties and early forties (the age group many student affairs mid-level managers fall within) may face such issues as family decisions, managing conflicting career and family obligations, and deciding whether to pursue a higher administrative position such as a chief student affairs officer. The synergistic supervisor is aware of and sensitive to the adult developmental issues such as the ones above in order to provide effective and unique supervision and motivation to the employee. Marsh (2001) also emphasized the importance of the synergistic supervisor recognizing and understanding adult developmental needs, and offered specific ways supervisors could assist employees as they faced various work and life issues based on whether the employee was entry-, early-, mid-, or late-career. Carpenter (2001) concurred, stating "employees of different ages and career stages have different needs that must be taken into account in the synergistic supervision model" (p. 232).

Though little empirical research has been conducted specifically examining the relevancy of synergistic supervision between chief student affairs officers and mid-level managers, Winston and Creamer (1997) addressed the unique aspects of supervising experienced professionals, stating:

All staff members, no matter the length of their tenure in the field or expertise, deserve regular, thoughtful supervision. The kind of supervision provided these

staff members, however, is considerably different from that provided new professionals or staff new to their positions or this institution. These staff members, for example, generally do not need assistance in determining what tasks need to be performed, instruction about commonly accepted practices, or explanations of how the informal administrative structure functions. (p. 212)

Agreeing with the need for meaningful supervision to occur with student affairs mid-level managers, Stock-Ward and Javorek (2003) stated:

One of the challenges for supervisors working with supervisees at this level is to not believe that the supervisee is so advanced the supervisor has nothing to offer. Supervisors still have the responsibility to provide sufficient stimulation and challenge to facilitate the professional growth of the supervisee, regardless of the developmental level of that supervisee. (p. 84)

Noting the different developmental needs as compared with newer professionals, Winston and Creamer (1997) recommended the following synergistic supervisory activities for managing mid-level professionals:

- (a) frankly appraising the manager's unit's productivity and contribution to divisional goals,
- (b) serving as a sounding board for ideas or strategies when dealing with difficult issues or personnel, institutional perception of manager's unit and his or her performance,
- (c) fostering manager participation in establishing and evaluating personal performance goals,
- (d) reminding manager of difficult, persistent issues that he or she may want to avoid,

- (e) offering information and advanced warning regarding organizational change,
- (f) occasionally listening to manager's discussion of personal concerns,
- (g) honestly assessing manager and suggesting improvements for career advancement, and
- (h) praising and encouraging when goals are achieved.

Since Winston and Creamer's 1997 study, a few authors within the student affairs literature have explored the synergistic supervision process (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, Cooper, 2003; Marsh, 2001; Randall, 2007; Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Shupp, 2007; Tull, 2006). Saunders et al., (2000) developed a quantitative instrument, the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), to assess staff members' perceptions of various aspects of their supervisory relationship, and found the scale to be valid for both professional and support staff. The researchers surveyed 380 student affairs members at fifteen different institutions and found the SSS had a significant relationship with measurements of supervisor satisfaction and organizational commitment (Saunders et al., 2000). Gender, ethnicity, age, functional area, or years in current position was not found to account for significant SSS scores among respondents. Additionally, in a regression analysis using the SSS as the criterion variable and Winston and Creamer's (1997) *Student Affairs Staff Survey, Form B*, the researchers found that synergistic supervision was related to (a) discussion of exemplary performance, (b) discussion of long-term career goals, (c) discussion of inadequate performance, (d) frequency of informal performance appraisals, and (e) discussion of personal attitudes (Saunders et al., 2000).

In a study of 1,233 new student affairs professionals, Tull (2006) also quantitatively explored synergistic supervision using the SSS, and found a positive significant correlation between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction, and a negative correlation between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and intention to turnover. Additionally, Tull (2006) found that length of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee did not influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and job satisfaction, or between synergistic supervision and intention to turnover. Other authors (Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, & Cooper, 2003; Renn & Hodges, 2007) have emphasized the importance of supervisors using synergistic supervision in creating a supportive environment for new student affairs professionals.

Exploring synergistic supervision from both a quantitative and qualitative approach, Randall (2007) surveyed 237 student affairs professionals working at several public Michigan universities. She found, regardless of position title, gender, race/ethnicity, age, length of time in profession, or professional organizational membership, respondents reported their supervisor's actions were congruent with synergistic supervision components. Through qualitative interviews with nine student affairs professionals, Randall discerned four themes emerging from participants' supervisory experiences (both as supervisees and as supervisors) that resembled synergistic supervision components, namely, (a) mentoring, (b) balance, (c) focus on students, and (d) creating opportunities.

Reporting data from interviews with twenty student affairs professionals identified by other professionals to be high quality supervisors, Arminio and Creamer

(2001) found quality supervisors used synergistic supervision components by consistently listening to, managing, providing role modeling for, observing, setting context for, motivating, giving direction to, and caring about employees. Emphasizing the balance required by supervisors implementing the synergistic approach, the researchers stated:

Supervisors must learn to be omnipresent in the lives of their staff members without being oppressive or controlling. They must be with staff members in meaningful and humane ways and still allow staff members autonomy in their work and personal lives. This type of involvement requires an artful walking of a fine line. It is this developmental complexity and sophistication that should be the focus of training and education for supervisors to achieve involvement and autonomy simultaneously. (p. 42)

In reviewing the literature, it is apparent attention has been given to how both the new professional and the organization benefits when those professionals receive supervision consisting of synergistic supervision components. However, missing from the student affairs research literature on supervision is quantitative research on the amount of synergistic supervision mid-level managers perceive they receive from their supervisor and what benefits the organization receives from the mid-level manager when such supervision occurs. Additionally, as the supervisory relationship at its core consists of two individuals, it would be appropriate to examine this relationship through a dyadic leadership theoretical approach that views “leadership as a reciprocal influence process between the leader and another person” (Yukl, 2006, p.16). Social exchange theory attempts to explain the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers but is rarely mentioned in the student affairs literature. The present study addressed this gap in the

literature by focusing specifically on synergistic supervision and the student affairs mid-level manager, and by examining the manager's supervisory relationship from a social exchange perspective, specifically through the theories of leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support.

Social Exchange in the Employment Relationship

The employment relationship can be viewed as a reciprocal one whereby an employee provides labor and other contributions deemed positive by the employer in exchange for something the employee values. Though this relationship may begin as a simple economic exchange, social exchange theory posits the employment relationship can consist of more than just the exchange of labor for monetary compensation. Blau (1964) distinguished between economic and social exchange stating the two differed in regard to specificity of obligations. An economic exchange centers around a formal, agreed-upon contract specifying what is to be exchanged (e.g., a home mortgage agreement), whereas a social exchange “involves the principle that one person does another favor, and while there is a general expectation of some future return, its exact nature is definitely *not* stipulated in advance” (p. 93). According to Blau, social exchange tends to “engender feelings of personal obligation, gratitude and trust” (p. 94), and it is “the exchange of the underlying support that is the main concern of the participants” (p. 95).

Reciprocity plays a significant role in attempting to explain exchange relationships, such as the one between employer and employee. Regarding the exchange relationship's reciprocal nature, Gouldner (1960) stated social system stability “depends in part on the mutually contingent exchange of gratifications, that is, on reciprocity as

exchange” (p. 168). He posited a norm of reciprocity operated within social relations and that norm made two demands: (a) people should help those that have helped them, and (b) people should not harm those who have helped them. From this norm, Gouldner concluded “if you want to be helped by others you must help them” (p. 173).

Additionally, when one party provides a benefit to another, a sense of obligation is created whereby the recipient becomes indebted to the provider until the recipient repays. Where there is a distinctly defined status difference among parties (e.g., supervisor and supervisee), Gouldner stated the norm of reciprocity provides a “second-order defense of stability” (p. 175) that provides additional motivation to conform with status roles. Using supervisor and supervisee as an example, the supervisor may feel compelled by the reciprocity norm to provide positive benefits (e.g., public recognition, sincere praise, career developmental opportunities) to the supervisee when he or she have performed one’s duties well, and, conversely, the supervisee may feel obligated to perform above and beyond what is required from his or her position based upon wanting to “repay” the supervisor for the beneficial treatment received.

Two types of social exchanges have received significant research attention in organizational management literature: leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived organizational support (POS) (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2004; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Both research threads attempt to provide insight into the employment relationship, with LMX focusing on how leaders develop exchange relationships with subordinates over time (Yukl, 2006) and POS describing how employees develop global beliefs regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). According to

Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2004), both concepts “extend social exchange theory by highlighting which inducements are important in prompting employee reciprocation and thus present clear prescriptive guidelines for organizations to fully realize employee contributions” (p. 14).

Leader-Member Exchange

Originally conceived as “vertical dyad linkage theory” due to its initial exclusive focus on the reciprocal relationship that exists between a person who has direct authority over another person (Yukl, 2006), leader-member exchange (LMX) has evolved into a leadership theory that attempts to explain how a “leader develops an exchange relationship over time with each subordinate as the two parties influence each other and negotiate the subordinate’s role in the organization” (Yukl, 2006, p. 117). In its initial version, vertical dyad linkage theory was used to distinguish between supervision and leadership (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), wherein supervision reflected an exchange relationship that relied primarily on the formal employment contract to influence employee behavior, and leadership was alternatively concerned with interpersonal exchange between supervisor and employee. Describing the interpersonal exchange, Dansereau et al. stated:

The supervisor for his part can offer the outcomes of job latitude, influence in decision making, open and honest communications, support of the member’s actions, and confidence in and consideration for the member, among others. The member can reciprocate with greater than required expenditures of time and energy, the assumptions of greater responsibility, and commitment to the success of the entire unit or organization, among others. (p. 49)

Interestingly, the initial study examining vertical dyad linkage theory had a connection with the student affairs profession, as the subjects of Dansereau et al.'s study were 60 managers of a large public university's housing division.

According to vertical dyad linkage theory, the more latitude a supervisor offered a subordinate in negotiating job-related matters, the more likely the supervisor was to use leadership, rather than supervision, with the subordinate (Dansereau et al., 1975). Additionally, the theory asserted leaders established over time either low or high exchange relationships, with most leaders having high exchange relationships with only a few trusted subordinates (due to time and resource constraints on the leader) based on personal compatibility and subordinate competence and dependability (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Yukl, 2006). This differential treatment by the supervisor toward subordinates led to the formation of "in" and "out" groups among subordinates within the organization, with members of the "in group" receiving additional benefits such as greater status, influence, and attention from the leader in exchange for increased work effort, initiative, and loyalty to the leader (Dansereau et al., 1975; Yukl, 2006). Those in the "out group," according to the theory, experienced relationships with the supervisor characterized by low trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

In a revision from the dichotomous structure of "in" groups and "out" groups, LMX was later re-conceptualized as a potentially evolving relationship between leader and subordinate, with stages of the relationship reflecting a movement from a transactional nature based on individual self-interest to a more transformational leadership quality focused on strengthening the organizational team (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). This "Leadership Making" model (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Graen & Uhl-Bien,

1995) begins with a formal “stranger” stage, wherein leader and follower operate from a purely economic exchange standpoint. This beginning stage is followed by an “acquaintance” stage as leader and follower test their relationship by engaging in exchanges where favors are quickly reciprocated within a limited time frame, however a high sense of trust and loyalty is still not present. According to the model, the final stage in the leader-follower relationship is the “mature” stage where leader and follower exhibit highly developed exchanges that may not be immediately reciprocated and where both count on each other for loyalty and support (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Yukl, 1996).

In contrast to the scarcity of high-exchange relationships found in vertical dyad linkage theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), the revised theory proposed that organizations benefited by increasing the number of high-exchange relationships among members (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Similar to Winston and Creamer’s (1997) description of synergistic supervision, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) placed emphasis “not on how managers discriminate among their people but rather on how they may work with each person on a one-on-one basis to develop a partnership with each of them” (p. 229). Graen and Uhl-Bien’s (1991) Leadership-Making Model also identified several immediate supervisor activities that correspond with recommended supervisor activities found in Winston and Creamer’s (1997) synergistic supervision model. Activities indicating high quality relationships included (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991):

- (a) provide special information through which the subordinate can learn how the company operates,
- (b) expose the subordinate to information regarding changes to be made,
- (c) give the subordinate challenging assignments,

- (d) talk about the subordinate's strengths with higher management,
- (e) prepare the subordinate for difficult assignments,
- (f) advise the subordinate on long-range career plans,
- (g) delegate to the subordinate enough authority to complete important assignments,
- (h) advise the subordinate on promotion opportunities,
- (i) confidentially advise the subordinate on career problems, and
- (j) include the subordinate's input in decisions for which only the boss was responsible.

Numerous studies have been conducted on LMX and its relationship to other organizational outcomes (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Lee, 2005; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997; Yukl, 2006). Significant relationships have been found between LMX and job performance, supervisor satisfaction, overall satisfaction, organizational commitment, role conflict, role clarity, member competence, and employee intention to turnover (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Additional research has found LMX to be significantly related to organizational citizenship behaviors, defined as discretionary behaviors exhibited by the employee that go beyond their prescribed role (Ilies et al., 2007).

Measurement of LMX has evolved from a two-item scale which measures negotiating latitude (Dansereau et al., 1975) to a widely used seven-item scale, the LMX-7 (Scandura & Graen, 1984). Example items from the LMX-7 scale ask "How well does your leader recognize your potential?", "How well does your leader understand your job

problems and needs?”, and “Do you usually know where you stand with your leader...do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The scale is intended to assess the core question “How effective is your working relationship with your leader?” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 236).

A review of the LMX literature reveals conflicting findings on whether LMX is a uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional construct (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Greguras & Ford, 2006; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Dienesch and Liden (1986) argued LMX was a multi-dimensional construct consisting of the following sub-dimensions: (a) contribution to the exchange, defined as the “perception of the amount, direction, quality of work-oriented activity each member puts forth toward the mutual goals (explicit or implicit) of the dyad” (p. 624), (b) loyalty, “the expression of public support for the goals and the personal character of the other member of the dyad” (p. 625), and (c) affect, “the mutual affection members of the dyad have for each other based primarily on interpersonal attractiveness rather than work or professional values” (p. 625). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) agreed that LMX had multiple dimensions, but theorized the sub-dimensions as respect, trust, and obligation, stating:

An offer will not be made and accepted without (1) mutual respect for the capabilities of the other, (2) the anticipation of deepening reciprocal trust with the other, and (3) the expectation that interacting obligation will grow over time as career-oriented social exchanges blossom into a partnership. (p. 237)

Liden and Maslyn (1998) extended the discussion on dimensionality by adding “professional respect,” defined as “the perception of the degree to which each member of the dyad has built a reputation, within and/or outside the organization, of excelling at his

or her line of work” (p. 50). Using the four sub-dimensions of contribution, loyalty, affect, and professional respect, Liden and Maslyn (1998) developed the LMX-MDM scale. However, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) argued the LMX-7 is “the most appropriate and recommended measure of LMX” (p. 236), due to expanded measures being highly correlated with the LMX-7 and producing the same effects. Yukl (2006) added that it is unclear whether the multi-dimensional scales are more useful than the unidimensional LMX-7 due to the limited amount of research using the LMX-MDM.

According to Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2006), social exchange theory “assumes that there is a clear demarcation between the inducements offered and the contributions expected, where the exchange in commodities is separated by an unspecified period of time” (p. 19). Leader-member exchange is one attempt to illuminate what organizational inducements elicit employee contributions by looking at the quality of the relationship between leader and follower. A separate, yet related, concept, Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) examines organizational inducements within a social exchange framework by attempting to understand the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization.

Perceived Organizational and Supervisor Support

The concept of perceived organizational support (POS), like leader-member exchange, also derives from social exchange theory. In defining POS, Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) theorized employees ascribe person-like characteristics to their organization and develop “global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (p. 501), in an effort to ascertain how likely the organization is to reward increased work

effort and meet the employee's need for praise and approval. Placing POS within the social exchange paradigm, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) stated:

First, on the basis of the reciprocity norm, POS should produce a felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help the organization reach its objectives. Second, the caring, approval, and respect counted by POS should fulfill socioemotional needs, leading employees to incorporate organizational membership and role status into their identity. Third, POS should strengthen employees' beliefs that the organization recognizes and rewards increased performance (i.e., performance-reward expectancies). These processes should have favorable outcomes both for employees (e.g., increased job satisfaction and positive mood) and for the organization (e.g., increased affective commitment and performance, reduced turnover). (p. 699)

Further exploring POS within a social exchange theoretical framework, Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001), examined the role reciprocity plays regarding perceived organizational support. In a study of 450 postal plant employees, the researchers found a significant relationship between POS and employees' reported sense of felt obligation (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Additionally, the study found the relationship between POS and felt obligation to be stronger for employees who indicated a high-exchange ideology with their employing organization compared to those who reported a low-exchange ideology (Eisenberger et al., 2001).

In an effort to measure POS, Eisenberger et al. (1986) developed the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS). The 36-item instrument, utilizing a 7-point Likert-scale, asked respondents to indicate their agreement to such items as "The

organization takes pride in my work.”, “The organization appreciates extra effort from me.”, and “The organization really cares about my well-being.” (Eisenberger et al., p.502). Surveying 361 employees from various types of organizations, Eisenberger et al. found that employees did develop beliefs concerning how much their organization valued their contribution and cared for them. Additionally, in a survey of 71 private high school teachers, the researchers found POS reduced absenteeism and that the reduction was greater for those respondents who reported a strong exchange ideology with their organization than those with a weak exchange ideology (Eisenberger et al.).

According to the theory of organizational support developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), three forms of perceived favorable treatment by the organization toward the employee should result in increased POS, specifically, (a) fairness, (b) supervisor support, and (c) organizational rewards and job conditions. Fairness is defined as fair decisions concerning resource allocation, formal rules and policies concerning decisions affecting employees, accurate notice by the organization before decisions are made, valuing employee input, and treating employees with dignity and respect (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Supervisor support reflects that, in addition to forming views regarding the organization’s level of support, employees also form views pertaining to what extent supervisors value their work and care about their well-being, and that these views contribute to employee POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger). Organizational rewards and job conditions refer to such organizational practices as recognition, pay, promotions, job security, autonomy, role stressors, and provided training (Rhoades & Eisenberger). Organizational support theory assumes that organizational rewards and job conditions contribute less strongly to POS if the employee believes the rewards and conditions are

required, rather than discretionary actions, on the organization's behalf (Rhoades & Eisenberger).

In a review of 73 studies on POS, Rhodes and Eisenberger (2002) found fairness to be the strongest antecedent of POS when supervisor support and organizational rewards, and favorable job conditions were controlled. Supervisor support was found to be the second strongest antecedent for POS, with organizational rewards and favorable job conditions the third strongest among the three forms of perceived favorable treatment studied (Rhodes and Eisenberger).

Several quantitative studies have used the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS), developed by Eisenberger et al., (1986) to explore POS. Positive relationships have been found between POS and other variables such as affective organizational commitment (Allen, 1992; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, Rhoades, 2001; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001), socioemotional needs (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998), organizational justice, inclusion, and recognition (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002), and employee attendance and job performance (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990).

Additionally, POS has been found to be a distinct construct from leader-member exchange (LMX) (Wayne et al., 2002), but results from the literature differ on whether a reciprocal relationship exists between the two constructs. Using the statistical technique of path analysis, Wayne et al. (2002) found the path between POS and LMX to be significant, but found the reverse path between LMX and POS to not be significant in predicting outcomes such as organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and performance ratings. These results conflict with an earlier study by

Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997) that indicated a reciprocal relationship existed between LMX and POS. Wayne et al. (2002) suggested organizational context could play a role in determining whether or not LMX influences POS.

A distinction exists between LMX and POS, and the function of positive interactions between the employee and supervisor. According to organizational support theory, supervisor support contributes to a more favorable relationship between the employee and the organization, whereas in LMX, positive interactions between employee and supervisor contribute to a more constructive relationship between the two (Eisenberger, Jones, Aselage, & Sucharski, 2004). Eisenberger et al. (2004) stated because the supervisor “is an important source of information, she is able to influence whether employees attribute favorable or unfavorable treatment to the actions of the supervisor, the organization, or both” (p. 211).

Narrowing the concept of perceived organizational support to the role the supervisor plays in employees’ perceptions of being supported, Kottke and Sharifinski (1988) developed the Survey of Perceived Supervisory Support (SPSS) by changing the reference in the SPOS from “organization” to “supervisor.” In a survey of 216 municipal employees, the researchers found the SPSS mirrored characteristics of the SPOS. Additionally, survey respondents reported more support from their supervisors than from the organization as a whole. Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberg, Sucharski, and Rhoades (2002) extended this research by using a panel design to examine the relationship of perceived supervisory support (PSS) to temporal change in POS and vice-versa. Surveying a random sample of 314 university alumni, Eisenberger et al. (2002) found PSS to be positively related to temporal change in POS, but no statistical

significance in the relationship between initial POS and temporal change in PSS. Based on this finding, the researchers concluded perceived supervisor support leads to perceived organizational support. Additionally, Eisenberger et al. found that supervisors with high perceived organizational status were considered by employees to “more completely embody the organization’s basic character, leading to a stronger relationship between PSS and POS” (p. 569).

Further studies have examined the important role the supervisor plays in the formation of an employee’s level of perceived organizational support (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). Emphasizing how employees can often view the supervisor as the organization personified, Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) stated:

Because supervisors act as agents of the organization in directing and evaluating employees, subordinates tend to attribute the supportiveness of such treatment, in part, to the organization rather than solely to the supervisor’s personal inclinations. As a consequence, perceptions of supervisors’ support have a strong influence on subordinates’ POS. (p. 689)

Surveying 248 retail employees, the researchers found that the supervisor’s own sense of organizational support impacted, in part, subordinate perceptions and performance (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). In other words, when supervisors feel they are supported by the organization, they are likely to treat subordinates supportively. This finding has important implications for chief student affairs officers who supervise mid-level managers, as those managers are often responsible for the supervision of other employees within the student affairs division.

Examining the relationship between perceived supervisor support and affective commitment to the supervisor, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) found that when employees attribute favorable intrinsically satisfying job conditions (i.e., feeling of personal accomplishment, opportunity to use competencies, and opportunities for challenging tasks) as acts of caring on behalf of the supervisors, employees also reported feeling a stronger sense of emotional attachment to the supervisor. Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) also found the supervisor's influence to be stronger "in the area of such favorable job conditions as providing opportunities for challenge and personal development than in the array of extrinsic rewards" (p. 265) such as pay raises and fringe benefits, leading the researchers to conclude that "supervisors would be well advised to act primarily upon intrinsically satisfying aspects of the job in order to build a constructive relationship with employees" (p. 265). These findings would appear to have importance for the synergistic supervisor, as the synergistic supervision model emphasizes the importance of providing employees opportunities for growth and development (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Both leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support provide insight into the social exchange relationship between supervisor and supervisee. As Wayne et al. (2002) stated "employees who perceive a high level of organizational support or have a high-quality exchange with their supervisor feel a sense of indebtedness and reciprocate in terms of attitudes and behaviors that benefit the exchange partner" (p. 591). Thus, examining the relationship between synergistic supervision and these two social exchange concepts could add further insight into how such supervision might

benefit the student affairs mid-level manager, his or her supervisor, and the student affairs organization.

Summary

Despite being considered by some to be the invisible leaders within the student affairs profession, the student affairs mid-level manager has “the greatest potential of any group of administrators to effect collaboration and change in an institution” (Young, 2007, p. 4). The impact these professionals have to positively shape the units they are responsible for and the developmental influence they have in leading others through their supervision is considerable. As a review of the literature has shown, more research of this population is needed to develop a better understanding of the contributions these professionals make within student affairs.

Additional research is also needed regarding the activity of supervision with student affairs and how this function provides opportunities for leadership. Winston and Creamer’s (1997) model of synergistic supervision provides a developmentally based framework through which to examine supervision, and several studies have explored how this model is experienced by new student affairs professionals. Missing from the student affairs literature is research detailing how those responsible for providing supervision to entry-level professionals, i.e., mid-level managers, are being supervised and whether the synergistic model is a useful framework for the supervisors of mid-level managers.

As the supervisory relationship can be seen as a reciprocal one between leader and follower, social exchange theory offers a relevant lens through which to view this give and take relationship. Two concepts emanating from social exchange theory, leader-member exchange and organizational support, provide insight into what organizational

inducements can result in increased employee contribution. Determining if synergistically supervising the mid-level manager is related to those managers perceiving their organization to be more supportive and experiencing a higher quality of relationship with their leader could enhance understanding of both the mid-level manager and supervision within student affairs.

This study's research questions and a description of the methods employed to collect the data are found in Chapter Three. Chapter Four contains the quantitative data analysis related to the research questions. Chapter Five concludes the study by presenting a summary of the findings and implications for future research.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The concept of synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) provides rich opportunities for further exploration of supervisory activity within the student affairs profession. As Janosik and Creamer (2003) stated:

This type of supervision recognizes the need to obtain the goals of the organization but it also recognizes the developmental needs of the staff member. Accordingly, both the supervisor and the employee must learn how to devote greater energies toward joint efforts, two-way communication, a focus on competence and goals, and an orientation toward personal and professional growth. (p. 9)

Though studies have been conducted regarding synergistic supervision and new student affairs professionals (Randall, 2007; Shupp, 2007; Tull, 2006), little research has explored the relevance of the synergistic approach for those often responsible for the supervision of new student affairs staff members, i.e., the mid-level professional. Additionally, Winston and Creamer (1997) posited synergistic supervision could increase loyalty to one's supervisor, institution, and unit, in response to the supervisor showing sincere concern and support for the supervisees' growth and development. However, no quantitative research has been conducted that has explored whether a relationship exists between synergistic supervision and two concepts found to be important in explaining the reciprocal nature of the supervisory relationship, leader-member exchange and perceived organizational and supervisor support.

This chapter will outline the research design and methodological procedures used in this study, with specific focus on research questions posed, population and sample selected, data collection and instrumentation, and statistical methods implemented in data analysis. This quantitative study, using individual mid-level student affairs professionals as the unit of analysis, was intended to explore to what extent synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) received by the mid-level professional is related to the professional's perception of the quality of his or her exchange relationship with one's supervisor, and the mid-level professional's perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. To address the study's purpose, a survey consisting of three existing instruments was developed and distributed to the sample population in a manner designed to solicit a sufficient return.

Research Questions

Within the context of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the reliability of using subscales (supervisor's decision-making inclusiveness, exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development, supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others, and supervisor's support for divisional work unit) developed by researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston & Chernow, 2000)?
2. For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and
 - a) leader-member exchange (LMX)?
 - b) perceived supervisor support (PSS)?

- c) perceived organizational support (POS)?
3. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on
 - a) leader-member exchange (LMX)?
 - b) perceived supervisor support (PSS)?
 - c) perceived organizational support (POS)?
 4. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of social exchange factors (leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived supervisor support (PSS), and perceived organizational support (POS)) on synergistic supervision?

Research Design

This cross-sectional study used a non-experimental survey design (Creswell, 2003). The study design is cross-sectional in that it measures attitudes in a sample from a population of mid-level student affairs professionals at a single point in time (Creswell). This quantitative design was selected to generalize from a sample of mid-level student affairs professionals to a larger population so that inferences can be made about how perceived level of synergistic supervision received is related to leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support (Creswell). Cost and efficiency were also secondary reasons a quantitative approach was selected over a qualitative one. As it would be extremely difficult to measure the relationship between synergistic supervision and leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support in every student affairs mid-level professional in the

United States, the use of a quantitative survey with appropriate sampling techniques was determined to be the best choice for the research questions posed.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of all mid-level student affairs administrators holding membership in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), a generalist organization consisting of seven regions and to which over 11,000 student affairs administrators from a wide variety of institutions, geographical areas, and administrative positions belong (NASPA, 2008). According to the 2008 annual report, 6,669 student affairs professionals were listed as “Professional Affiliates.” The researcher requested and received from NASPA an Excel spreadsheet of members, which included members’ name, title, institution, mailing address, and phone number.

Student affairs mid-level professionals were selected as the population of interest for the current study due to their significant role within their divisions and institutions (Mills, 2009; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Semersheim & Keim, 2005). As Mills (2009) stated, these managers are “the knowledge professionals of student affairs programs and have an important influence on each student’s development and that of staff members who will be the professional leaders of the next generation” (p. 369). Researching how these professionals perceive the supervisory relationship with their respective supervisors will not only increase knowledge regarding mid-level student affairs professionals, but also add to the literature pertaining to supervision within student affairs.

For this study’s purpose, mid-level student affairs professionals are defined as those student affairs professionals reporting directly to the chief student affairs officer

(CSAO) or one level removed from the person reporting to the CSAO (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003). Usually these professionals are academic or nonacademic support personnel, and have position titles of director of such functional student affairs areas as student housing, financial aid, admissions, placement, registrar, student health centers, student recreation centers, multicultural programs, counseling, and student unions (Mills, 2009). They are rarely classified as instructional faculty (Rosser, 2004).

Upon receipt of the NASPA membership list, the researcher deleted those names with titles of vice-president, assistant director, and coordinator, in an initial attempt to remove as many senior- and entry-level professionals from the survey sample as possible. All members with director listed in their title remained on the list, consistent with the definition of mid-level professional used in this study. Additionally, the list requested contained only those professionals with six or more years in the student affairs field so as to further eliminate entry-level staff members from the sample population.

As a total of eight variables were examined within the study, a sufficient sample was required to ensure statistical confidence. Field (2009) suggested researchers conducting exploratory factor analysis have a sample of at least 300 cases. In order to obtain a sample size of $n = 300$, a sample population size of $N = 1,200$ was developed from the remaining names on the NASPA membership list using an online randomizer found at www.randomizer.org. With a sample population of $N = 1,200$, a 25% survey return rate would reach the necessary sample size of $n = 300$.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Three previously established instruments were used in this study: perceived level of synergistic supervision received was measured using the 22-item Synergistic

Supervision Scale developed by Saunders, Cooper, Winston, and Chernow (2000); leader-member exchange was measured using the seven-item LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995); perceived organizational support (POS) was measured using the eight-item short form of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002); and perceived supervisor support (PSS) was measured using the same eight items used to assess POS modified by replacing the words *work organization* with the word *supervisor* (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberg, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2006; Kottke & Sharifinski, 1988). Necessary permission from the authors was obtained for all three instruments.

Survey data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire distributed to the population sample via the internet. This method was selected to produce a large return rate, and was considered to be more efficient, less costly, and more environmentally sensitive than mailed surveys. A team of students at the researcher's institution assisted in finding e-mail addresses for the participants through on-line campus directories and internet search engines. Study participants were initially contacted by an e-mail message briefly explaining the study's purpose and providing a survey hyper-text link. Participants were given 15 business days to complete the survey. Participants accessing the survey via the link were taken to an informed consent page providing a study overview and confidentiality and consent statement, which needed to be confirmed before moving forward with the survey. To strengthen response rate, non-respondents were contacted via e-mail reminder on the sixth work day the survey was active (Fink, 2006). Reminder e-mails again explained the study's purpose and invited participants to access the on-line survey.

Synergistic Supervision Scale

The Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000), or SSS, was developed “to help researchers better understand the components of effective staff supervision in higher education settings” (p. 183). Employing Winston and Creamer’s (1997) synergistic supervision as its conceptual framework, the 22-item scale was “designed to assess staff members’ perceptions of various aspects of their current supervisor relationship and activities” (p. 183). Consistent with the synergistic supervision approach, the scale is intended to measure the following supervisor behaviors, (a) concern about staff members’ personal and career development, (b) equitable staff treatment, (c) management that encourages productivity, (d) cooperative problem solving with staff, (e) systematic goal-setting, and (f) two-way communication and mutual feedback (Saunders et al.). The SSS is operationalized using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never or almost never and 5 = always or almost always), with the sum of the items reflecting the level of perceived synergistic supervision received by the respondent from the supervisor.

Saunders et al. (2000) tested the internal consistency reliability of the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) by calculating a Cronbach alpha co-efficient. An alpha co-efficient of .94 was found for the total scale (Saunders et al.). A range of item correlations between .44 to .75 was found for the item totals (Saunders et al.). Survey authors tested the concurrent validity of the SSS by correlating survey scores to scores on the Index of Organizational Reaction (IOR) (Smith, 1976) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Porter & Smith, 1970). The IOR measures satisfaction with supervision and perceived productivity, and the OCQ measures strength

of identification and organizational involvement (Saunders et al.) The authors found the Pearson product-moment correlation between the IOR and SSS was .91 ($n = 275$, $p < .001$), and .64 ($n = 275$, $p < .001$) between the SSS and the OCQ (Saunders et al.). In a later study, Tull (2006) found the level of synergistic supervision received by new student affairs professionals ($n = 435$), as measured by the SSS, to be significantly and positively related to job satisfaction, and negatively related to intention to turnover.

The Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) was designed without subscales. As a component of the current study, the researcher developed four subscales for the purpose of conducting statistical regression analysis with other study variables. The researcher developed the four subscales by examining each of the 22 items and grouping items together based upon common thematic elements. After grouping common items, the researcher reviewed Winston and Creamer's (1997) discussion on synergistic supervision to determine if support for the subscales could be found in the literature. Through this process, the researcher created the following subscales: *Decision-making Inclusiveness* (SSS items # 1, 2, 4, 7, and 21), *Exhibiting Interest in Personal/Professional Development* (SSS items # 5, 6, 8, 10, 15, and 20), *Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others* (SSS items # 3, 11, 12, 16, 19, and 22), and *Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit* (SSS items # 9, 13, 14, 17, and 18). The developed subscales have not been tested for reliability, as determining internal consistency is a part of the current study.

Example items in the *decision-making inclusiveness* subscale were "My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities," and "My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution." The *exhibiting interest in personal/professional*

development subscale contained such items as “My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind whether it is personal or professional,” and “My supervisor shows that he/she cares about me as a person.” The *fair and equitable treatment* subscale included such items as “My supervisor criticizes staff members in public,” and “My supervisor has favorites on the staff.” Example items in the *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* subscale included “My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution,” and “When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.” A complete listing of subscale items is contained in Appendix A.

LMX-7

The LMX-7 was designed to measure the quality of the exchange relationship found between the member and his or her leader, with the central question being “How effective is your working relationship with your leader?” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the development of leader-member exchange, or LMX, “is based on the characteristics of the working relationship as opposed to a personal or friendship relationship, and this trust, respect, and mutual obligation refer specifically to the individuals’ assessments of each other in terms of their professional capabilities and behaviors” (p. 237). Though some researchers have used longer questionnaires in an attempt to identify separate dimensions of the LMX theory (Liden & Maslyn, 1998), Gerstner and Day (1997), in a meta-analytic review of 79 LMX studies, found the LMX-7 instrument “appears to provide the soundest psychometric properties of all available LMX measures” (p. 837).

The LMX-7 is operationalized using a 5-point Likert-type scale with the sum of the items reflecting the level of LMX as perceived by the respondent (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Past studies have indicated high internal reliability for the instrument, with Gerstner and Day's (1997) meta-analytic review finding a higher Cronbach alpha (.89) for the LMX-7 than for the mean of other LMX measuring instruments (.83). Recent studies have reported an internal consistency for the LMX-7 to be high, with a Cronbach alpha ranging from .87 (Yukl, O'Donnell, & Taber, 2009) to .90 (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Regarding the instrument's predictive validity, the LMX-7 was found to correlate consistently with such outcomes as member job performance, supervisory and overall satisfaction, commitment, role perceptions, and turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997). In a review of LMX instruments, Gerstner and Day (1997) found the LMX-7 to "provide the soundest psychometric properties of all available LMX measures" (p. 837).

Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS)

The Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) was developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), and measures employee perceptions about the extent to which an organization is willing to reward greater efforts by the employee due to the organization valuing the employee's contributions and caring about the employee's well-being. Several studies have examined the instrument's internal reliability, with coefficient alpha values ranging from .74 to .95 (Fields, 2002).

Studies regarding the SPOS validity found perceived organizational support to correlate positively with overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, direct and indirect control at work, and affective organizational attachment (Fields, 2002). Through

confirmatory factor analysis, perceived organizational support (POS), as measured by the SPOS, was found to be distinct from overall job satisfaction (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997) and leader-member exchange (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Several studies (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) have used shorter versions of the scale developed through selection of the highest loading items from the original 36-item SPOS. According to Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), “because the original scale is unidimensional and has high internal reliability, the use of shorter versions does not appear problematic” (p. 699). The current study used the eight-item version of the SPOS.

Several studies support using an altered version of the SPOS to also measure perceived supervisor support (PSS) by substituting the word *supervisor* for the term *work organization* in the instrument (c.f. Kottke & Sharifinksi, 1988; Hutchison, 1997a, 1997b; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armelli, 2001; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2001; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). Additionally, studies have provided evidence of discriminative validity between perceived organizational support and PSS (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, & Sucharski, 2002; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) showing the two concepts to be empirically distinct from each other. The current study measured PSS by substituting the word *supervisor* for the term *work organization* in the eight-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS).

Demographic information

In order to gain a more detailed perspective on the population sample, several demographic questions were included in the survey. Demographic variables included gender, race/ethnicity, years in the position, years at institution, institution type (e.g.,

public/private, two/four year), level of supervisor (e.g., chief student affairs officer or one level below), and number of years reporting to direct supervisor.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the reliability of using subscales (supervisor's decision-making inclusiveness, exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development, supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others, and supervisor's support for divisional work unit) developed by researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000)?

This question was addressed by computing a Cronbach alpha for each of the four subscales developed by the researcher. If the Cronbach alpha for a particular subscale was found to be .7 or above, the subscale was considered to be reliable (Field, 2009).

Research Question 2a: For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and leader-member exchange?

This question was addressed by computing Pearson correlation coefficients of the means for scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000) and the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The researcher looked for statistical significance between the two variables. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded a real relationship existed between synergistic supervision and the measure of leader-member exchange (LMX) for mid-level student affairs administrators (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). If $p < .05$ was not reached, then the researcher concluded a relationship between the two variables did not exist. Additionally, the researcher made inferences regarding the strength of the relationship, should one exist, as determined by its "r" value (Field, 2009).

A weak relationship was inferred if “ r ” value was .1 to .3, a moderate relationship was inferred if the “ r ” value was .4 to .6, and a strong relationship was inferred for an “ r ” value of .7 or higher.

Research Question 2b: For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and perceived supervisor support?

This question was addressed by computing Pearson correlation coefficients of the means for scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000) and the shortened 8-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) with the term *work organization* replaced by the word *supervisor* (Eisenberger et al, 2002; Kottke & Sharifinksi, 1988; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). The researcher looked for statistical significance between the two variables. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded a real relationship existed between synergistic supervision and the measure of perceived supervisor support for mid-level student affairs administrators (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). If $p < .05$ was not reached, then the researcher concluded a relationship between the two variables did not exist. Additionally, the researcher made inferences regarding the strength of the relationship, should one exist, as determined by its “ r ” value (Field, 2009). A weak relationship was inferred if the “ r ” value was .1 to .3, a moderate relationship was inferred if the “ r ” value was .4 to .6, and a strong relationship was inferred for an “ r ” value of .7 or higher.

Research question 2c: For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a significant relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and perceived organizational support?

This question was addressed by computing Pearson correlation coefficients of the means for scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000) and the shortened eight-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The researcher looked for statistical significance between the two variables. If $p < .05$ was reached, the researcher concluded a real relationship existed between synergistic supervision and the measure of perceived organizational support for mid-level student affairs administrators (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). If $p < .05$ was not reached, then the researcher concluded a relationship between the two variables did not exist. Additionally, the researcher made inferences regarding the strength of the relationship, should one exist, as determined by its “ r ” value (Field, 2009). A weak relationship was inferred if “ r ” value was .1 to .3, a moderate relationship was inferred if the “ r ” value was .4 to .6, and a strong relationship was inferred for an “ r ” value of .7 or higher.

Research Question 3a: For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on leader-member exchange?

This question was addressed using multiple regression technique, which allowed the researcher to determine a correlation between a criterion variable (leader-member exchange, as measured by the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)) and the best combination of two or more predictor variables (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). To use the technique, the researcher created subscales to be used as predictor variables from items found in the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000).

Research Question 3b: For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on perceived supervisor support?

This question was addressed using multiple regression technique, which allowed the researcher to determine a correlation between a criterion variable (perceived supervisor support, as measured by the shortened eight-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) with the term *work organization* replaced with the word *supervisor* (Eisenberger et al, 2002; Kottke & Sharifinksi, 1988; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) and the best combination of two or more predictor variables (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). To use the technique, the researcher created subscales to be used as predictor variables from items found in the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000).

Research Question 3c: For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on perceived organizational support?

This question was addressed using multiple regression technique, which allowed the researcher to determine a correlation between a criterion variable (perceived organizational support, as measured by the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support, (Eisenberger et al., 1986)) and the best combination of two or more predictor variables (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). To use the technique, the researcher created subscales to be used as predictor variables from items found in the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000).

Research Question 4: For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of social exchange factors (leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support) on synergistic supervision?

This question was addressed using multiple regression technique, which allowed the researcher to determine a correlation between the criterion variable of synergistic

supervision, as measured by the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000), and the best combination of two or more predictor variables (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). The researcher also conducted additional multiple regression analyses by using the four researcher-developed subscales derived from SSS items as criterion variables. To use the technique, the researcher used scores from the LMX-7, the shortened eight-item version of Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) with the term *work organization* replaced with the word *supervisor*, and the shortened eight-item version of the SPOS as predictor variables (Frankel & Wallen).

Summary

This chapter discussed the research design and methodologies used in addressing the research questions exploring the relationship between synergistic supervision and leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support in mid-level student affairs administrators. The researcher surveyed (via the internet) a random sample of mid-level student affairs administrators and applied appropriate statistical techniques to the responses. The survey consisted of three existing instruments with each reviewed for validity and reliability.

The quantitative findings of the study's research questions are presented and discussed in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, conclusions drawn from the findings and implications for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

This study's intent, using social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) as a conceptual framework, was to quantitatively examine how student affairs mid-level professionals are supervised, and to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the professional's perceptions of receiving supervision considered "synergistic" (Winston & Creamer, 1997) and his or her perceptions of the quality of the social exchange relationship with the supervisor. The study also explored whether a significant relationship existed between the level of synergistic supervision received by the mid-level professional and his or her perceptions regarding the supportiveness of one's supervisor and organization.

This chapter presents the data analysis results of this researcher's study on supervision and mid-level student affairs professionals. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) received by mid-level student affairs professionals and the quality of their exchange relationship with their supervisor, and their perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. Additionally, the study attempted to add to the existing research literature on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000) by examining the reliability and usefulness of researcher-developed subscales to predict other organizational outcomes. This chapter consists of four main sections. The first section will provide study respondents' demographic information and will offer a detailed profile of mid-level student affairs professionals answering the survey. The

second section will address the first research question regarding the reliability of using the four subscales (supervisor's decision-making inclusiveness, exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development, supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others, and supervisor's support for divisional work unit) developed by the researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, et al., 2000).

The chapter's third section will address the second research question, concerning whether a relationship exists for mid-level student affairs professionals between perceived level of synergistic supervision and various social exchange factors (i.e., leader-member exchange, perceived organizational support, and perceived supervisor support). The chapter's fourth and final section will address the study's remaining research questions concerning what predictive value, if any, synergistic supervision has on the social exchange factors examined in the study, and what predictive value, if any, those social exchange factors have on synergistic supervision for mid-level student affairs professionals. All data analyses were performed using Predictive Analytics SoftWare (PASW) version 18.0.

Demographics

This research study focused on mid-level student affairs professionals, with such professionals defined as directly reporting to either a chief student affairs officer (CSAO) or one level below the CSAO (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003). The researcher randomly selected 1,200 National Association of Student Personal Administrators (NASPA) professional members to receive an e-mail inviting recipients to complete the survey instrument. Prior to selecting the sample, the researcher deleted those names with titles of vice-president, assistant director, and coordinator in an initial attempt to remove

as many senior- and entry-level professionals as possible from the survey sample. Out of the 1,200 e-mails sent, 1,181 e-mails were received (19 e-mail invitations were not received due to faulty e-mail addresses). Out of the 1,181 e-mail invitations received, 468 respondents ($N = 1,181$; 39.6%) agreed to take the survey. From the 431 respondents who reported their level of supervisor, 337 (78.2%) met the study's definition of student affairs mid-level professional (see Table 1).

Table 1

Respondent's Direct Supervisor Level (N = 468)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Reports to CSAO	105	22.4	24.4	24.4
	Reports to one level below CSAO	232	49.6	53.8	78.2
	Reports to two or more levels below CSAO	94	20.1	21.8	100.0
	Total	431	92.1	100.0	
Missing	System	37	7.9		
Total		468	100.0		

To ensure only those matching the study's definition of mid-level professional proceeded further in the study, respondents who answered that they reported to two or more levels below the chief student affairs officer were taken to the end of the on-line survey instrument and thanked for their participation. Further demographic information was collected from the remaining 337 respondents.

Slightly over half of the remaining respondents were female ($N = 183$; 56.5%), while 43.5% were male ($N = 141$). Regarding respondents' race, over half of the participants were Caucasian ($N = 268$; 57.3%), 6.4% were African-American ($N = 30$), and 3% ($N = 14$) who responded to the item regarding race were Hispanic/Latino (see Table 2).

Table 2

Race of Mid-level Professionals in Sample ($N = 324$)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
African-American	30	6.4	9.3	9.3
Asian Pacific Islander	4	.9	1.2	10.5
Caucasian	268	57.3	82.7	93.2
Hispanic/Latino	14	3.0	4.3	97.5
Native American	1	.2	.3	97.8
Multiracial/multiethnic	7	1.5	2.2	100.0
Total	324	69.2	100.0	

Participants were also asked demographic questions regarding number of years worked at their current institution, years worked in current position, years reporting to their direct supervisor, and years worked in the student affairs profession. As Table 3 shows, the mean number of years worked at current institution was 11.37 ($SD = 8.77$; $N = 325$), the mean number of years worked in current position was 5.40 ($SD = 4.48$; $N = 324$), the mean number of years reporting to direct supervisor was 4.45 ($SD = 3.93$;

$N = 324$), and the mean number of years worked in the student affairs profession was 18.29 ($SD = 8.80$; $N = 324$).

Table 3

Descriptive Means for Work Demographics

	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Years at Current Institution	11.37	9	8.77	1	39	325
Years in Current Position	5.40	4	4.48	1	27	324
Years Reporting to Supervisor	4.45	3	3.93	0	24	324
Years in Student Affairs	18.29	17	8.80	1	42	324

Regarding institutional status, out of the 324 respondents who answered the question, 64.7% reported working at a public institution, while 34.9% reported working at a private institution. Fifteen respondents (4.6%) reported working at a two-year institution, whereas 69.3% ($N = 226$) worked at a four-year higher education institution.

Results

In addition to the demographic analyses conducted, additional statistical analyses were completed on the data gathered from the survey. The study's research questions were addressed through the computation of Cronbach alphas to determine reliability of researcher-developed subscales, Pearson product-moment correlations to examine relationships between study variables, and backward deletion multiple regression analyses to explore the predictive value of study variables.

Reliability of Subscales

Response scores for the Synergistic Supervision Scale, the LMX-7, the eight-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS), and the SPOS with the term *work organization* replaced with the word *supervisor* were entered into PASW version 18.0. Prior to data analyses being conducted, the researcher reverse coded applicable items as instructed by the various instruments' authors. Scores were then calculated for the subscales developed by the researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS). Subscale scores for *Decision-Making Inclusiveness* (SSS items #1, 2, 4, 7, and 21), *Exhibiting Interest in Personal/Professional Development* (SSS items #5, 6, 8, 10, 15, and 20), *Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others* (SSS items #3, 11, 12, 16, 19, and 22), and *Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit* (SSS items #9, 13, 14, 17, and 18) were computed by adding together scores of items within the developed subscale and dividing by the number of items within the subscale. A complete listing of subscale items is contained in Appendix A. Cronbach alphas were computed for each of the subscales to answer the study's first research question.

Research question 1. What is the reliability of using subscales (supervisor's decision-making inclusiveness, exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development, supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others, and supervisor's support for divisional work unit developed by researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Sanders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000)?

The four subscales developed by the researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale were found to be highly reliable (see Table 4), with Cronbach alphas for all subscales above .8 (Field, 2009). No Cronbach alphas increased substantially with the

deletion of any items; therefore, all four subscales were used with all of their items for the remaining statistical analyses.

Table 4

Cronbach Alphas for Researcher-Developed Synergistic Supervision Subscales

Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Decision-Making Inclusiveness	5	.843
Exhibiting Interest in Personal/Professional Development	6	.831
Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others	6	.813
Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit	5	.829

Relationship between Synergistic Supervision and Social Exchange Factors

The second set of research questions examined whether a significant relationship existed for mid-level student affairs professionals between synergistic supervision received and the social exchange factors of leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support. These questions were addressed by computing Pearson correlation coefficients of the means for the scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) and the LMX-7, the eight-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS), and the eight-item SPOS with the term *work organization* replaced with the word *supervisor* (SPSS).

Using PASW version 18.0, descriptive analyses were completed for scores on each of the four instruments used in the survey. Table 5 shows the mean scores, standard deviations, score minimums and maximums, and sample population for each of the four

instruments (SSS, LMX-7, SPOS, and SPSS). The lowest average score possible was 1.00 for the all instruments. The highest average score possible was 5.00 for the SSS and LMX, and 7.00 for the SPOS and SPSS.

Table 5

Mean Scores for Synergistic Supervision, Leader-Member Exchange, Perceived Organizational Support, and Perceived Supervisor Support

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
SSS	293	3.90	.71	1.27	5.00
LMX	319	3.86	.91	1.14	5.00
POS	321	5.13	1.36	1.00	7.00
PSS	319	5.75	1.40	1.00	7.00

Research question 2a. For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and leader-member exchange?

As Table 6 shows, perceived level of synergistic supervision received was found to have a strong, statistically significant relationship with leader-member exchange (LMX), $r = .912$, $p < .01$. This positive correlation indicates that higher scores on perceived level of synergistic supervision received are associated with higher levels of LMX, with low levels on each also being associated. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .831$) indicates these variables share 83% of variance with each other.

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Between Synergistic Supervision and LMX (N = 287)

		LMX
Synergistic Supervision	Pearson Correlation	+ .912
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

Research question 2b. For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and perceived supervisor support?

The analysis found a strong, statistically significant relationship exists between synergistic supervision and perceived supervisor support (PSS), $r = .894$, $p < .01$ (see Table 7). This positive correlation indicates higher scores on perceived level of synergistic supervision are associated with higher levels of PSS, with low levels on each also being associated. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .799$) indicates these variables share 80% of variance with each other.

Table 7

Pearson Correlation Between Synergistic Supervision and PSS (N=284)

		PSS
Synergistic Supervision	Pearson Correlation	+ .894
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

Research question 2c. For mid-level student affairs professionals, does a significant relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and perceived organizational support.

As Table 8 shows, perceived level of synergistic supervision received was found to have a statistically significant relationship of moderate strength with perceived organizational support (POS), $r = .621$, $p < .01$. This positive correlation indicates higher scores on perceived level of synergistic supervision are associated with higher levels of POS, with low levels on each also being associated. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .385$) indicates these variables share 39% of variance with each other.

Table 8

Pearson Correlation Between Synergistic Supervision and POS (N = 286)

		POS
Synergistic Supervision	Pearson Correlation	+.621
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

Predictive Value of Synergistic Supervision and Social Exchange Factors

The study's remaining research questions examined the predictive value of synergistic supervision upon the social exchange factors of leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived supervisor support (PSS), and perceived organizational support (PSS). The research questions also examined the predictive value of social exchange factors upon synergistic supervision. To address the remaining research questions, the researcher used backward deletion multiple regression to determine a correlation between criterion and two or more predictor variables (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). The backward method places all of the predictor variables in a model and then calculates each one's contribution by looking at the significance value of each predictor's *t*-test. Those predictors that do not make a statistically significant contribution to how well the model predicts the outcome,

or dependent variable, are removed, and the model is recalculated for the remaining predictors (Field, 2009).

Research question 3a. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on leader-member exchange?

Using the four researcher-developed subscales (*decision-making inclusiveness, exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development, fair and equitable treatment of others, and exhibiting support for divisional work unit*) as predictor variables, backward deletion multiple regression was conducted to determine a parsimonious model for predicting leader-member exchange. No predictors were removed from the final model ($R = .916$), which accounted for 83.9% (R^2) of the variance in leader-member exchange (see Table 9).

Table 9 displays the beta values, the standard errors, and the standardized betas for the regression model used in this analysis. All four subscale b -values are positive indicating positive relationships between the subscales and leader-member exchange. For example, for every unit increase in leader-member exchange, one could expect an additional .287 increase in decision-making inclusiveness when the other three predictor variables are held constant. Model statistics produced an F -ratio of 368.039, indicating the model significantly improved the ability to predict the outcome variable of LMX over what one would expect from chance ($p < .001$).

Table 9

Backward Regression of Synergistic Supervision Subscales on LMX (N = 287)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	-.565	.133	
Decision-Making Inclusiveness	.287	.054	.247*
Exhibiting interest in personal/professional development	.348	.050	.328*
Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others	.165	.046	.129*
Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit	.355	.055	.297*

Note. $R = .916$; $R^2 = .839$; $F = 368.039$. * $p < .001$.

Research question 3b. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on perceived supervisor support?

Backward deletion multiple regression was conducted to determine a parsimonious model for predicting perceived supervisor support (PSS). No predictors were removed from the final model ($R = .894$), which accounted for 80% (R^2) of the variance in PSS. The final model included the four predictors of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*, *fair and equitable treatment of others*, and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* (see Table 10).

Table 10

Backward Regression of Synergistic Supervision Subscales on PSS (N = 284)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	-.983		
Decision-Making Inclusiveness	.391	.227	.221*
Exhibiting interest in personal/professional development	.565	.092	.348*
Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others	.415	.086	.213*
Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit	.373	.095	.206*

Note. $R = .894$; $R^2 = .800$; $F = 279.079$. * $p < .001$.

Research question 3c. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of synergistic supervision on perceived organizational support?

Backward deletion multiple regression was conducted to determine a parsimonious model for predicting perceived organizational support (POS). The predictor variables removed from the final model were *fair and equitable treatment of others* and *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*, as they did not make a statistically significant contribution to how well the model predicted POS. The final model ($R = .624$) accounted for 38.9% (R^2) of the variance in POS, with the two predictors of *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* and *decision-making inclusiveness* (see Table 11).

Table 11

Backward Regression of Synergistic Supervision Subscales on POS (N = 286)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	.670	.343	
Decision-Making Inclusiveness	.507	.135	.291*
Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit	.653	.138	.297*

Note. $R = .624$; $R^2 = .389$; $F = 90.114$. * $p < .001$.

Research question 4. For mid-level student affairs professionals, what is the predictive value of social exchange factors (leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support) on synergistic supervision.

This final research question also utilized backward deletion multiple regression to determine a parsimonious model for predicting synergistic supervision. The predictor removed from the final model was perceived organizational support (POS). The final model ($R = .928$), containing the two predictors of perceived supervisor support (PSS) and leader-member exchange (LMX) accounted for 86.1% (R^2) of the variance in synergistic supervision (see Table 12).

Table 12

Backward Regression of Social Exchange Factors on Synergistic Supervision (N = 274)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	1.043	.071	
Leader-Member Exchange	.452	.039	.580*
Perceived Supervisor Support	.653	.026	.372*

Note. $R = .928$; $R^2 = .861$; $F = 842.551$. * $p < .001$.

To further address the research question, the research utilized backward deletion multiple regression on each of the four researcher-developed synergistic supervision subscales. In determining a parsimonious model for predicting *decision-making inclusiveness*, the predictor removed from the final model was perceived organizational support (POS). As Table 13 shows, the final model ($R = .849$) accounted for 72% (R^2) of the variance in *decision-making inclusiveness*, with the two predictors of perceived supervisor support (PSS) and leader-member exchange (LMX).

Table 13

Backward Regression of Social Exchange Factors on Decision-Making Inclusiveness (N = 274)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	1.159	.106	
Leader-Member Exchange	.515	.057	.596*
Perceived Supervisor Support	.151	.037	.273*

Note. $R = .849$; $R^2 = .720$; $F = 386.961$. * $p < .001$.

Backward deletion multiple regression was conducted to determine a parsimonious model for predicting *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*. The predictor removed from the final model was perceived organizational support. The final model ($R = .878$) accounted for 77.1% (R^2) in the subscale variable, with the two predictors of perceived supervisor support and leader-member exchange (see Table 14).

Table 14

Backward Regression of Social Exchange Factors on Exhibiting Interest in Employee's Personal/Professional Development (N = 295)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	.421	.107	
Leader-Member Exchange	.525	.059	.550*
Perceived Supervisor Support	.216	.038	.352*

Note. $R = .878$; $R^2 = .771$; $F = 492.021$. * $p < .001$.

To determine a parsimonious model for predicting the *fair and equitable treatment of others* subscale, the researcher employed backward deletion multiple regression. The predictor removed from the final model was once again perceived organizational support. The final model ($R = .760$), containing the two predictors of perceived supervisor support and leader-member exchange, accounted for 57.8% (R^2) of the variance in the outcome variable of *fair and equitable treatment of others* (see Table 15).

Table 15

Backward Regression of Social Exchange Factors on Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others (N = 291)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	1.744	.121	
Leader-Member Exchange	.279	.066	.356*
Perceived Supervisor Support	.217	.043	.426*

Note. $R = .760$; $R^2 = .578$; $F = 197.267$. * $p < .001$.

Finally, backward deletion multiple regression was conducted to determine a parsimonious model for predicting *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*. No predictors were removed from the final model, which accounted for 75.4% (R^2) of the variance in the outcome variable. The final model ($R = .868$) included all three predictor variables of perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, and leader-member exchange (see Table 16).

Table 16

Backward Regression of Social Exchange Factors on Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit (N = 291)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Constant	.755	.105	
Leader-Member Exchange	.566	.056	.663*
Perceived Organizational Support	.042	.023	.072
Perceived Supervisor Support	.095	.038	.206**

Note. $R = .868$; $R^2 = .754$; $F = 294.736$. * $p < .001$; ** $p < .05$.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between synergistic supervision received by mid-level student affairs professionals and the quality of their exchange relationship with their supervisor, and their perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. Additionally, the study attempted to add to the existing research literature on the Synergistic Supervision Scale through the examination of researcher-developed subscale reliability.

The researcher-developed synergistic supervision subscales of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development*, *supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others*, and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*, were tested by computing Cronbach alphas for each subscale. The resulting analyses found the subscales to be highly reliable.

Pearson-product moment correlations were conducted between mean scores on the Synergistic Supervision Scale and the LMX-7, the eight-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS), and the eight-item version of the SPOS with the term *work organization* replaced with the word *supervisor*. Findings indicated a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived supervisor support (PSS). A moderately strong and statistically significant relationship was found to exist between synergistic supervision and perceived organizational support (POS).

Backward deletion multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the predictive value of synergistic supervision on the social exchange variables studied (i.e., LMX, PSS, and POS) and vice-versa for mid-level student affairs professionals. The

analyses found synergistic supervision to be predictive of LMX and PSS, with all four subscales included within the final model. *Exhibiting support for divisional work unit* and *decision-making inclusiveness* were found to be significant predictors of perceived organizational support in the regression model.

Regarding the predictive value of social exchange factors on synergistic supervision, backward deletion multiple regression analyses found LMX and PSS were significant predictors of synergistic supervision for mid-level professionals. Additional analyses on the synergistic supervision subscales found LMX and PSS to be significant predictors for *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development*, and *fair and equitable treatment of others*. All three social exchange factors (LMX, POS, and PSS) remained in the final regression model for predicting *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*.

This chapter outlined the statistical analyses conducted on the data gathered on mid-level student affairs professionals who participated in the study. Chapter Five will discuss conclusions reached by the researcher based on the findings and implications for student affairs practice. Additionally, the chapter will provide recommendations regarding avenues for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study was intended to provide a better understanding of how mid-level student affairs professionals are supervised within higher education institutions. Rather than focusing on the economic exchange that may occur within the supervisory relationship, this study was concerned with the social exchange that takes place between the supervisor and the one supervised. Using social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) as a conceptual framework, the purpose of this study was to quantitatively explore the relationship between synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) received by mid-level student affairs professionals and the quality of their exchange relationship (LMX) with their supervisor, and their perceived level of supervisor and organizational support (PSS; POS). Additionally, the study extended the research on synergistic supervision, as measured by the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS; Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000), through reliability testing of subscales developed by the researcher from SSS items.

A random sample of 1,200 mid-level student affairs professionals was selected from professional affiliate members of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) to receive an e-mail inviting them to participate in an on-line survey. Survey participants who met the study's definition of mid-level professional (i.e., who reported directly to a chief student affairs officer [CSAO] or one level below the CSAO) completed the SSS, the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), the eight-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger, Huntington,

Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), and the eight-item version of the SPOS (Kottke & Sharifinski, 1988) with the term *work organization* replaced with the word *supervisor*. The mid-level professionals participating in the survey also completed demographic information used for descriptive purposes.

The collected data were analyzed through the computing of Cronbach alphas to determine the reliability of the researcher-developed subscales, calculating Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to determine existence and strength of relationships between synergistic supervision and the social exchange factors of LMX, PSS, and POS; and conducting backward deletion multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive value of synergistic supervision on the social exchange factors studied and vice-versa.

This chapter will report conclusions drawn from the study and discuss the study's findings relevant to concepts examined in Chapter Two. Additionally, this chapter will further detail study limitations, discuss implications for future student affairs practice, and provide recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

This study examined whether mid-level professionals receiving supervision considered “synergistic,” exemplified by a holistic concern for the employee’s personal and professional development while also concerned with organizational goal accomplishment (Winston & Creamer, 1997), was related to the mid-level professional’s perception of the supervisory relationship’s quality, and the organization and supervisor’s supportiveness. Using social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) as a conceptual framework, four research questions were posed and examined. To answer the research questions,

quantitative data was collected through a survey to a sample of mid-level student affairs professionals and was analyzed.

An examination of the results pertaining to the reliability of the four subscales developed by the researcher from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) found the subscales to be highly reliable. The four subscales of *supervisor's decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in employee's personal/professional development*, *supervisor's fair and equitable treatment of others*, and *supervisor's support for divisional work unit*, were found to have a high internal consistency among items within each subscale, with Cronbach alphas for each scale exceeding .8.

An analysis of the results regarding whether a significant relationship exists between mid-level student affairs professionals' perceived level of synergistic supervision received and the social exchange factors of leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived supervisor support (PSS) revealed synergistic supervision shared a strong, positive relationship with both LMX and PSS. Results also showed mid-level student affairs professionals' perceptions of synergistic supervision received had a moderate, positive relationship with the professionals' perceived organizational support (POS).

As Figure 1 illustrates, an examination of the results regarding the predictive value of synergistic supervision received (using the four researcher-developed subscales as predictors) and the social exchange factors of LMX, PSS, and POS showed all four subscales together formed a parsimonious model for predicting both LMX and PSS. *Exhibiting interest in personal/professional development* was the strongest predictor within the model for both LMX and PSS. *Decision-making inclusiveness* and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* formed a statistically significant model for predicting

POS, with backward deletion multiple regression removing both *fair and equitable treatment of others* and *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development* as non-statistically significant predictors.

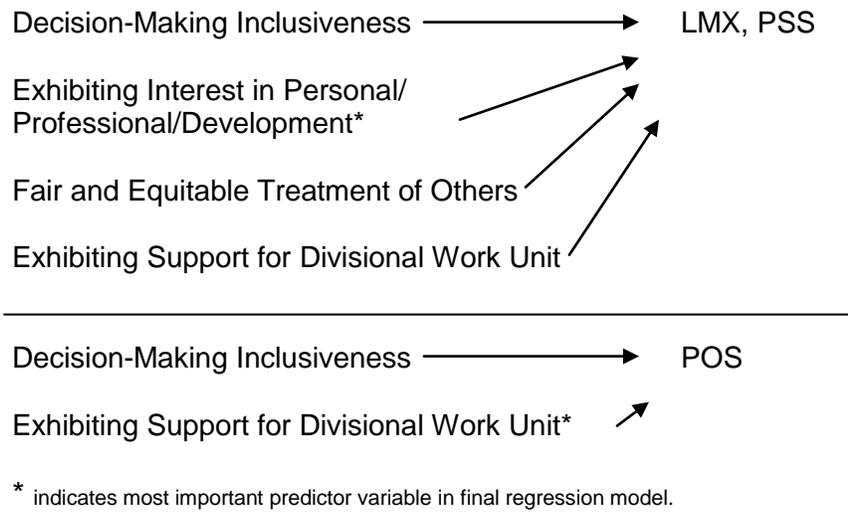


Figure 1. Predictive Value of Synergistic Supervision on Social Exchange Factors.

As shown in Figure 2, an analysis of the results regarding the predictive value of the social exchange factors of LMX, PSS, and POS on synergistic supervision revealed both LMX and PSS as significant predictors at an alpha of .01. Backward deletion multiple regression removed POS as a significant predictor of synergistic supervision to improve the regression model. Additionally, results revealed LMX and PSS were significant predictors of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*, and *fair and equitable treatment of others*, with POS removed to improve the regression models. All three social exchange factors formed a parsimonious model for predicting *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*.

- LMX*, PSS → Overall Synergistic Supervision
- LMX*, PSS → Decision-Making Inclusiveness
- LMX*, PSS → Exhibiting Interest in Personal/Professional Development
- LMX, PSS* → Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others
- LMX*, PSS, POS → Exhibiting Support of Divisional Work Unit

*indicates most important predictor variable in final regression model.

Figure 2. Predictive Value of Social Exchange Factors on Synergistic Supervision.

Discussion

Reviewing study participants' mean scores for the variables of synergistic supervision, leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organizational support, the findings indicate the mid-level student affairs professionals surveyed, on average, often receive supervision considered synergistic, experience a moderately high exchange relationship with their direct supervisor, and report receiving a moderately high amount of support from both their supervisor and organization. This finding supports Stock-Ward and Javorek's (2003) assertion that, despite the advanced developmental level of the mid-level student affairs professional, supportive supervision that stimulates and challenges should still occur with this population.

The high reliability found in the researcher-developed subscales adds additional insight into what inducements might be offered by the supervisor that strengthen the exchange relationship with the mid-level professional. Combining similar thematic items from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) into four subscales provided a more detailed examination into what supervisory behaviors are related to high exchange relationships and perceived organizational and supervisor support. Rather than having only one score of overall synergistic supervision, the subscale scores allowed the

researcher to further identify which synergistic supervision factors had the most predictive value on the social exchange factors studied.

The study's findings of the strong, significant relationship between synergistic supervision and LMX and PSS suggests that the mid-level professional's perception of synergistic supervision received is highly related to how the mid-level professional perceives the supportiveness of his or her supervisor and how he or she perceives the quality of the supervisory relationship. Additionally, the finding of the significant relationship between synergistic supervision received and one's perceptions regarding the supportiveness of the organization indicates there is a moderately strong relationship between the two variables, which supports past studies' findings that one's supervisor plays an important role in the employee's formation of beliefs regarding how the organization values his or her contributions and well-being (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003).

Findings from the backward deletion regression analyses indicate the researcher-developed synergistic supervision subscale of *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development* had the best predictive value for both LMX and PSS for mid-level student affairs professionals. The subscale's standardized beta coefficient for PSS and for LMX were larger than those of the three other subscales (i.e., *decision-making inclusiveness*, *fair and equitable treatment of others*, and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*). This finding supports Winston and Creamer's (1997) emphasis on the need for supervisors to attend to staff members' personal and professional developmental needs in addition to organizational goals, and Marsh's (2001) assertion of the importance of supervisors being aware of and sensitive to adult developmental issues in order to provide

effective supervision and motivation. With regard to the chief student affairs officer's supervisory role, this finding supports Sandeen's (1991) statement that CSAOs should establish personnel practices that foster "professional advancement and growth" (p. 5). The finding that *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development* is a significant predictor of leader-member exchange and perceived supervisor support also adds credence to the call for institutions and supervisors to provide support for activities that challenge mid-level professionals' growth, and to become more intentional in identifying opportunities for those seeking to move beyond the mid-level position (Rosser, 2004; Semersheim & Keim, 2005).

Though the Pearson's product-moment correlation analyses found a moderate (defined as having an r value between .4 and .6), significant relationship between synergistic supervision and perceived organizational support, backward deletion multiple regression analyses revealed POS was not a significant predictor for synergistic supervision (nor was it a significant predictor for the synergistic supervision subscales of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*, and *fair and equitable treatment of others*) when placed with the other social exchange variables of LMX and PSS. This finding indicates mid-level student affairs professionals may form a clear distinction between beliefs they have regarding one's supervisor and beliefs held about one's employing organization. This distinction may result from the mid-level professional's recognition of the organizational complexity often found within higher education institutions and his or her awareness of the bridging role the position plays between the work of entry-level staff and senior administration (Mills, 2009). Such awareness may assist the mid-level professional in more clearly distinguishing between

supervisor and organizational actions that form one's belief regarding how the organization values his or her contribution. For example, a mid-level professional's perceived organizational support may be informed just as much, if not more, by relationships he or she has with the staff he or she supervises or his or her mid-level peers at the institution.

The regression analyses did find the synergistic subscales *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* and *decision-making inclusiveness* were significant in predicting perceived organizational support at an alpha of .01. The regression analyses exclusion of *fair and equitable treatment of others* subscale was surprising, as a meta-analytic review of several POS studies (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002) found fairness to be the strongest antecedent for organizational support. In reviewing the individual items within the two synergistic subscales found to be significant predictors, several items include actors external to the one-to-one supervisory relationship such as rewarding teamwork, supporting the mid-level professional when there is conflict with others, and including the professional in organizational decision-making that impacts his or her area of responsibilities. This inclusion of factors external to the one-to-one relationship may help explain the predictive value found in these two particular subscales for POS. Clearly, the results indicate further study is warranted on how mid-level student affairs professionals develop beliefs regarding how the organization values their contributions and well-being.

Limitations Based on Study

Several study limitations exist which should be taken into consideration when generalizing the study's sample results to the larger population of mid-level student affairs administrators. For example, despite the 337 student affairs professionals who met

the study's definition of mid-level professional, approximately 63 respondents did not complete the entire survey, including several who chose not to answer items related to one or more of the study's major variables. Additionally, despite efforts to remind those randomly selected to participate, the survey had an overall response rate of 38%. Though the response rate was sufficient to make reasonable statistical inferences, a stronger response rate would increase confidence in generalizing results to the larger population of student affairs mid-level professionals.

The study was also limited in selecting participants from only one of two generalist student affairs professional associations, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. As discussions regarding merging the two generalist student affairs professionals associations have occurred for the past several years, a recurring theme in those discussions is the different organizational cultures between NASPA and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). Should such cultural differences exist between the two associations, it is not difficult to imagine that responses from members of one association may differ from those given by members of the other, or even from mid-level professionals who are members of neither professional association.

A limitation also exists regarding the definition of mid-level student affairs professional. Though defining such professionals as reporting directly to the chief student affairs officer or one level below the CSAO (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003) was useful in efficiently ensuring survey responses could be attributed to the study's population of interest, the definition excluded many student affairs professionals who may consider themselves, and might be considered by others to be mid-level due to scope of responsibilities or the complex hierarchical arrangements at their institutions. The

researcher received several e-mails from survey respondents who fell outside the study's definition of mid-level professionals, yet were responsible for overseeing comprehensive student affairs departments. Future research would benefit from a more consistent definition of this professional subgroup within student affairs.

The survey's omission in asking whether the mid-level professional was hired by their supervisor they reported to or, rather, was "inherited" by their supervisor presented another study limitation. One could reasonably argue that this variable, missing from the study, might play an important role in the mid-level professional's perceptions of the supervisory relationship. Little information was found in the student affairs literature regarding the importance of this variable in relation to mid-level professionals' supervisory perceptions and warrants further study.

Another study limitation is the study design's sole focus on the perceptions of the person being supervised, as it did not take into account the supervisor's perception of the supervisory relationship due to the difficulty involved in matching responses. Additionally, all instruments relied on self-reported data, which may or not accurately reflect the reality of the supervisory relationship.

A final limitation results from the study's use of a quantitative paradigm to explore mid-level student affairs professionals' perceptions of the supervisory relationship. Though the use of a survey allowed the researcher to gather a significant amount of data from a large group of mid-level student affairs professionals, respondents had to respond to questions within a prescribed range of answers, which may or may not have reflected all of their concerns regarding the supervisory relationship.

Implications for Future Practice

The study's findings indicate a strong, positive relationship exists between mid-level student affairs professionals' perceptions of experiencing supervisory behaviors considered synergistic and their perceptions of the quality of the supervisory relationship and supervisor supportiveness. This finding supports the need for supervisors of mid-level student affairs professionals to be cognizant of how they exhibit interest in the personal and professional development of those they supervise, how they include others in decision-making processes, how they approach treating staff in a fair and equitable manner, and how they exhibit support for the work unit that reports to them.

Given the study's finding of the contribution of taking an interest in another's personal and professional development in predicting such outcomes as leader-member exchange and perceived supervisor support, it would appear to be important for the supervisor of the mid-level professional to take the necessary time and effort to develop a better understanding of the professional's developmental needs, interests, and desires, and provide or promote opportunities for personal/professional growth to occur. Such an approach would seem incongruent with the laissez-faire supervisory approach (Winston & Creamer, 1997) of "hiring good people and getting out of their way." Rather, the challenge for the supervisor of the mid-level student affairs professional is to take an active interest in the professional and appropriately assist him or her in developing and realizing personal and professional goals.

For the mid-level student affairs professional, a study implication for practice is assessing how one communicates effectively with one's supervisor regarding professional and personal developmental growth needs so that the supervisor is aware of

those needs. Leaving the supervisor to guess what one's personal and professional needs are makes it difficult for the supervisor to effectively recognize where such opportunities for growth exist. Additionally, the mid-level professional should be cognizant of how he or she is reciprocating the interest shown in him or her by the supervisor. The astute mid-level professional should identify where there are opportunities to show loyalty and support for one's supervisor and organization, and act in accordance. The synergistic approach to supervision implies a partnership between the supervisory dyad, not a one-way relationship.

Given the importance of the supervisory relationship, a final implication for future practice is for student affairs professionals to engage in reflective conversation regarding how to develop those skill sets required for strong supervisory partnerships. Such conversations could begin in student affairs graduate preparation programs, continue with training sessions on how to synergistically supervise others offered within divisional staff development programs and at professional association conference sessions, and continued research on supervising staff within professional journals.

Recommendations for Future Research

The higher education and student affairs literature has unsatisfactorily examined the supervisory needs of student affairs mid-level professionals. The current study makes an important contribution to this emerging research area and several opportunities exist for the study's findings to be extended. For example, given the supervisory responsibilities often held by mid-level professionals, it would be interesting to learn whether those professionals who report receiving a high level of synergistic supervision also provide such supervision to the staff members that report to them. Exploring what

relationship, if any, exists between synergistic supervision received and such variables as years reporting to supervisor or whether the mid-level professional was hired or inherited by supervisor could also provide additional insight. Another opportunity for future research, as mentioned earlier, would be additional study into the factors that contribute to mid-level student affairs professionals' perceived organizational support.

Further studies could be conducted concerning the usefulness of the researcher-developed subscales for the Synergistic Supervision Scale. For example, as this study focused only on mid-level student affairs professionals, it is unknown whether the subscales would have similar reliability among entry-level professionals. Additionally, more sophisticated factor analysis could be conducted to further add credence to the four subscales.

Another avenue for future research regarding synergistic supervision would be to quantitatively examine whether such supervision received positively impacts employee performance in the eyes of the supervisor. Such a study could have employees complete the Synergistic Supervision Scale and compare those scores with some sort of quantifiable employee performance appraisal completed by supervisor. Exploring what relationship exists, if any, between synergistic supervision received and organizational citizenship behaviors exhibited by the employee would also be an interesting study, and would help deepen both researcher and practitioner understanding of the role supervision plays within the student affairs organization.

A potential area for further research regarding synergistic supervision and student affairs mid-level managers is to qualitatively examine how such professionals understand and articulate the benefits they receive from being in a synergistic supervisory

relationship. For example, through such techniques as interviews or focus groups with mid-level professionals receiving synergistic supervision, one could collect qualitative data that deepens understanding of this population's synergistic supervision experiences.

Finally, employing a mixed methods research approach, such as interviewing and or observing mid-level student affairs professionals and their supervisors (in addition collecting survey data) could provide additional insight and rich detail into the reciprocal nature of the supervisory relationship. Such an approach could enhance understanding regarding how mid-level professionals and their supervisors experience the supervisory relationship, provide opportunities for participants to tell their own story beyond traditional quantitative methods, and further examine what is socially exchanged by identifying what specific inducements and contributions can be found within such relationships.

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APPENDIX A

Subscales for Synergistic Supervision Scale

Based on items within the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000), the researcher developed four subscales reflecting common themes found among the items. These subscales were tested for reliability and used to complete a regression analysis in the study.

- Supervisor's Decision-Making Inclusiveness (items 1, 2, 4, 7, 21)
- Exhibiting Interest in Personal/Professional Development (items 5, 6, 10, 15, 20)
- Fair and Equitable Treatment of Others (items 3, 11, 12, 16, 19, 22)
- Exhibiting Support for Divisional Work Unit (items 9, 13, 14, 17, 18)

SYNERGISTIC SUPERVISION SCALE

Sue Saunders, Diane Cooper, Roger Winston, Erin Chernow

1. My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
2. 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. My supervisor criticizes staff members in public. (REVERSE KEY)
4. My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution
5. My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind whether it is personal or professional.
6. My supervisor shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement.
7. My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions. (REVERSE KEY)
8. My supervisor shows that he/she cares about me as a person.
9. My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution.
10. My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat." (REVERSE KEY)
11. My supervisor has favorites on the staff. (REVERSE KEY)
12. My supervisor breaks confidences. (REVERSE KEY)

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

Note. Response options: 1 = *never or almost never*, 2 = *seldom*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*, 5 = *always or almost always*. Reverse keyed items were changed before computations.

PLEASE DO NOT REPRODUCE WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR. CONTACT Dr. Sue Saunders at sue.saunders@uconn.edu

APPENDIX B

LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)

1. Do you know where you stand with your supervisor...do you usually know how satisfied your supervisor is with what you do?

Rarely Occassionally Sometimes Fairly Often Very Often
2. How well does your supervisor understand your job problems and needs?

Not at Bit A Little A Fair Amount Quite a Bit A Great Deal
3. How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?

Not at All A Little Moderately Mostly Fully
4. Regardless of how much power your supervisor has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your supervisor would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work.

None Small Moderate High Very High
5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your supervisor has, what are the chance that he/she would "bail you out," at his/her expense?

None Small Moderate High Very High
6. I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your supervisor?

Extremely Ineffective Worse than Average Average Better than Average Extremely Effective

Format for the 8-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support

© University of Delaware, 1984

Listed below and on the next several pages are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at _____. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the circle on your answer sheet that best represents your point of view about _____. Please choose from the following answers:

Strongly Disagree
Moderately Disagree
Slightly Disagree
Neither Agree or Disagree
Slightly Agree
Moderately Agree
Strongly Agree

1. The organization values my contribution to its well-being.
3. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
7. The organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
9. The organization really cares about my well-being.
17. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice. (R)
21. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
23. The organization shows very little concern for me. (R)
27. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

APPENDIX D

Permission to use Synergistic Supervision Scale in Study

From: Saunders, Sue [mailto:sue.saunders@uconn.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, November 19, 2008 8:16 AM
To: Lane, Thomas A
Subject: RE: Synergistic Supervision Scale Request

Sounds like a fascinating study. I'm hoping to move back into this research area at some point in the future....

You can certainly use the instrument if you'd like. My only request is that I'd like to see the results.

Just let me know what you need from here.

S

Sue A. Saunders, Ph.D.
Associate Extension Professor and Coordinator, Higher Education and Student Affairs Program
University of Connecticut
Neag School of Education
249 Glenbrook Rd. Unit 2093
Storrs, CT 06269-2093
Phone: (860)486-1241
FAX: (860) 486-4028
email: sue.saunders@uconn.edu

From: Lane, Thomas A [mailto:ThomasLane@MissouriState.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, November 18, 2008 3:59 PM
To: Saunders, Sue
Subject: Synergistic Supervision Scale Request

Dr. Saunders: I am writing to see if I might obtain a copy of the Synergistic Supervision Scale. I am a doctoral student through the University of Missouri narrowing down my dissertation topic. I know that I am going to be focusing on supervision within student affairs and am interested in learning more about the SSS. I have read your article "Supervising Staff in student affairs: Exploration of the synergistic approach" and was intrigued to find out about your instrument. One area I am interested in exploring is to see if there are organizational cultural factors that are associated with synergistic supervision. Another area I am considering is learning more about how middle managers experience supervision within student affairs.

If you could share with me whether I might be able to use your instrument and under what parameters I might be able to use it, I would greatly appreciate it. Thanks so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Thomas Lane
University of Missouri Doctoral Student

APPENDIX E

Permission to use LMX-7 in Study

January 6, 2010 e-mail received from Dr. Mary Uhl-Bien.

Hi Thomas,

Of course you can, as it is published in Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995. I am attaching the article. All the best with your research!

Mary

APPENDIX F

Permission to use Survey of Perceived Organizational Support in Study

January 24, 2009 e-mail received from Dr. Robert Eisenberger.

Dear Thomas,

Thanks for your interest in POS. I am happy to give permission to use the scale. It sounds like an interesting study and I would be interested in hearing what you find out.

Cordially,

Bob

Robert Eisenberger

Professor

Psychology Department

University of Delaware

Newark, DE 19716

eisenber@udel.edu

(302) 831-2787

APPENDIX G

University of Missouri Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval

Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled Synergistic Supervision and the Student Affairs Mid-level Manager: A Social Exchange Perspective meets the criteria for EXEMPT APPROVAL and will expire on February 12, 2011. Your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval. The Campus IRB is required to maintain a record of all human subject research activities conducted under its jurisdiction, and this includes exempt research.

*We reserve the right to seek clarification from you to confirm this exempt status.

You must submit the Annual Exempt Research Certification form before **December 29, 2010**. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval.

If you wish to revise your exempt activities, you must contact the Campus IRB office for a determination of whether the proposed changes will continue to qualify for exempt status. You may do this by email. You will be expected to provide a description of the proposed revisions and how it will impact the risks to subject participants.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX H

Recruitment E-mail Sent to Study's Sample

Dear Student Affairs Colleague:

My name is Thomas Lane, Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs at Missouri State University/Director of the Student Union, and I am completing the final stages of a dissertation as a doctoral student at the University of Missouri. I am writing to ask for your help in conducting research on the topic of supervision with student affairs, specifically the supervision of student affairs mid-level managers. The purpose of my study is to explore the relationship between the supervision mid-level student affairs managers receive and the quality of the exchange relationship with their supervisor and their perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. This information will be useful in better understanding the role supervision plays for mid-level student affairs professionals. The University of Missouri has granted IRB approval for this research to be conducted. A brief web-based survey has been created and made available for you as part of this study. To take the survey, please click on the link below:

(LINK)

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and all answers will be kept confidential. Results will be presented to others in summary form only, without names or other identifying information. Please read the informed consent letter located at the secure online survey site before deciding to answer the survey questions. The time commitment for your participation should be 15 minutes or less. I ask that you participate within seven days of receiving this e-mail.

Thank you in advance for considering this request to participate in this study. Your assistance will not only help me complete my doctoral journey, but may also provide useful information regarding supervision within the student affairs profession.

Sincerely,

Thomas Lane
Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs/Director of Student Union
Missouri State University

Educational Leadership Doctoral Student
University of Missouri

APPENDIX I

Informed Consent Agreement

Dear Student Affairs Colleague:

Thank you for considering participation in the study "Synergistic Supervision and the Student Affairs Midlevel Manager: A Social Exchange Perspective." This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the supervision midlevel student affairs professionals receive and the quality of the exchange relationship with their supervisor and their perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. This information will be useful in better understanding the role supervision plays for midlevel student affairs professionals. Before you make a final decision about participation, please read the following about how your input will be used and how your rights as a participant will be protected:

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any point without penalty.
- You need not answer all of the questions.
- Your answers will be kept confidential. Results will be presented to others in summary form only, without names or other identifying information.
- Your participation will take approximately 15 minutes. During this time you will complete a brief on-line survey consisting of 52 items.
- The data collected will be stored on StudentVoice's secure website and will only be accessible by the researcher through a unique username and password. StudentVoice has implemented various security measures to ensure that data will not be compromised. Once the study has been completed, all of the raw data will be located in a locked drawer at the researcher's university office.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights, and may be contacted at 573.882.9585. The project is being supervised by Dr. Cindy MacGregor, Associate Professor, CLSE, Missouri State University (417.836.6046).

If at this point you are still interested in participating and assisting with this important research project please click on the "I AGREE" button below. Feel free to keep this e-mail for future reference. You can also contact me at 417.343.6051 if you have questions or concerns about your participation. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Thomas Lane
University of Missouri-Columbia

By clicking on the "I AGREE" button below, I agree to participate in the study of "Synergistic Supervision and the Student Affairs Midlevel Manager: A Social Exchange Perspective", conducted by Thomas Lane. I understand that:

- My answers will be used for educational research.
- My participation is voluntary.
- I may stop participation at any time without penalty.
- I need not answer all of the questions.
- My answers and identity will be kept confidential.

By clicking on the “I AGREE” button below, I am indicating that I have read the information above and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

I AGREE BUTTON

APPENDIX J

Study Survey Instrument

Demographic information

Your Gender (please select one): Female
Male
Transgender

Your Race (please select one): African American
Asian Pacific Islander
Caucasian
Hispanic/Latino
Native American
Multiracial/Multiethnic

How many years have you worked your current institution (in numeric form)?

How many years have you worked in your current position (in numeric form)?

How many years have you reported to your current direct supervisor (in numeric form)?

How many years have you worked in student affairs (in numeric form)?

Institutional category (please check all that apply):

Public
Private
Two Year
Four Year

Organizational Level of your direct supervisor (please check one):

Chief Student Affairs Officer
One level **below** Chief Student Affairs Officer
More than one level **below** Chief Student Affairs Officer (*if this answer is checked, respondent should be taken to end of survey instrument*)

For the following questions, please choose from the following response options:

Never or almost never
Seldom
Sometimes
Often
Always or almost always.

1. My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
2. 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. My supervisor criticizes staff members in public.
4. My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution
5. My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind whether it is personal or professional.
6. My supervisor shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement.
7. My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions.
8. My supervisor shows that he/she cares about me as a person.

9. My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution.
10. My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, “don’t rock the boat.”
11. My supervisor has favorites on the staff.
12. My supervisor breaks confidences.
13. My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.
14. When faced with a conflict between an external constituent (for example, parent or donor) and staff members, my supervisor supports external constituents, even if they are wrong.
15. My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.
16. If I am not careful, my supervisor may allow things that are not my fault to be blamed on me.
17. My supervisor rewards teamwork.
18. When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.
19. My supervisor looks for me to make a mistake.
20. My supervisor and I develop yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses or blind spots.
21. When problem solving, my supervisor expects staff to present and advocate differing points of view.
22. In conflicts with staff members, my supervisor takes students’ sides (even when they are wrong).

For the following questions, please select the most appropriate response:

22. Do you know where you stand with your supervisor...do you usually know how satisfied your supervisor is with what you do?
Rarely Occasionally Sometimes Fairly Often Very Often
23. How well does your supervisor understand your job problems and needs?
Not a Bit A Little A Fair Amount Quite a Bit A Great Deal
24. How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?
Not at all A Little Moderately Mostly Fully
25. Regardless of how much power your supervisor has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your supervisor would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work.
None Small Moderate High Very High
26. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your supervisor has, what are the chance that he/she would “bail you out,” at his/her expense?
None Small Moderate High Very High
27. I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
28. How would you characterize your working relationship with your supervisor?
Extremely Ineffective Worse than Average Average Better than Average Extremely Effective

Listed below are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at your institution. Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement by selecting the most appropriate response:

Strongly Agree
Moderately Agree
Slightly Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Slightly Agree
Moderately Agree
Strongly Agree

29. My work organization values my contribution to its well-being.
30. My work organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.
31. My work organization would ignore any complaint from me.
32. My work organization really cares about my well-being.
33. Even if I did the best job possible, my work organization would fail to notice.
34. My work organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
35. My work organization shows very little concern for me.
36. My work organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

Listed below are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working your direct supervisor. Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement by selecting the most appropriate response:

Strongly Agree
Moderately Agree
Slightly Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Slightly Agree
Moderately Agree
Strongly Agree

37. My supervisor values my contributions to the well-being of our department.
38. My supervisor fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.
39. My supervisor would ignore any complaint from me.
40. My supervisor really cares about my well-being.
41. Even If I did the best job possible, my supervisor would fail to notice.
42. My supervisor cares about my general satisfaction at work.
43. My supervisor shows very little concern for me.
44. My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your assistance with this research is greatly appreciated.

VITA

The author, Thomas Lane, currently serves as the Assistant to the Vice-President for Student Affairs and Director of the Plaster Student Union at Missouri State University in Springfield, MO. He holds the following degrees: B. S. Degree in Communications from Illinois State University (1991); M.S. Ed. (College Student Personnel Sequence) from Illinois State University (1995); and Ed.D. in Educational and Leadership Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia (2010). He has worked in the field of student affairs since 1993, holding positions within the college student union at Illinois State University and Minnesota State University-Moorhead. In 2010, he was elected to serve as the president-elect of the Association of College Unions International, with a one-year term as president in 2011 and past-president in 2012. Beginning Fall 2010, Thomas will serve as an instructor in the Master's in Student Affairs program at Missouri State University.