RETAINING STAFF IN STUDENT AFFAIRS: THE RELATIONSHIP OF SUPERVISION

AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

by

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(Under the Direction of DIANE L. COOPER)

ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education do not currently know the relationship between supervision and new professionals in the field. This study provides a deeper understanding of the correlation between perceived synergistic supervision behaviors and new professionals' engagement in the workplace and intent to leave the field of student affairs. Synergistic supervision is a dual focus on both the organization's goals and supporting staff in their personal and professional goals. It centers on two-way communication, competences, is goal based, growth oriented, holistic, and is based on joint effort (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Through a quantitative study, the researcher surveyed over 350 participants to understand their perceptions in the workplace. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that participants who did not perceive synergistic supervision behaviors from their supervisor were less likely to be engaged and more likely to intend to leave the field within the next three years. Additionally, employees who reported they were less likely to be engaged reported they were more likely to leave the field within the next three years. On this basis, it is recommended that institutions of higher education train supervisors in synergistic supervision behaviors to best meet the needs of new professionals. Future research is needed to better understand the effects of supervision on

innovation in the workplace. Additionally, future research is needed to identify the factors that impacted professionals' decision to leave the field of student affairs.

INDEX WORDS: Synergistic supervision, employee engagement, new professional, supervision, burnout, motivation, job satisfaction, trust

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to previous and current supervisors who have inspired me to become a better version of myself so that I am able to positively supervise others throughout my career.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person –
not just an employee – are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled." Anne Mulcahy, then
the CEO of Xerox, said these words in a keynote address in 2003. Institutions of higher
education are not unlike other corporations and businesses when it comes to caring about their
employees. Engaging new professionals – those professionals with less than five years of
experience (Renn & Hodges, 2007) – in a new institution and culture is challenging. Not only
must the new professional learn the institution from the ground up, but they must learn to work
with a new group of colleagues and, most importantly, a new supervisor. The first supervisor
these new professionals report to can have a critical impact on their career trajectory. Tull
(2006) found that this first supervisor affects whether the professional chooses to remain in the
field of student affairs. New professionals expect their supervisor to provide a fulfilling,
engaging, and mentoring relationship and experience at the new institution (Barham & Winston,
2006).

Supervisors have the responsibility to socialize and engage new professionals as they join
the field of student affairs. New professionals must become oriented to the mission, goals, and
values of the institution (Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, & Cooper, 2003). Not only
are these new professionals looking for guidance as they begin their role within the institution,
but they are also trying to navigate through the politics of the institution. The supervisory
relationship is key to providing new professionals with confidence in their future development

not only with the institution but also in future career endeavors. Both the supervisor and the new professional must be engaged in the relationship to make it successful. Synergistic supervision, a model proposed by Winston and Creamer (1997), is a holistic approach to supervision that allows both the supervisor and supervisee to focus on long-term career goals, performance, and personal attitudes. The model emphasizes an opportunity for improving communication between both parties and can lead to greater satisfaction for the new professional. This supervision model can lead to both personal and professional development of new professionals and allows the new professional to outline future career aspirations with the support of their supervisor.

When considering employee engagement in the workplace and the importance of supervision of a new professional, it is not hard to assume that supervision has a relationship with the level of employee engagement of those new professionals. When employees are not engaged at work, it can lead to lower productivity, a loss of money on the part of the company, and attrition from the field (Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, & Lowery, 2016).

At times, supervisors are promoted into supervisory roles because they are an exemplary employee. Being a good employee does not always equate to managing staff well. When staff are placed in supervisory roles prior to being trained in how to supervise someone else, it can have a negative impact on the employee (Tull, 2006). Supervision of new professionals can be a competing responsibility but the importance of it cannot be overlooked (Davis & Cooper, 2017). Supervisors often have a full workload to attend to without adding supervising a new professional to their job description. The combination of being a new professional and reporting to a supervisor who is not yet aware of how to properly supervise can lead to lower reported levels of employee engagement (Gallup, 2017). When a supervisor does not understand the influence they can have on an employee in the workplace, they are unable to fully socialize the

new professional to the institution. Both the supervisor and supervisee are responsible for the

relationship created and need to be invested in the steps taken to improve professionally.

Currently, there is a heavy focus on new professionals in the workplace (Barham & Winston,

2006; Dinise-Halter, 2017) but not a specific focus of how the supervisory relationship is related

to engagement with the institution.

Research Problem

Fifty-nine percent of employees surveyed by Gallup (2017) indicated that they are more

likely to be engaged when they are supervised by a highly engaged manager. Supervisors may

be unable to adequately meet the needs of new professionals and engage them in the greater

institution if they are not engaged themselves. Work engagement means that employees are

willing to go the extra mile, while feeling well, being able to detach from their work, and

maintaining a healthy work-life balance (Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2010). When a

supervisor is positively engaged with the institution and provides a positive supervisory

relationship to an employee, the employee is more likely to be engaged at work and attribute the

supervisory support to a feeling of support from the institution as a whole (Gutermann,

Lehmann-Willenbrock, Boer, Born, & Voelpel, 2017; Marshall et al., 2016). This supervisory

relationship can change their view of an institution's culture as well as departmental culture.

In addition to engagement in the workplace, employees are more likely to have higher job

satisfaction if they have a developmental working relationship with a supervisor (Gutermann et

al., 2017; Tull, 2006). Satisfaction in the workplace can lead to increased productivity and a

better working culture (Singh, 2016). As supervisors take on employees, open communication,

trust, and authenticity become of the utmost importance (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015;

Gutermann, et al., 2017; Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018; Xiong, Lin, Li, & Wang, 2016). Trust in the

supervisory relationship will lead to increased job satisfaction as well as engagement within the institution.

Institutions seem to struggle with determining how to engage their employees in an effective and meaningful way. Supervisors have the responsibility to not only supervise those in their department but also to report to upper administration about what is happening in the department (Davis & Cooper, 2017). Supervision responsibilities are most always given in addition to other job responsibilities. Balancing supervising an employee while being held accountable by an administrator leads supervisors to desire to excel in both jobs but find themselves unable to divide their time appropriately. Supervisors strive for their employees to succeed but can struggle in navigating how best to support them (Tull, 2006).

Professionals sometimes confuse workplace engagement with being a workaholic. Being an engaged employee does not have to equate being over-worked, engaging in unhealthy behaviors, or forcing employees to be overworked (Makikangas, Schaufeli, Tolvanen, & Feldt, 2013; Salanova, Del Libano, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2013). Research shows that if supervisors take pleasure in their position, they are more likely to have positive well-being, despite the number of hours worked (Salanova et al., 2013). Engaged managers are just that, engaged. They are more willing to give of time because of their passion and vibrancy in the position, rather than feeling overworked or overloaded. Supervisor engagement has the potential to "rub off" on employees and increase job satisfaction and engagement with employees.

Research has been conducted on the supervisor/employee relationship and the importance of the commitment in that relationship (Chughtai et al., 2014; Gutermann et al., 2017; Xiong et al., 2016). Research has also shown how a high level of engagement of the supervisor leads to higher engagement for the employee (Gallup, 2017; Gutermann et al., 2017). There is little

research looking at the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee and how that

relationship affects the level of engagement of the supervisee. When attrition from the field is

because of bad supervision, that is a problem. Supervision is something that can be controlled; if

new professionals are citing it as a reason to leave, it means the field is not doing what it should

be doing to help employees. Understanding how supervisors affect new professional work

engagement and intent to leave the field can change how student affairs professionals prepare for

supervision.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how supervision is related to new professional

employee engagement and intent to leave the field of student affairs. By exploring this

phenomenon from the supervisee perspective, information was gathered for the future direction

of supervision within student affairs as well as how to work with employees employed at a

higher education institution. This research also sought to understand how a supervisor is related

to the trajectory of a new professional's career path and intent to remain in the field.

Understanding these phenomena can better shape supervisory training programs and graduate

programs that prepare individuals to take on supervisory roles. This research can assist the field

of student affairs in better understanding new professionals and how they work with their

supervisors. Additionally, the participant responses can better inform new professionals on

expressing and advocating for their needs as professionals.

Research Questions

Using a quantitative methodology, the researcher used the *Synergistic Supervision Scale*,

a scale developed by a group of researchers to understand the extent to which employees

perceived they were supervised in a synergistic way, meaning a dual focus on the organization

and the employee goals with foundations of two-way communication, joint effort, competences, is goal-oriented and holistic (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000), and the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*, a scale developed to understand the different factors that affect engagement in the workplace (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), to see if a relationship exists between engagement and supervision.

The researcher sought to answer these questions:

1. For new student affairs professionals, is there a correlation between perceived level of synergistic supervision as measured by the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS) and employee engagement as measured by the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES)?

2. For new student affairs professionals, to what extent does perceived level of synergistic supervision correlate to employee job satisfaction, as measured by the *Synergistic Supervision Scale*?

3. For new student affairs professionals, what is the correlation of perceived level of synergistic supervision on intent to leave the field as measured by the *SSS* and the researcher defined question on intent to leave the field within three years?

4. For new student affairs professionals, what is the correlation of employee engagement on intent to leave the field measured by the *UWES* and the researcher developed question on intent to leave the field within the next three years?

5. For new student affairs professionals, is there a difference in engagement by gender?

6. For new student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, engagement in the workplace, and burnout measured by the rated level of synergistic supervision by the *SSS* and level of engagement on the *UWES*?

7. For new student affairs professionals, is there a difference in perceived synergistic supervision and level of engagement between those that attended a graduate preparation program and those that did not?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in understanding the relationship between supervision and employee engagement in the field of student affairs. Attrition from the field of student affairs is not inherently bad, but when it is because of supervision, something that can be controlled or changed for the better, that is a problem.

Because we know that engaged supervisors are more likely to have engaged employees (Gallup, 2017), this research will look at the relationship between the supervisor and employee and how the supervisory style is related to engagement in the workplace. Without extensive research on the effects of supervision on new professionals, it is hard to imagine the future of student affairs in the hands of new professionals (Barham & Winston, 2006). Further understanding the needs of new professionals in the workplace and the effects of supervision on new professionals can help the field create new strategies and initiatives to meet those needs (Barham & Winston, 2006). This research hypothesized that the nature of the supervisor/supervisee relationship and the quality of that relationship is significantly related to engagement. The findings of this study should be used to alter supervisor training programs, to bolster the use of mentoring programs for new supervisors, and to add to the validity of the use of synergistic supervision with the field of student affairs.

By combining the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (*UWES*) and the Synergistic Supervision Scale (*SSS*), this quantitative exploratory study informs the field on employee engagement in the workplace. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was developed by Dutch

psychologist Dr. Wilmar Schaufeli in 1999 to understand the different factors that impact

engagement in the workplace (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The Synergistic Supervision Scale

was developed by a group of researchers to understand the extent to which staff perceive their

supervisor focuses on the advancement of institutional mission and development of staff

(Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000). Participants were gathered through the social

media site, Facebook and garnered 387 responses to the survey. The researcher analyzed the

data to see if there was a correlation between a perceived synergistic supervisory relationship and

high levels of engagement among participants. This analysis led to a stronger understanding of

intent to leave the field of student affairs and successful supervisory tactics among student affairs

professionals.

Operational Definitions

- Employee Engagement is defined as a

   "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor,

   dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state,

   engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that

   is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behavior" (Schaufeli,

   Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p. 1).

- Trust is defined as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability

   based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau,

   Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395).

- Supervision is defined as

   "A management function intended to promote the achievement of institutional goals and

   to enhance the personal and professional capabilities and performance of staff.

Supervision interprets the institutional mission and focuses on human fiscal resources on the promotion of individual and organizational competence" (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 186).

- Synergistic Supervision is defined as

  "a dual focus on accomplishment of the organization's goals and on support of staff in accomplishment of their personal and professional development goals. It is based on joint effort, requires two-way communication, focuses on competences, and is growth oriented, goal based, systematic and ongoing, and holistic" (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 43).

- New Professional is defined as an individual working within student affairs at a higher education institution with less than five years of post-masters professional experience in the field (Renn & Hodges, 2007).

- Burnout is a psychological response to prolonged stress on the job, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a lack of productivity (Day, Crown, & Ivany, 2017; Peoples, 2016).

- Employee/subordinate is the person reporting to a supervisor, used interchangeably

Summary of the Chapter

The relationship between a supervisor and supervisee is consequential. Winston and Creamer (1997) highlighted the importance of the relationship and variables that make the relationship successful. Tull (2006) examined the impact of the supervisory relationship on job satisfaction, but few studies have been conducted on how the supervisory relationship is related to engagement in the workplace. This study contributes to the literature to assist supervisors and higher education institutions in understanding how new professionals perceive the supervisory

relationship and how it impacts their engagement. By exploring this topic, the field of student affairs will better understand how supervisory style is related to engagement and employee intent to leave the field.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to a 2017 Gallup poll, only 34% of professional workers, salaried employees, not working in a trade, surveyed are engaged at work. Employees who are not engaged reported lower levels of job satisfaction and an increased intent to leave the position. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is crucial for new professionals. The following chapter outlines research on supervision in student affairs, employee engagement, and new professionals within student affairs.

Supervision in Student Affairs

Winston and Creamer (1997) called the field of student affairs to understand the importance of staffing practices and supervision to better serve employees in the profession. Winston and Creamer (1997) laid the groundwork for supervising in student affairs and higher education. The authors explored the need for a set of principles regarding staffing practices in student affairs because they saw a gap in the information in treatment of staff at institutions (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Their research laid the groundwork for staffing and supervising practices in more recent years.

Though there is a lack of recent research in this area, researchers found that practitioners are often unprepared for supervisory responsibilities and do not spend adequate time on this portion of their role (Schuh & Carlisle, 1991). This is alarming when 55% of individuals surveyed by a 1998 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators survey reported their supervisor as a top influencer in their professional career (Cooper & Miller, 1998). When

new professionals put this much weight on the relationship, supervisors should be adequately prepared to supervise these individuals.

Throughout the years, supervision has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Dalton (1996) described supervising as talent development and including activities such as assessing employee skills and knowledge, facilitating performance improvement, rewarding performance, providing professional development opportunities, and measuring developmental outcomes. 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). Focusing more on the developmental side of supervision, Arminio and Creamer (2001) defined supervision as "an educational endeavor demonstrated through principles practiced with a dual focus on institutional and individual needs. It requires (a) synergistic relationships between supervisor and staff members, (b) ubiquitous involvement with a constant nurturing of staff members, and (c) a stable and supportive environment to be effective" (p. 42). Keener (2007) defined supervision from the supervisor's point of view, saying that "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).

Supervisors can have an enormous impact on whether a new professional decides to stay in the field of higher education (Tull, 2006). Despite the various definitions of supervision and the importance placed on the development of employees, Winston and Creamer (1997) noted the inadequacy of how frequently supervision occurs in the workplace. In a survey given by the authors, practitioners reported they viewed themselves as providing supervision to staff at least once a month; however, they then reported they received supervision from their superior half as

often (Winston & Creamer, 1997). With this stark contrast, it seems that the perception of giving and receiving supervision within student affairs is not equal among employees and supervisors. Survey respondents stated the focus on supervision consisted of work assignments and projects and reported that was not an adequate showing of support for staff (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Effective supervision includes building rapport, maintaining a positive working relationship, and creating structure for the supervisory relationship (Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Building rapport is a challenging aspect of supervision. Supervisors must walk a thin line to give feedback to employees while simultaneously building an environment where employees feel safe to talk about their jobs honestly. In addition to building rapport, supervisors must also work to build trust (Scheuermann, 2011). Without trust, supervisors are unable to speak honestly with supervisees, facilitate a safe environment, or hold staff accountable (Scheuermann, 2011; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Supervisees need managers who support them in growth, guide them when they have questions related to their role, and act as mentors to guide their career path (McGraw, 2011).

Beneficial supervision is a relationship between the employee and manager that focuses on both the goals of the individual and the educational institution (Hirt & Strayhorn, 2011). Building the capacity to supervise other professionals is not typically a part of student affairs preparation programs (Hirt & Strayhorn, 2011; McGraw, 2011; Schuh & Carlisle, 1997; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003; Winston & Creamer, 1998). Winston and Creamer (1997) argued that employing the goals of synergistic supervision, where both the supervisor and employee are critically engaged, encourages success of the relationship.

Approaches in Supervision

Just as there are different ways to define supervision, there are also multiple approaches and styles. Winston and Creamer (1997) have identified four main approaches to supervision: laissez faire, authoritarian, companionable, and synergistic. These four approaches are utilized in higher education and student affairs organizations.

The laissez faire approach to supervision gives employees the autonomy to do their jobs according to their skills and talents (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Supervisors have a goal to hire the right people and then let them do their jobs accordingly. With the laissez faire approach, supervisors will step in only when needed after setting the goals and direction of the department. Employees sometimes see this approach to supervision as hard to work under because it may feel like a failure to have to ask for the supervisors' assistance in a time of need. When using this approach, supervisors must be careful in how they approach situations when employees need assistance as to not further compound the feeling of failure. Conflict is typically dealt with by the employee and staff, as needed, but the supervisor may step in if a solution is not found (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Authoritarian supervision has a foundational notion that staff members need continuous attention and that they are undependable or lazy without it (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The belief is that people will work as little as possible unless someone is continuously monitoring their actions. The supervisor continuously checks up on employees to ensure the work is getting done and that no one is slacking on their responsibilities. Conflict is typically handled by the supervisor, not the employee, to bring the staff in line with the organizational goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997). In this approach to supervision, the supervisor is responsible for staff performance and constant contact is a main role of the supervisor.

The companionable supervision approach is based on having a friendship-like relationship with employees. The supervisor seeks to be well-liked by the staff and have supportive relationships with each of them (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Supervisors who use this type of approach can sometimes struggle in situations of conflict because they have a desire to be liked by employees. Confronting staff can prove to be challenging with this type of supervision which then can lead to staff not knowing when they are doing poorly in their job responsibilities. Supervisors who use this approach provide both personal and professional support and a great deal of attention to ensure employees feel supported (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Any organizational conflict is dealt with by the supervisor to defend the staff and provide unwavering support to the staff.

Finally, synergistic supervision is "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" (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 196). This approach to supervision is committed to assisting all staff to enhance their professional development and advancement in the organization and career. With this type of supervision, conflict is typically dealt with as a team, both the supervisor and the staff member, to encourage joint problem solving. Synergistic supervision is seen as an ongoing process where both the supervisor and employee are equally engaged in the relationship (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Synergistic Supervision

Synergistic supervision is the collaborative efforts of both the supervisor and employee with the notion that both of their efforts will result in greater growth than either could accomplish on their own, using the metaphor: $1 + 1 = 3$ (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Employees

must be engaged in their relationship with the supervisor to grow in their current role but also professionally. Synergistic supervision is defined as a

> dual focus on accomplishment of the organization's goals and support of staff in accomplishment of their personal and professional development goals, joint effort, two-way communication, a focus on competence, growth orientation, proactivity, goal-based, systematic and ongoing processes, and holism. (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 197)

Dual focus is a combination of focusing on both the individual's personal and professional goals as well as the institutional and divisional goals. Winston and Creamer (1997) reported that staff members must feel like they have influence over establishing goals and strategies so that they take ownership of the process. As supervisors show sincerity toward their staff, the staff more likely to open up and show loyalty to the supervisor and institution alike. Both the institution and staff member can flourish when the supervisor focuses on the growth of the whole individual, personally and professionally.

Because supervision and staffing practices have historically not been the focus of higher education institutions, the field has been playing catch up to support staff (Saunders et al., 2000; Winston & Creamer, 1997). With a focus on student development and growth, student affairs professionals understand the importance of synergistic supervision but lack the time to do it right (Saunders et al., 2000). Saunders and colleagues (2000) developed an instrument, the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS) to examine supervision in student affairs. More specifically, the *Scale* measures the

> extent to which staff perceive that their supervisor focuses on the two areas of advancement of the institutional mission and goals and the personal and professional advancement of individual staff members (Saunders et al., 2000, p. 181).

The scale is used to measure employee's perception of their supervisor's behaviors pertaining to concern for personal and professional growth, productive management tactics, goal setting, two-way communication, and staff treatment (Saunders et al., 2000). The research team found that the *SSS* was equally valid for professional and supportive administrative staff (Saunders et al., 2000). The authors suggested that utilizing synergistic supervision can be effective no matter the student affairs unit.

In their study, the researchers found that subordinates reported they met with their supervisor less than once a month (Saunders et al., 2000). Subordinates reported that the focus of these meetings was on day-to-day activities and overall issues of performance rather than professional development (Saunders et al., 2000). The study suggested that the developmental outcomes outlined in synergistic supervision are impossible to produce when supervisors do not have developmental meetings with their employees. Additionally, the study found that supervisors need to put more of a focus on building relationships with subordinates and then focus on growth and development. This study suggests that the field needs to reexamine practices of supervision to better serve employees in higher education.

Tull (2006) went on to use the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* to understand the relationship to job satisfaction and intent to leave the field for new professionals. Tull (2006) found that synergistic supervision had a negative correlation with intent to leave the field and a positive correlation to job satisfaction. Employees experiencing synergistic supervision are more likely to have positive regard for both their department and toward the institution. Tull (2006) found that as new professionals reported a lack of synergistic supervision, there was a correlation with intent to leave.

New professionals look for a supervisor to work with them holistically, someone focused on their personal and professional growth and someone willing to develop a relationship with them. Though new professionals may not be able to adequately articulate their supervisory needs (Barham & Winston, 2006), using a synergistic model and building a strong foundation will be most beneficial to both employee and supervisor. The synergistic approach is best suited for new professionals due to their unknown expectations of their supervisor and the institution. The holistic approach, to enhance the new professional both personally and professionally, directly relates to expectation a new professional may have in the workplace (Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995). The synergistic approach may assist new professionals in developing their needs and expectations entering a new institution.

Supervisor Trust

Trust is defined as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395). A positive supervisory relationship includes a foundation of trust between the employee and supervisor. This trust is developed when the two learn to understand one another, come together with questions or concerns, and develop a feeling of reliability with each other. The notion of trust between a supervisor and employee correlates to organizational effectiveness and growth of outcomes (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2017; Xiong, Lin, Li, & Wang, 2016).

Employee trust in a supervisor has a positive correlation with their organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Conversely, a lack of trust can lead to higher rates of job dissatisfaction and a lack of engagement at work (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2017; Singh, 2016; Xiong et al., 2016). A trusting relationship is also built by how the employee sees

the supervisor interacting with others (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015; Jawahar & Schreurs, 2017). How the supervisor is perceived as a leader and whether they are perceived as authentic can also cause an employee to build trust or lose trust in the person (Xiong et al., 2016). Additionally, when an employee trusts their supervisor, the employee is more likely to have positive regard for their own well-being despite job related difficulties (Chughtai et al., 2015). New professionals in the field of student affairs look for a trusting relationship with their supervisor. If they are negatively affected in their first few years in the field, they are less likely to stay engaged or retained in the field of higher education.

Jawahar and Schreurs (2017) sought to understand the effects of incivility from supervisors and how it affected subordinate's performance. They found that trust played a mediating role in the relationship. The authors defined incivility as workplace behavior with a vague intent to harm. Jawahar and Schreurs (2017) focused on the supervisor-subordinate relationship because of the deep impact supervisors can have on quality of life and organizational commitment. As supervisors and employees create a relationship, the foundation of trust creates a desirable work environment for both (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2017).

The authors found that employees who had low levels of trust in their supervisor had lower expectations of their supervisor and therefore were not as greatly impacted by the effects of incivility towards them. Those employees with high levels of trust in the supervisor were more likely to be affected when treated with incivility because it was an unexpected outcome (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2017). This foundation of trust exacerbated the relationship between incivility and work engagement. Employees who had a trusting relationship with their supervisor but then were treated unfairly, then experienced lower levels of engagement in the workplace (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2017).

Communication

Employees with positive communication habits with both their supervisor and their peers are more likely to remain engaged with the organization (Schroeder & Modaff, 2018). Having a personal connection with a supervisor made the employee feel like they were more than just a number for the organization, that the organization cares for them as a person (Schroeder & Modaff, 2018).

Kelly and Westerman (2014) conducted a study to explore the role of perceived immediacy in supervisor-subordinate communication. Immediacy behaviors include attentive body orientation, eye contact, and open or relaxed posture. The study described how the perceived immediacy in behavior communication impacted job satisfaction and levels of burnout (Kelly & Westerman, 2014). The researchers found that job satisfaction can directly relate to immediate supervisory behaviors and actions. A key variable of the Kelly and Westerman (2014) study was the perception of the subordinate, not the intention of the supervisor behind any action. Employees reported they were more likely to respond to the feeling of perceived immediacy given by their supervisor and reported feeling less burned out at work as a result (Kelly & Westerman, 2014). How supervisors communicate, whether verbally or nonverbally, to and with their employees can directly impact the employees' satisfaction or burnout in a position (Kelly & Westerman, 2014).

Employee-supervisor communication can greatly impact employee engagement in the workplace. If employees are positively communicative with their supervisor or peers, they are more likely to show commitment to the overall organization (Schroeder & Modaff, 2018; Walden, Jung, & Westerman, 2017). As employees communicate positively with their peers, they are more likely to feel connected to the organization, and that connection turns into

commitment (Walden et al., 2017). Three types of communication—information flow, information adequacy, and interaction support—all positively correlate with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. As employees find a supportive, communicative work environment, they are more likely to be engaged in the organization and with their supervisor (Walden et al., 2017).

Supervisor-subordinate communication has been linked to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (MacDonald, Kelly, & Christen, 2014). This communication can relate to organizational productivity, and, if the communication is not effective, the employee is less likely to be committed to the organization (MacDonald et al., 2014). Communication is more than informing subordinates of meetings or new rules. Employees desire a supportive relationship where they can go to their supervisor with questions, comments, and ideas, without fear of retribution.

Employee Engagement

Engagement is defined as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Vigor is defined by high levels of mental resilience as well as energy, even when met with difficulties on the job (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Dedication comes from a feeling of enthusiasm, pride, challenge, and significance but is not to be confused with involvement because of the wider scope of dedication (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Finally, absorption, the final dimension of engagement, is characterized by being engulfed and concentrated on one's work and struggling to detach from work when not present (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor and dedication are considered direct opposites of exhaustion and cynicism, two constructs measured

with burnout. Absorption is characterized by being fully engrossed and immersed in ones' work, a distinct factor when considering work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Before Schaufeli's work, engagement was measured using the same scale as burnout. This one instrument was utilized to measure if a participant experienced feeling of burnout, and it was widely accepted that low levels of burnout directly correlated to higher levels of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Burnout was initially measured by the Maslach-Burnout Inventory (MBI. The inventory concluded that if an employee was not burned out, they were engaged (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Schaufeli and colleagues (2002) argued with the use of one instrument to measure both burnout and engagement. Schaufeli and colleagues (2002) did not agree that the opposite of burnout was engagement. Employees can be disengaged while also not experiencing burnout in the workplace, and the inverse, employees can experience burnout while not experiencing high levels of work engagement. The researchers then created the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. This second scale measured the variables related to engagement in the workplace (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Now, burnout and work engagement can be measured separately without assuming the two are opposites of one another.

Employees who are engaged have a strong desire to go above and beyond, are respectful to peers, believe in the organization, and work to make things better (Robinson, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2010; Walden, Jung, & Westerman, 2017). Different driving forces in a work environment lead to feelings of engagement, including positive communication, pay and benefits, fair treatment, job satisfaction, and a beneficial supervisory relationship (Gutermann et al., 2017; Robinson, 2007; Schroeder & Modaff, 2018).

Robinson (2007) found that the employee-manager relationship was of critical importance for the employee to be engaged with the organization. Fifty-nine percent of surveyed employees reported they are more likely to be engaged when they are supervised by a highly engaged manager (Gallup, 2017). According to the literature, the largest impact on engagement is effective leadership (Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017; Xiong et al., 2016). For example, hierarchical organizational cultures can have either a positive or negative impact on employee engagement. Employees report they are more likely to be engaged when they feel they are bringing value to the organization by decision-making at face-to-face meetings and through conversations with colleagues (Yoerger, Crowe, & Allen, 2015). Employees who do not have a say in decisions that are made or are told what and how to do their job are less engaged (Lee, Iris, & Delfabbro, 2017).

When employees are unable to see the meaning in their positions, they struggle to actively engage in their work (Lee et al., 2017; Martin & Ottemann, 2015). The presence of meaningfulness in one's work can lead to strong intrinsic motivation for employees because they feel appreciated and valued in the workplace. Being engaged in the workplace can come from both intrinsic or extrinsic motivators (Lee et al., 2017; Singh, 2016). Some employees, despite leadership challenges, still possess intrinsic motivation to be engaged in the workplace (Singh, 2016). Working in a hierarchical environment, employees that are given more autonomy are more likely to become dedicated to their work (Lee et al., 2017). Those employees who feel they have autonomy to problem-solve and make meaning in their jobs every day, rather than wait for leadership to provide it, are reportedly more engaged. More freedom leads to higher engagement in the workplace (Singh, 2016).

Authentic and empowering leadership allows a team to thrive and have trust in the organization and its culture (Lee et al., 2017; Marshall et al., 2016; Singh, 2016). For student affairs employees, a supportive and authentic supervisor is critical to the engagement of a worker (Marshall et al., 2016). When an employee perceives a manager to be trustworthy, predictable, and reliable, they are more likely to be engaged because they see the manager as being engaged (Lee et al., 2017; Singh, 2016; Xiong et al., 2016). Furthermore, when employees believe their supervisor is empowering and cares for them, the employee is more likely to feel appreciated and safe within the organization (Lee et al., 2017). When an employee does not feel supervisory support, they are less likely to feel connected to the organization and are more likely to go elsewhere (Marshall et al., 2016).

Employee engagement, as defined by Schaufeli and colleagues (2002), means that employees show up to work with vigor, dedication, and a willingness to go above and beyond. Employees can experience engagement through intrinsic factors as well as extrinsic factors. When employees find meaning in their work, they are more likely to be engaged in the work they are doing. Additionally, authentic leadership can be a key component in affecting engagement in the workplace. Though engagement was previously measured as the opposite of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), Schaufeli and colleagues found that employees are not always engaged when they are not burned out (2002). Separating this thought process, that not all burned out employees are disengaged and not all disengaged employees are burned out, gives room to better understand how employees show up to work when they are not on either end of the spectrum.

Burnout in the Workplace

"Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 1). A lack of workplace engagement can morph into job-related burnout. Burnout results from exhaustion and cynicism in the workplace due to the misalignment of work and personal values (Day et al., 2017; Mo & Shi, 2015; Peoples, 2016). Many factors play into how an employee can begin to feel burnout. Burnout is a combination of emotional exhaustion and feelings of low personal accomplishment (Malach-Pines, 2005). Burnout can also stem from a lack of emotional support or perceived lack of support from a supervisor and colleagues in the work environment.

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI) was originally developed to measure burnout in a variety of different helping professions (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The inventory was the first of its kind examining three key areas of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout is a continuous, fluctuating construct. People can range from a low level to high level of burnout and the score can change based on different factors. Educator burnout is measured slightly differently than other helping professions. Educator burnout uses the same three burnout scales as the original *Maslach Burnout Inventory,* but some of the items have been slightly varied to change the word "recipient" to "student" (Schwab, 1981). The Educator MBI is used by teachers as a self-assessment tool to develop an awareness of whether burnout is an issue for them to address (Schwab, 1981). The Educator MBI should not be used as a widespread evaluation because it is a self-assessment tool.

Change in a department or institution can be a catalyst for burnout. If an employee lacks a fruitful and supportive relationship with a supervisor, higher levels of burnout exist (Crawford,

LePine, & Rich, 2010; Day et al., 2017; Hildenbrand, Sacramento, & Binnewies, 2018; Mo & Shi, 2015). A supportive supervisor can mitigate the impact change can have on an individual, reducing the risk of burnout (Day et al., 2017). When an employee feels they have a supportive supervisor, they are less likely to feel the stress of change, and, in turn, they feel less burned out (Day et al., 2017; Hildenbrand et al., 2018).

Transformational and ethical leadership also have strong correlating impacts on employee burnout (Day et al., 2017; Hildenbrand et al., 2018; Mo & Shi, 2015). When an employee feels that their supervisor is being authentic, they have more trust in the organization, which leads to lower reported levels of burnout (Mo & Shi, 2015). Even if an employee has a supportive supervisor, if they do not feel they have community in the workplace, they are more likely to feel the impact of burnout (Peoples, 2016). Coworker support in the workplace seems to be equally as important as supervisor support so that employees feel a connection to the team and the work accomplished (Montani, Odoadri, & Battistelli, 2012).

Burnout is typically experienced by those employees who are experts and achievers in their respective positions (Peoples, 2016). For many individuals, their jobs demand a great deal without providing proper resources to do the job effectively. When this takes place, employees report that they experience higher levels of burnout (Crawford et al., 2010). The mentality to "do more with less" seems to impact employee burnout greatly. Employers should work to provide resources for employees to be able to mitigate the impact of demand on the employees' well-being. When employers are able to provide two-way communication, it gives the employees trust in the organization and also the comfort in knowing the supervisor will support and assist them, despite a lack of resources (Mo & Shi, 2015).

Employees who feel they hold more autonomy in the workplace show lower levels of burnout (Day et al., 2017; Peoples, 2016). Supervisors can encourage autonomy by way of open communication, lower hierarchical decisions, and allowing employees to determine how and when they will do certain parts of their job (Day et al., 2017; Mo & Shi, 2015). Supervisors can lead with transformational leadership, allowing their employees to thrive in the work environment (Hildenbrand et al., 2018). Supervisors striving to limit feelings of burnout and attrition from the field of student affairs should strive to provide stronger support for their employees in the workplace.

Job Satisfaction & Motivation

New professionals within the field of student affairs leave every single year (Tull, 2006). Some of these professionals attribute their leaving the field to dissatisfaction with aspects of their job (Marshall et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2000; Silver & Jakeman, 2014; Tull, 2006). This dissatisfaction can result from a lack of understanding of the role, a lack of fulfillment in job responsibilities, and a lack of connection with a supervisor or poor relationship to a supervisor (Marshall et al., 2016; Silver & Jakeman, 2014; Tull, 2006). When a new professional lacks a strong relationship with their supervisor, they may lack in professional direction, lack a strong mentorship relationship, or lack a sense of fit within their department (Marshall et al., 2016). Though a supervisor can't ensure an employee will be satisfied in their role, providing supportive and intentional supervision can help.

Frederick Herzberg laid the foundation of employee motivation work in the 1950s and 1960s. Herzberg's research found that the things that make people motivated to work are different, in type, from the things that make them dissatisfied (Herzberg, 2003). People are motivated by interesting and challenging work (Herzberg, 2003). This desire stems from a

craving for both growth and achievement. When employees are asked what makes them unhappy at work, they frequently report a bad manager, low salary, or rules they don't agree with (Herzberg, 2003). These reasonings are utterly different, leaving managers to focus on things that are easier to change; for example, an increase in salary opposed to providing and creating interesting and meaningful work.

Many managers are under the impression that by increasing wages and creating a more vibrant benefits package, employees will be motivated to do their work. Unfortunately, that is just not true. Employees will work to get the next pay bump or find the job with the best benefits, but they will not actually be motivated in their day-to-day job by these factors (Herzberg, 2003).

Managers and organizations who want to motivate their employees must focus on opportunities for growth, advancement, achievement, and recognition (Herzberg, 2003). Taris, Feij, and Capel (2006) found that meeting expectations for newcomers is critical for a successful work adjustment. Intrinsic factors such as motivation, effort, health, values, and met expectations were studied to understand how newcomers perceived the new organization (Taris et al., 2006). These different intrinsic factors had a strong impact on whether new professionals are likely to stay motivated in their jobs (Herzberg, 1982; Taris et al., 2006).

Both job satisfaction and motivation are fluid concepts for employees in the workforce (MacDonald et al., 2014). Herzberg (1982) pushed supervisors to understand the different motivations of employees to further encourage commitment to the organization. Recognizing both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of employees can bring supervisors closer to their subordinates. Employees want to experience job satisfaction and motivation to do their jobs well, and by focusing on both extrinsic and intrinsic factors, supervisors can assist them in doing so.

New Professionals in Student Affairs

A new cohort of new professionals enters the field of student affairs annually (Barham & Winston, 2006). New professionals can come directly from graduate preparation programs, from a different field, or even straight from an undergraduate degree program. These professionals may have been driven to the field because of the vibrancy of the collegiate environment, the values of higher education, or the opportunity to help others (Janosik et al., 2003). New professionals are primarily responsible for direct student interaction and program delivery (Barham & Winston, 2006). However, up to 60% of professionals leave the field of student affairs within the first five years (Barham & Winston, 2006; Lorden, 1998).

Barham and Winston (2006) conducted a qualitative study with both new professionals and their supervisors to understand the different needs and supervision styles. Past research had not directly focused on the needs of new professionals, and Barham and Winston (2006) found that new professionals have difficulty identifying their needs to a supervisor. The participants in the study expressed the need to vent frustrations to someone they trusted and someone who was non-judgmental, preferably their supervisor, who could understand their role and interactions (Barham & Winston, 2006). New professionals reported wanting both a professional and personal relationship with their supervisor (Barham & Winston, 2006). Davis and Cooper (2017) found that supervisors reported the same conclusion of not knowing specific needs when asked about new professionals. The supervisors reported trying to find a balance between a personal and professional relationship with their subordinates but wanted to show the new professionals they were invested in their whole development (Davis & Cooper, 2017).

Newcomers to the field struggled to identify their professional needs. New supervisors, as opposed to seasoned supervisors, also struggled to identify the needs of their supervisees

(Barham & Winston, 2006). With this lack of clarity, the supervisor struggles to serve the new professional, and the new professional is unsure of how to identify needs. Davis and Cooper (2017) sought to understand the perspective of the supervisor, a voice often overlooked in new professional/supervisor research.

The supervisors in this study reported that new professionals are better served when they are not micromanaged, but they found it hard to walk the line between giving guidance and micromanaging. Additionally, supervisors found that one-on-one meetings were crucial to the success of the relationship. Helping new professionals understand their needs coming into the field, though complicated, is crucial to both supervisor and supervisee.

Onboarding and Socialization

Because new professionals come to the field from many different career paths or backgrounds, it can be challenging for them to transition to the world of higher education. If the new professional did not come directly from a graduate preparation program, they may not understand the values or foundations of student affairs. Socialization in a new role can assist newcomers in becoming effective members of the organization (Hillman, 2010; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983). Not only will the socialization or onboarding process for employees make them feel a part of the organization, but it will also teach them about their role and provide a foundation for long-term success with the institution (Hillman, 2010).

Onboarding is a "special, conscious effort" to bring the new employee up to speed to be a productive member of the organization as quickly as possible (Hillman, 2010, p. 1). Just as orientation is crucial to the success of new students at an institution, it is also invaluable to new hires of an institution. Successfully onboarding a new professional can increase organizational commitment and increase job satisfaction (Major et al., 1995). Onboarding is more than

teaching the new professional where and who people are; it provides the opportunity to quickly and effectively become integrated into the organization (Hillman, 2010; Major et al., 1995). With this specialized process, new professionals develop relationships with colleagues, begin to understand the different business tools of the organization, and become integrated into the culture of the organization (Hillman, 2010).

As newcomers join the organization, they have a certain set of expectations of the organization (Major et al., 1995). Newcomers form these expectations prior to arrival at the organization during the recruitment and hiring timeline (Major et al., 1995). These expectations are formed in conversation in interviews, when researching the organization, and the cultivated thoughts the newcomer has about working at the organization. When expectations are unmet, newcomers are less likely to be satisfied with the organization (Louis et al., 1983; Taris et al., 2006). If an organization is unable to meet these expectations, newcomers report lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Major et al., 1995; Taris et al., 2006). Some employees become complacent about the expectations but report lower levels of motivation to do the job well (Taris et al., 2006). Institutions can better manage these expectations as they alter the different socialization processes offered.

Louis, Posner, and Powell (1983) studied the effectiveness of socialization processes on newcomers to the organization. The researchers found that, depending on the different practices, the newcomers' job satisfaction and commitment to the organization could shift. Part of the socialization process is to encourage growth and transformation in personal and professional knowledge (Hirschy, Wilson, Liddell, Boyle, & Pasquesi, 2015). Socialization to a new career can also help form the newcomer's professional identity (Hirschy et al., 2015). This professional identity can be impacted by the orientation processes and access to a mentor to help guide the

newcomer to understand the ins and outs of the organization. Socialization practices have shown different levels of effectiveness for new professionals (Louis et al., 1983). Such practices include defining the job accurately and completely; face to face introductions with the department, team, and across the institution; providing training and development opportunities for the newcomer; and helping the newcomer understand the mission, values, and culture of the institution (Hillman, 2010). According to Louis and colleagues (1983), newcomers reported that peer-to-peer conversation and engagement was the most effective form of socialization to the organization.

Retention and Turnover

Creating an environment where new professionals have high levels of employee engagement is crucial to retention and low turnover. By developing strategies for new professionals, organizations can work to increase engagement and job satisfaction. As organizations work to increase engagement, reported levels of burnout should lessen and employees will have higher levels of job satisfaction.

Successful onboarding practices are more than just a heartfelt welcome and giving someone an outline of their role. Successful onboarding includes great attention to detail to training and development, face to face interactions, and a focus on a full integration to the institution, which in turn increases retention of newcomers (Hillman, 2010). Institutions can provide a modest upfront investment in newcomers to provide the best onboarding experience, which can lead to long-term retention and lower rates of turnout for employees (Hillman, 2010). While newcomers have expectations from their new role and environment, newcomers sometimes have a hard time outlining their specific expectations from both a supervisor and a department (Major et al., 1995).

Taris and colleagues (2006) study of skilled laborers showed that newcomers whose initial expectations were met were less likely to leave the organization than others. Interestingly, the researchers also found that young workers were more likely to leave the organization when expectations were unmet as opposed to older works staying with the organization (Taris et al., 2006). The chances of turnover decreased by 35% when the age increased by one standard deviation (Taris et al., 2006). Additionally, Louis and colleagues (1983), found that socialization practices such as face-to-face peer interactions and open communication with the supervisor positively related to increased commitment to the organization, in turn decreasing turnover. The practice that led to the highest level of commitment to the organization was formal socialization practices, including formal onsite orientation sessions (Louis et al., 1983). Employees reported more positive attitudes, increased job satisfaction, and tenure intention with the organization (Louis et al., 1983). To decrease turnover intentions in newcomers, institutions should focus on newcomer onboarding socialization practices that are proven to increase retention for new employees.

Summary of the Chapter

Supervisors are a key component to an employee experiencing satisfaction, lower levels of burnout, and increased commitment in the workplace (Louis et al., 1983; Taris et al., 2006). Experiencing a supportive type of leadership from a supervisor and the organization strongly impacts employee engagement (Lee et al., 2017; Marshall et al., 2016; Singh, 2016). Without a productive working relationship with a supervisor, a new professional is more likely to experience lower job satisfaction and increased feelings of intent to leave the organization (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). New professionals are interested in a supportive supervisory relationship that provides autonomy, opportunity for growth, and collaboration when solving problems (Lee et al.,

2017). Synergistic supervision is encouraged for student affairs supervisors because of the focus

on communication and personal and professional growth.

Bridging the gap between supervisory research and employee engagement can assist

student affairs professionals in learning how to work best with new professionals. In student

affairs, new professionals are not always young professionals. They can also be professionals

who transitioned to the field from a different career path. Providing different supervision

practices to new professionals can better socialize new professionals in the field and with

increased support and can increase their intent to remain in the field (Louis et al., 1983). A

combined effort by both the employee and the supervisor can positively increase engagement

and job satisfaction (Barham & Winston, 2006).

Further research on the effects of supervisory support and higher reported levels of work

engagement is needed. Understanding the effects of supervision on new professionals can create

more understanding for the importance of the supervision role and training needed for

supervisors. This chapter focused on the different areas of research pertaining to workplace

engagement, supervision styles, and new professionals. Chapter three will explain the

methodology of the study conducted.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology used in this study, including the process, selection of participants, the method for data collection, a description of the instruments included in the questionnaire, and the statistical methods used for analysis of the data.

The purpose of this research study was to understand the relationship between a supervisor/new professional supervisee relationship, employee engagement, and intent to leave the field of student affairs. To answer the research questions, the researcher used a quantitative methodology, with an exploratory design.

The use of quantitative methods allowed the researcher to examine the relationship between differing variables and to capture several experiences of participants (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie, 2016). The participants in this study completed a questionnaire, a combination of two instruments and researcher developed items. The questionnaire includes the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS), the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES), and six researcher developed items that measure factors including the supervisor-supervisee relationship quality, job satisfaction, burnout, and intent to leave the field.

Sample

The population in this study were new professionals, those with less than five years of professional experience, not including graduate school, in the field of student affairs, who had worked in their current position for at least six months and who were willing to complete a web-based questionnaire. Purposive sampling was utilized to find participants who met the study

criteria and were willing to volunteer to participate in the research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Due to the focus on a targeted population, purposive sampling was best to find those who met the criteria outlined by the researcher.

In addition to purposive sampling, participants were asked to pass along the survey to their colleagues or peers whom they felt met the criteria to participate in the study. This type of snowball sampling further allowed the researcher to cast a wider net when soliciting participants because initial participants passed along the survey to other qualified participants, which in turn allowed the sample to grow larger and larger (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Unfortunately, it is impossible to adequately count the population of new professionals in the field of student affairs. Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, and Sloane (2006) estimated that 15 to 20% of the student affairs workforce is made up of new professionals. The survey for the current study was published on several Facebook group pages totaling approximately 41,000 members. Twenty percent of this total number is 8,200 people and is assumed this number represents new professionals in the field who are on Facebook.

The researcher used an online sample size calculator with a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error, which resulted in the researcher needing at least 365 participants to be confident about the data collected (Sample size calculator, 2004). Additionally, the researcher recognized that there may be overlap in members of multiple social media pages, which would result in a lower number of participants needed.

After final data collection, the researcher gathered 387 replies, adequately reaching the needed sample number. These data may not represent the entire population, due to only using one social media forum and because of relying exclusively on social media, but the sample provided an adequate confidence level. Participation was encouraged throughout the entire time

the survey was open, a three-week period in late September and early October 2019 to gather as many responses as possible.

Participants

Participants included student affairs professionals who are engaged in social media pages targeted to student affairs professionals and who met the eligibility criteria. This group of people was targeted to gain the widest variety of responses to the questionnaire. By using this approach, the researcher collected responses from people at a diverse array of institutions rather than only collecting from one institution. Due to the nature of the research, the researcher wanted to provide comfort in anonymity; therefore, institution name and region were not collected.

Data Collection Methods

The social media site Facebook was used as the source for gathering participants for the study. Facebook was chosen due to the increased use of social media networking, primarily on Facebook, by academic researchers (Nandez & Borrego, 2013). The researcher hoped to gather a variety of responses from new professionals across the United States.

With a variety of groups targeted towards student affairs professionals, the researcher chose those that had a variety of professionals as members to not only send to new professionals but to send to mid-level and experienced professionals who could share within their network. Some members might belong to multiple groups on social media, so the total number of professionals might be lower than the sum of these groups.

Three Facebook pages were used for the study including: the Student Affairs Professionals Group, with almost 33,000 members; the Millennials in Student Affairs Group, with just over 8,000 members; and the Georgia College Personnel Association page, with just over 400 members (Georgia College Personnel Association, 2008; Millennials in Student

Affairs, 2017; Student Affairs Professionals, 2006.) These pages were selected for their frequent activity on the pages by engaged student affairs professionals and based on recommendations from student affairs professionals in a doctoral program.

Though these social media pages were not inclusive of the entire population, they provide a way for any and all professionals to have a space in the social media context of the field. Because using Facebook is not something inclusive of all people and populations, this could be a disadvantage to drawing conclusions from this population, specifically. Without knowing the true makeup of the population across the United States, it is impossible to tell if those represented on social media do, in fact, represent the population.

The researcher also listed the call for participants on their personal page for their network to share with new professionals. Additionally, the researcher contacted the Southern Association for College Student Affairs (2012) to post on their social media page for participants but never received a reply from the practitioner that deals with research requests. Because of this, the invitation to participate was not posted on this page nor were members contacted specifically.

Because the research was targeted to new professionals, a call was put out for those professionals with up to five years of professional experience (Renn & Hodges, 2007), excluding graduate preparation programs. The researcher posted a recruitment announcement explaining the research study and a link to the questionnaire on each of the aforementioned social media pages. The announcement outlined the purpose of the study, the criteria for participants, and the call for volunteers with a link to the web-based questionnaire. By using a social media post, the researcher provided the necessary information needed by participants in an easy and readily available manner. A sample of the flyer and wording for the announcement can be found in Appendix A.

Participants were asked to click the link, fill out the survey, and also pass it on to those in their network who met the criteria. The first page of the survey was the informed consent form for participants to read and approve if they agreed to take part in the study. The complete informed consent form can be found in Appendix B. Participants were encouraged to send an email directly to the researcher if they had further questions. Data collection began on September 17, 2019, after the researcher received IRB approval, and closed on October 4, 2019. The researcher posted a reminder in the original Facebook post one week after the initial request and then a secondary final call for participants two weeks after the initial request. Participants were then entered into a drawing to win one of ten $50 gift cards. Participation in the study was not necessary to be entered in the drawing. Winners were chosen and notified on October 6, 2019.

The University of Georgia-licensed Qualtrics software was used to collect data. The first page of the survey provided a consent form to participants, found in Appendix B. If an individual did not consent, they were taken to the end of the survey thanking them for their time. When a participant consented, by clicking the 'begin survey' button, they were taken to the first question of the survey. If at any time a participant closed out of the survey, a box popped up asking if they wished to leave the survey, and the survey closed out when they hit the X again. To analyze the data, inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions about the population based on the data provided by the sample. The software system used to analyze the data was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

To ensure confidentiality of data, the data was stored on the researcher's personal computer, not used for any functions having to do with professional work responsibilities, and the Qualtrics system was password protected. The laptop was password protected and the data

was stored in a password-protected drive, making it highly unlikely someone could gain access. By providing these barriers, the researcher ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in the study.

Instrumentation

To study how supervisors relate to employee engagement in new professionals, the research questionnaire included the following two scales (a) the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and (b) the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (Saunders et al., 2000). The instruments provided to participants in this study were developed and tested by other researchers. The surveys were reviewed for validity and reliability by the scholars who developed the two individual instruments, the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* and the *Synergistic Supervision Scale*. The survey also included six researcher-developed items to designed to examine the participant's intent to leave the field of student affairs and additional demographic items. The individual studies were combined into one 50-item instrument. The estimated time spent on the survey for the participant was 15 to 20 minutes.

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* measured engagement in the workplace by looking at three different factors: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The study was developed as a result of historically only using one instrument, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, 1981), to measure both engagement and burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). When the Maslach Burnout Inventory was originally crafted, it was assumed that the opposite of burnout was engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Schaufeli and associates (2004) did not believe this to be true. Employees who may be disengaged may not experience explicit feelings of burnout, and vice versa.

Engagement is a

Positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior. (Schaufeli, et al., 2001)

Vigor is categorized by high reported levels of energy and resilience, persistence to keep going in hard times, and willingness to invest effort and time in one's work. Dedication is descriptive of one being highly involved in work, finding a sense of meaning and pride in the work, and having increased levels of enthusiasm and inspiration. Absorption is characterized by one being fully engrossed and concentrated on one's work and having difficulty detaching from work. Vigor and dedication are considered to be direct opposites of exhaustion and cynicism from the definition of burnout, being characterized by low levels of energy and poor identification with work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The third factor, absorption, is included because engagement is characterized by an employee being happily immersed in one's work.

The scale consisted of 17 items related to the three factors of vigor, dedication, and absorption. The factor of vigor was measured by six items of the scale, and those who score high on vigor typically have high energy and stamina while working (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Dedication was measured by five items on the scale, and those who score high on dedication identify with their work because it is meaningful, challenging, and inspiring to them (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Finally, absorption was measured by the remaining six items on the scale; those who score high in this area are highly immersed in their work while also having difficulty detaching from their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The researchers explained how

engagement is negatively related to burnout when measured by the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Examples of items in the *UWES* include (a) at my work, I feel bursting with energy, (b) I am enthusiastic about my job, (c) I am proud of the work that I do, (d) at my job, I am very resilient, mentally, and (e) at my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well. A complete list of the items on the *UWES* are included in Appendix C.

Three additional variations of the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* exist, a short 9-item scale, a similar 15-item scale, and an adaptive student scale measuring student engagement in academic coursework and classes. For the purposes of this study, the full 17-item scale was used. The *UWES* has been used in nine different countries and taken by over 12,000 participants. To ensure participants are not swayed before taking the survey, the authors recommend calling the *UWES* the 'Work and Well Being Survey (*UWES*)' (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The instrument was tested as one-factor, meaning that all three scales (vigor, dedication, and absorption) are underlying of one dimension as well as three independent, yet correlated factors (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Based on findings, confirmatory factor analyses showed that the three-factor structure is superior to the one-factor model as a measure for work engagement because the factors can be measured independently yet related to one another (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Each of the three factors, vigor, dedication, and absorption, have a high correlation with one another, exceeding .65 (Salanova et al., 2013; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Additionally, this pattern of relationships takes place cross-nationally, given in different countries, all coming to the same conclusion, proving validity of the instrument. The internal consistency of the three

scales in the UWES is also strong. In all cases, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scales range between .80 and .90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The *UWES* has also been tested for stability. Over the course of a year, participants who were employees and students from Spain, The Netherlands, and Portugal, were asked to participate in the questionnaire. In each of the factors, stability coefficients were vigor = .30, dedication = .36, and absorption = .46 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). A stability coefficient is used to test reliability using a test-retest method, where participants are taking the same instrument at two different points in time. The stability coefficient comes from looking at the two scores for each participant and how alike the two are.   When looking at these data together, engagement is a strong construct consisting of three related aspects measured by three consistent scales.

Previous studies have used the *UWES* including 140 teams from different organizations to gather a collective level of engagement of the overall team, associated with the individual level of engagement with team members (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This study found that engaged teams were more likely to have access to more job resources compared to other teams that were reportedly less engaged, which in turn had a positive impact on levels of engagement of team members, individually (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Additionally, the instrument has been used across professional fields, particularly in the Dutch language version. This version has been used in 25 different occupations and was used to better understand engagement across occupational lines (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These previous studies have a particular focus on occupations where participants are working predominantly with other people and are not representative of people who may work on a production line or primarily with a computer, not engaging with other individuals (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

To gather an engagement score of new professionals in student affairs, as measured by the *UWES*, the researcher computed a total engagement score. The total engagement score was calculated by adding the scores of each scale and dividing the sum by the number of total items (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). The individual subscale scores were calculated by adding the scores on each particular scale and dividing the sum by the number of items on the subscale involved (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Also provided in the *UWES* Manual (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) are the different scores on the scale transposed into percentages for ease of use of the instrument.

Synergistic Supervision Scale

The *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS) is a 22-item scale related to synergistic supervision, higher education, and business management (Saunders et al., 2000). The instrument was designed to measure professionals' perceptions of their current supervisory relationship, including two-way communication and feedback, equitable staff treatment, concern for the individual's personal and professional development, cooperative problem solving, systematic goal setting, and management that encourages productivity (Saunders et al., 2000). The instrument was developed to examine the perceived levels of synergistic supervision within the field of student affairs and higher education. The different items on the scale asked participants to rate the frequency of the described behaviors of their supervisor using a five-point scale (1 = never or almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always or almost always).

Items from the scale include (a) my supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities, (b) my supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions, (c) my supervisor shows that she/he cares about me as a person, (d) my supervisor rewards teamwork, and (e) my supervisor looks for me to make a mistake. A complete list of the items in the *SSS* scale is included in Appendix C.

The *SSS* was originally a 30-item scale but eight items were eliminated due to "complex loadings or their failure to load at or above .40 on any one factor" (Saunders et al., 2000, p. 185). This is important to note because this means that these eight items did not provide internal consistency and therefore were removed by the researchers. After removing the eight items, a final principal component factor analysis was used specifying one factor. The single factor had an eigenvalue of 10.032 and accounted for 46% of the variance. The authors then used a series of one-way analyses of variance to see if factors on the *SSS* were influenced by the different demographic variables. Only one factor, employment classification, showed a significant F ratio ($F = 4.56$, $df = 2, 291$, $p < .01$) (Saunders et al., 2000). After this factor analysis, and removing the eight items, the researchers determined the 22-item scale was satisfactory.

To establish the validity of the *SSS*, the authors administered two additional instruments including the *Index of Organizational Reaction* (IOR) and the *Organizational Commitment Questionnaire* (OCQ) (Saunders et al., 2000). Combined, these instruments include 26 items that measure satisfaction with supervision and the strength of involvement in the organization. The authors correlated these scores with the scores on the *SSS*. To determine the internal consistency of the *SSS*, the authors ran a Cronbach's alpha coefficient; it was .94 and the range for all 22 items was .44 to .75 (Saunders et al., 2000). The internal consistency is important because it shows that the different items in the instrument that say they measure the same construct, do in fact, correlate to one another and measure the construct. The validity of the *SSS* was calculated by correlating with the scores of the *IOR* and the *OCQ* using a Pearson product-moment correlation coming to .91 (n = 275, $p < .001$) and .64 (n =275, $p < .001$) respectively (Saunders et al., 2000). Validity in a study is important because it shows that an instrument measures what it says it will measure. The scores reflected by the *SSS* show that the study has a

strong correlation to the other instruments used. The *Synergistic Supervision Scale* has been used in other studies, but no psychometrics were reported for the instrument; however, the findings show that perceived levels of synergistic supervision are positively related to job satisfaction (Tull, 2006).

Researcher-Designed Questionnaire Items

The researcher developed six items to add to the two previously discussed questionnaires. Three questions asked about staying in the field, intent to leave the field, and intent to begin a job search. One question asked satisfaction with current experience in the field of student affairs. The remaining two questions asked about feelings related to experiencing burnout at work. These questions were developed and included to complete the study after reading through the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and previous studies that used the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (Tull, 2006). With these questions, the researcher was able to look at the correlation of perceptions of synergistic supervision and engagement at work and effect on intent to stay in the field of student affairs. The complete list of questions can be found in Appendix C.

Demographic Information

Multiple demographic questions were asked of the participants. Questions included the length of time the participant was directly supervised by their current supervisor to provide further context for experiencing perceived synergistic supervision tendencies (Tull, 2006), length of time in the field of student affairs to determine if they are new professionals (Tull, 2006), age, gender, and whether they received a graduate degree in higher education or student affairs. The responses enabled the researcher to better understand the relationship of the supervisee and supervisor. The complete list of demographic questions can be found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

The following section outlines the research questions aligned with how each question was analyzed. Because the researcher was primarily searching for relationship understanding, a Pearsons correlation was used for a number of research questions.

Research Question One: For new student affairs professionals, is there a correlation between perceived synergistic supervision as measured by the Synergistic Supervision Scale and employee engagement as measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale?

Question one was addressed by running a Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision score and the overall engagement score. A Pearson's correlation calculates the linear relationship between two variables. A Pearson's correlation calculates a range from 0 to 1, with 0 meaning there is no relation and 1 meaning there is a perfect relationship between the two variables (Christopher, 2017). The closer a correlation coefficient is to 1, the stronger the relationship is between the two variables.

Research Question Two: For new student affairs professionals, to what extent does perceived level of synergistic supervision correlate to employee job satisfaction, as measured by the Synergistic Supervision Scale?

Question two was addressed by computing a Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision mean and the rated job satisfaction mean.

Research Question Three: For new student affairs professionals, what is the correlation of perceived level of synergistic supervision on intent to leave the field as measured by the *SSS* and the researcher defined question on intent to leave the field within three years?

Question three was computed using a Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision scale mean and the intent to leave the field.

Research Question Four: For new student affairs professionals, what is the correlation of employee engagement on intent to leave the field as measured by the level of engagement on the *UWES* and the intent to leave the field question?

Question four was calculated using a Pearson's correlation between employee engagement and intent to leave the field.

Research Question Five: For new student affairs professionals, is there a difference in engagement by gender?

Question five was addressed by running an independent samples *t* test to see if there is any significant difference by gender in regard to workplace engagement, using the total score from the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*.

Research Question Six: For new student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, engagement in the workplace, and burnout measured by the rated level of synergistic supervision by the *SSS*, the level of engagement on the *UWES*, and the rated level of job satisfaction?

Question six was calculated using regression. The regression used three variables of synergistic supervision, engagement, and job satisfaction to understand if these variables had an influence on burnout. The *F* ratio test told the researcher if any of the variables were statistically significant.

Research Question Seven: For new student affairs professionals, is there a difference in perceived synergistic supervision and level of engagement between those that attended a graduate preparation program and those that did not?

Question seven was computed using an independent samples *t* test of the participants that did attend a graduate preparation program and those that did not to find out if there was a difference in both supervisory behaviors and engagement score.

Table 1 provides a compacted description of the research questions asked and the analysis used in each of the questions.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the research design and methodologies used in examining the research questions exploring the relationship between synergistic supervision and employee engagement in new professionals. The researcher surveyed new student affairs professionals, utilizing the social media site Facebook. The survey consisted of the combination of two separately validated instruments developed previously by professionals in the field. The researcher also developed six items that accompanied demographic questions to gain an understanding of who was represented in the sample. The instrument was defined in such a way that it was easy to understand by participants while also not taking too much time, a total of 15 to 20 minutes.

Table 1

Research Questions and Analysis

Research Question	Data Analysis
Is there a correlation between synergistic supervision as measured by the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS) and employee engagement as measured by the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES)?	Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision score and the overall engagement score
To what extent does perceived level of synergistic supervision correlate to employee job satisfaction, as measured by the *SSS*?	Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision score and the rated job satisfaction
What is the correlation of perceived level of synergistic supervision on intent to leave the field as measured by the *SSS* and the intent to leave the field within three years?	Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision scale and the intent to leave the field
What is the correlation of employee engagement on intent to leave the field as measured by the *UWES* and the question on intent to leave the field in three years?	Pearson's correlation between work engagement and intent to leave the field
Is there a difference in engagement by gender?	Independent Samples *t* test to see if there is significance by gender in workplace engagement
For new student affairs professionals, does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, engagement in the workplace, and burnout measured by the rated level of synergistic supervision by the *SSS*, the level of engagement on the *UWES*, and the rated level of job satisfaction?	Regression of the variables of synergistic supervision, engagement, and job satisfaction
For new student affairs professionals, is there a difference in perceived synergistic supervision and level of engagement between those that attended a graduate preparation program and those that did not?	Independent Samples *t* test by the participants that did attend a graduate prep program and those that did not to find if there is a difference in relation to supervisory behaviors and engagement

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter contains the results of the quantitative research study to look at the relationship between supervision, employee engagement, and intent to leave the field for new student affairs professionals. The research questions included: is there a correlation between the perceived level of synergistic supervision and rated level of employee engagement, is there a correlation between supervision and job satisfaction, is there a correlation between engagement and intent to leave the field, and is there a difference in engagement by gender. This chapter includes a description of the sample, a discussion of the data analysis conducted, how it answers the research questions, and the demographics of those involved in the study presented in both tables and charts. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data gathered through a 50 question Qualtrics survey.

Description of the Sample

Participants were acquired through social media invitations on four different Facebook group pages. Within 17 days' time, over 500 participants had started the survey and 387 participants completed the entire survey. Though not interpreted to be a limitation, future researchers should be aware that the response was notably fast, with 290 replies within the first 48 hours, which could skew some of the data sets. The researcher also required demographic information from participants. To confirm eligibility in the study, participants identified both time at their institution and time working under their current supervisor. Table 2 provides descriptive information of how long participants have worked at their institution, with an average

of just over 2 years. Additionally, 46% of participants have worked with their supervisor less

than one year and 38% of participants have worked with their current supervisor between one

and two years. Seventy-six percent of participants hold a master's degree in student affairs or

higher education.

Age was collected as a demographic to further understand the age range of new

professionals. Seventy-seven percent of respondents reported they were between the ages of 23

and 28 years old. Finally, 300 of the 387 respondents reported they identified as female.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Time at Institution		
Less than 1 year	120	31
1-2 years	142	36.7
2-3 years	75	19.4
3-4 years	32	8.3
4-5 years	18	4.7
Time Under Supervisor		
Less than 1 year	178	46
1-2 years	147	38
2-3 years	42	10.9
3-4 years	16	4.1
4-5 years	4	1
Obtained a Degree		
Yes	294	76
No	93	24
Gender		
Male	62	16
Female	311	80.4
Prefer not to say	1	.3
Self-Describe	13	3.4
Age		
Less than 23	10	3
23-28	300	77
29 and older	77	20

Note. $N = 387$, unless otherwise noted.

Research Question One

The first research question this study sought to answer was whether there is a correlation between perceived level of synergistic supervision as measured by the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS) and employee engagement as measured by the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES). To analyze this question, a Pearson correlation was utilized to show the type and strength of the relationship between two variables. There is a positive correlation between perceived level of synergistic supervision and reported levels of employee engagement ($r = .39$, $p = .000$). The closer a correlation is to 1, the stronger the relationship between the variables (Christopher, 2017). Between 0 to plus or minus .29 the strength is none or weak, from plus or minus .30 to .49 the strength is moderate, and from plus or minus .50 to 1, the strength is strong (Christopher, 2017). The strength of this correlation is moderate meaning that as participants reported higher levels of perceived synergistic supervision practices, they were more likely to be more engaged at work.

Research Question Two

Research question two addressed the extent to which perceived level of synergistic supervision correlates to employee job satisfaction, as measured by the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* and the mean of the job satisfaction score. A Pearson correlation was used to show the strength of the relationship and whether it was positive or negative. A strong positive relationship exists between perceived level of synergistic supervision and job satisfaction ($r = .57$, $p = .000$). As people reported higher levels of perceived synergistic supervision, they were more likely to report higher job satisfaction.

Research Question Three

The third research question explored the correlation of perceived level of synergistic supervision and intent to leave the field as measured by the *SSS* and the researcher defined question on intent to leave the field within three years. A Pearson correlation was again utilized to understand the strength of the relationship between the two variables. A moderately strong negative relationship exists between perceived level of synergistic supervision and intent to leave the field within the next three years ($r = -.36, p = .000$). Participants who were less likely to report being supervised in a synergistic way were more likely to report their intent to leave the field within the next 3 years.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question examined the correlation of employee engagement and intent to leave the field measured by the level of engagement on the *UWES* and the researcher-developed question on intent to leave the field within three years. A Pearson correlation was used to understand the strength of the relationship between the two variables. A negative, moderate relationship exists between employee engagement and intent to leave the field within the next three years ($r = -.48, p = .000$). Participants who reported they were less likely to be an engaged employee reported they were more likely to leave the field within the next three years.

Research Question Five

Research question five sought to find whether any differences in engagement were related to participant gender. An independent samples *t*-test was utilized to compare the engagement means, by gender, to see if any differences exist. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics by gender. There is no significant difference based on gender ($t = .381, df = 371, p <$

.703), meaning that neither gender reported significantly higher levels of engagement than the

other.

Table 3

Employee Engagement Score by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Engagement	Male	62	4.95	.794	.101
	Female	311	4.90	.801	.045

Research Question Six

Research question six sought to understand the correlation of employee engagement on

intent to leave the field as measured by the *UWES* and the question on intent to leave the field in

three years. A simple regression was used to answer this research question ($r = .533$, $r^2 = .284$).

In this case, 28% of the variability in burnout scores is accounted for by job satisfaction,

employee engagement, and perceived levels of synergistic supervision. Perceived levels of

synergistic supervision ($p = .001$, $\beta = -.186$, $t = -3.45$) and job satisfaction ($p = .000$, $\beta = -.389$, $t =$

-6.63) are statistically significant in predicting burnout in the workplace. Reported levels of

employee engagement ($p = .619$, $\beta = -.026$, $t = -.497$) is not a significant predictor of burnout in

the workplace.

Research Question Seven

The seventh research question addressed whether there a difference between perceived

synergistic supervision and level of engagement by those who attended a graduate preparation

program in higher education or student affairs and those who did not. An independent samples *t*-

test was utilized to compare the group means of employee engagement and the synergistic

supervision scale. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample. No statistically

significant difference existed in reported levels of employee engagement for those professionals

who had obtained a master's degree in higher education and those who had not ($t = -.822$, $df = 385$, $p = .411$).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics by Higher Education Degree or No Degree

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Yes	294	Engagement	4.88	.781	.046
		Supervision	80.16	19.27	1.14
No	93	Engagement	4.97	.831	.086
		Supervision	80.21	19.09	2.00

Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference between those who had obtained a degree in higher education and those who had not in perceived level of synergistic supervision ($t = -.023$, $df = 377$, $p = .982$). This means that whether the individual graduated from a preparation program had no effect; they did not score differently in terms of levels of employee engagement or perceived levels of synergistic supervision.

Table 5 shows the complete list of research questions, the analysis used to answer the questions, and a compact view of the findings related to the questions.

Table 5

Research Questions, Analysis, and Findings

Research Question	Data Analysis	Findings
Is there a correlation between synergistic supervision as measured by the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS) and employee engagement as measured by the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES)?	Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision score and the overall engagement score	A moderately strong positive correlation between perceived level of synergistic supervision and reported levels of employee engage ($r = .39$, $p = .000$) As participants report higher levels of perceived SS, more likely to be more engaged at work.
To what extent does perceived level of synergistic supervision correlate to employee job satisfaction, as measured by the *SSS*?	Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision score and the rated job satisfaction	A strong positive relationship exists between perceived level of synergistic supervision and job satisfaction ($r = .57$, $p = .000$) As participants reported higher job satisfaction, they were more likely

		to report perceived Synergistic Supervision.
What is the correlation of perceived level of synergistic supervision on intent to leave the field as measured by the *SSS* and the intent to leave the field within three years?	Pearson's correlation between the synergistic supervision scale and the intent to leave the field	A moderately strong negative relationship exists between perceived level of synergistic supervision and intent to leave the field within the next three years (r = -.36, p = .000) As participants reported intent to leave the field, they were less likely to report a perception of synergistic supervision.
What is the correlation of employee engagement on intent to leave the field as measured by the *UWES* and the question on intent to leave the field in three years?	Pearson's correlation between work engagement and intent to leave the field	A moderately strong negative relationship exists between employee engagement and intent to leave the field within the next three years (r = -.48, p = .000) As participants reported intent to leave the field, they were less likely to be an engaged employee.
Is there a difference in engagement by gender?	Independent Samples *t* test to see if there is significance by gender in workplace engagement	No significant difference based on gender exists (t = .381, df = 371, p< .703) There was not a drastic difference in level of engagement
Does a relationship exist between perceived level of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, engagement in the workplace, and burnout measured by the rated level of synergistic supervision by the *SSS* and level of engagement on the *UWES*?	Regression of the variables of synergistic supervision, engagement, and job satisfaction	28% of the variability in burnout scores are accounted for by job satisfaction, employee engagement, and perceived levels of synergistic supervision. Synergistic supervision (p = .001, β = -.186, t = -3.45), job satisfaction (p = .000, β = -.389, t = -6.63) are significant in predicting burnout in the workplace Employee engagement (p = .619, β = -.026, t = -.497) is not a significant predictor
For new student affairs professionals, is there a difference in perceived synergistic supervision and level of engagement between those that attended a graduate preparation program and those that did not?	Independent Samples *t* test by the participants that did attend a graduate prep program and those that did not to find if there is a difference in relation to supervisory behaviors and engagement	No significant difference exists in reported levels of employee engagement for professionals who had obtained a degree or not (t = -.822, df = 385, p = .411) No significant difference exists in perceived levels of synergistic supervision for professionals who had obtained a degree or not (t = -.023, df = 377, p = .982)

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter offered the results of the research study designed to understand the relationship between supervision, employee engagement, and intent to leave the field. While many of the factors analyzed showed significance, three factors related to differences by group did not show significance. Employee engagement is strongly positively correlated with the perceptions of synergistic supervision behaviors but has a negative strong correlation to intent to leave the field for new professionals. Similarly, perceived levels of synergistic supervision are strongly positively correlated to job satisfaction and negatively correlated to intent to leave the field. Male and female participants did not show a significant difference in reported levels of engagement. Additionally, a graduate degree in higher education or student affairs did not have a statistically significant difference in responses for either employee engagement or perceived levels of synergistic supervision. Finally, both the perception of synergistic supervision behaviors and job satisfaction are predictors of job burnout but alternatively, employee engagement is not a strong predictor of burnout in the workplace.

This research suggests that the supervisory relationship truly does affect employee engagement in new professionals as well as their intent to leave the field of student affairs altogether. Discussion of the results, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a discussion of the results of the study and the data presented in Chapter 4. It begins with an overview of the purpose of the study and an explanation of the research questions, then presents a discussion of the findings, the significance of the findings, and recommendations for practice and for future research.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this research study was to understand how supervisors affect new professionals' engagement in the workplace and their intent to leave the field of student affairs. The researcher conducted this study using a quantitative methodology to explore seven research questions. The research questions ranged from analyzing the relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision, rated levels of workplace engagement, and understanding if there was a difference in engagement by gender. The questionnaire was a combination of the *Synergistic Supervision Scale* (SSS), the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES), and multiple researcher-developed questions about intent to leave the field, job satisfaction, and feelings of burnout in the workplace. The *Synergistic Supervision Scale* was chosen because it measures employee's perception of the level of synergistic supervision behaviors of their supervisor (Saunders et al., 2000). Synergistic supervision is a cooperation and dual-focus of both professional goals and institutional goals, two-way communication, a focus on competency of skills, is both proactive and goal-based, and holistic, helping staff become more effective at work, at home, and in their future development (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The *Utrecht Work*

Engagement Scale was chosen because it measures employees' feelings of engagement in the workplace (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The survey also included researcher-developed questions designed to gain a better understanding of respondents' satisfaction in the field, time in the field, time under their respective supervisor, their intent to leave the field, and feelings of burnout.

The sample for this study was gathered through the social media site Facebook. The researcher posted on multiple Facebook groups for student affairs professionals from across the nation. This sample cannot readily be compared to the entire population of new professionals because little definitive information is known about the composition of this population across the United States. Participants were invited to participate through a post on the group page that included a flyer about the research and a deeper explanation of the criteria sought after, professionals with less than five years of experience, not including graduate school. Additionally, respondents were able to enter themselves into a drawing for one of ten gift-card incentives. Two reminder posts were populated on the original research posting. The total number of professionals in all of the groups approximated 41,000 members, although some duplicates could exist among the multiple groups. The researcher assumed that 20% of the professionals in the Facebook groups were new professionals because it is estimated that new professionals make up 20% of the field of student affairs professionals (Cilente et al., 2006), making a total number of 8,200 potential participants. The researcher had 387 respondents from the Facebook groups.

The majority of participants, over 60%, have worked at their respective institutions for two years or less. The participant group was made up of 80% self-reported females. Additionally, 80% of participants were 28 years or younger. Finally, 76% of the participant pool had previously obtained a master's degree in higher education and student affairs.

The researcher analyzed the data and conducted statistical analyses to answer the seven research questions. Both descriptive statistics and frequencies were run to examine the sample gathered and individual responses. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare group means between gender and graduate school attendance. Correlations were utilized to determine the relationship between the factors of engagement, perception of synergistic supervision behaviors, and intent to leave of the field. Finally, a simple regression was conducted to explore if the factors in the study explained the variance in burnout levels.

Limitations

Those researchers looking to replicate this study should consider the following limitations and how it may affect their sample. Because there are a lot of unknown factors when it comes to new professionals in student affairs, it is hard to determine what an accurate sample is. No succinct knowledge of the population across the nation, or internationally, exists making it very challenging to gather a sample comparable to the entire population.

A second limitation to consider is how participants were collected. Utilizing only a social media site, and no professional database, makes it challenging to assume the entire population of new professionals was represented in this study. Future researchers might consider gathering participants from professional organization membership bases or a wide variety of institution types, not just on social media. This may allow future researchers to cast a wider net in terms of new professionals, not just those who utilize social media. Because of the nature of the study, some new professionals and even supervisors may feel threatened by the survey, so it is recommended to provide complete anonymity for participants. As seen in comments on the original Facebook posting, some professionals assumed the study had a negative connotation even though its purpose is exploratory.

Finally, the sample lacked variance in the length of the supervisory relationship. Only 16% of participants had worked under their supervisor for more than 2 years. While this may be the nature of being a new professional, future researchers should consider this lack of range for future studies due to how relationship expectations and experiences can change based on time in the relationship.

Discussion of Findings

The first three research questions were designed to explore the relationship between work engagement, job satisfaction, and intent to leave the field with respondents' perceptions of synergistic supervision behaviors of their supervisors. All three of these variables were found to have statistically significant correlations with synergistic supervision.

Job satisfaction was the factor most highly related with synergistic supervision behaviors. This strong relationship between job satisfaction and perceived synergistic supervision may suggest a couple of things. First, professionals who receive this type of supervision are more satisfied. Second, professionals who are already satisfied in their role may be more able to engage in a synergistic supervisory relationship. Job satisfaction can lead to a number of positive factors for the organization including increased productivity and a better working culture (Singh, 2016). A large piece of the synergistic supervisory relationship is communication between the supervisor and the employee. This communication leads to increased job satisfaction as reported by MacDonald and colleagues (2014). The findings of this research question support previous research, including what Tull (2006) found with synergistic supervision behaviors relating positively to job satisfaction.

This research also reflected a moderately strong positive relationship between reported levels of work engagement and the perception of synergistic supervision behaviors. This may

suggest that employees are more likely to be engaged in their word day when they receive synergistic supervisory behaviors. Contrastingly, this may suggest that employees who are engaged in their work are more likely to want to engage in synergistic supervisory relationships. This finding may suggest that supervisors who would like to have engaged new professionals should offer synergistic supervision practices as a means of supervision. When employees are more engaged, similar to job satisfaction, they are more likely to be more productive, more motivated, and less burned out from their work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Interestingly, participants reported that they were more likely to leave the field of student affairs if they reported they were not supervised in a synergistic manner. In student affairs, if a professional is going to choose to leave the field, they will often do so within their first five years of employment in the field (Barham & Winston, 2006; Lorden 1998). Similar to Tull (2006), these findings suggest that when supervisors utilize synergistic supervision behaviors, employees are less likely to intend to leave the field. The findings offer further support for supervisors to utilize synergistic supervision tactics when supervising new professionals to increase job satisfaction and engagement. In turn, the findings show a relationship between synergistic supervision and intent to leave the field of student affairs.

The synergistic supervision approach seeks a joint effort from both the supervisor and the employee, encouraging communication and a focus on development and accomplishment of both the individual's professional goals and those of the institution. The findings of this study suggest that supervisors should work to engage the new professional in a synergistic supervision relationship. To be most effective, this relationship must be an effort of both the supervisor and the employee. The employee must be proactive in developing open communication with their

supervisor and similarly, the supervisor must encourage this type of communicative relationship. Without this intentionality from both parties, enacting a synergistic supervisory relationship could prove very difficult for the pair.

Question Four

The fourth research question sought to understand the relationship between employee engagement and intent to leave the field of student affairs. A moderately strong, negative relationship existed between these two variables. Employees who reported lower levels of engagement in the workplace were more likely to intend to leave the field within the next three years. This shows the significance of employees being engaged in their work environment. If employees are not passionate or engaged in their work, they are more likely to leave to find something else that will fit what they are looking for (Lee et al., 2017; Martin & Ottemann, 2015).

Questions Five and Seven

Independent samples t-tests were run to answer two research questions to compare means of two groups. Male and female means were run to see the difference in engagement. Additionally, if a participant had a graduate degree in higher education or student affairs or not were run to see the difference in engagement. This finding showed no significant difference based on gender for engagement in the workplace. In this study, it suggests that gender is not a factor, related to different levels of engagement in the workplace.

The second question, comparing group means by those that had a graduate degree in higher education and those that did not, in relation to both levels of engagement and perceived levels of synergistic supervision also proved to not be significant. Having a graduate degree in the field did not factor into reported levels of engagement or perceptions on synergistic

supervision. The researcher would venture to say that a supervisory relationship and engagement in the workplace transcend the boundary of graduate education and are rooted in who we are as people. No matter the graduate education level, participants responded similarly, making the variables rooted more in who they are as individuals rather than their educational background. Individual qualities that may influence this could be an emphasis on empathy, learning, and a dedication to growth, and a passion for helping others. Those are not skills developed in a graduate program but rather qualities that are developed throughout life.

Question Six

Finally, question six was used to understand if a relationship existed between perceived levels of synergistic supervision, engagement in the workplace, and burnout levels in new professionals. Both the perception of synergistic supervision behaviors and job satisfaction are significant in predicting burnout in the workplace. As lower levels of job satisfaction and synergistic supervision behaviors were reported, employees were more likely to rate themselves as being burned out. This finding has the potential to impact institutions across the nation. As institutions work to better understand new professionals and work with them more productively, the research suggests that it is imperative to encourage synergistic supervision behaviors to limit the opportunity for feelings of burnout in professionals. Additionally, those professionals who are feeling burned out at work may not have the capacity to engage in a synergistic supervisory relationship.

Alternatively, reported levels of engagement are not a significant predictor of burnout in the workplace. Like Schaufeli and colleagues work (2002), professionals can report being disengaged at work but may not be experiencing feelings of burnout. This finding again reinforces the need for two separate assessments, both the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* and

the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Because burnout and engagement are not equal to one another, two separate assessments are needed to measure the two separate phenomena. Employees may be disengaged while not experiencing feelings of burnout. These assessments are two tools in the proverbial toolbox that supervisors and employees alike can use to better understand both themselves and their staff.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Implications for Practice</h2>

The findings from this study have several implications for student affairs professional practice. The implications run the gamut of senior level professionals, mid-manager supervisors, students in graduate preparation programs, and of course new professionals themselves. Any professional who is currently being supervised or will supervise in the future of their career can find relevant information in this research study.

Supervisory Relationships

Those supervisors who choose to use synergistic supervision practices must learn and get to know each and every employee they supervise. Each employee comes to their department with a different set of needs, desires, and expectations of their new role. To do this, supervisors must understand the importance of interpersonal relationships with their employees. Because synergistic supervision has a dual focus on meeting the institution's goals as well as the professional goals of the employee, a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective. Supervisors must work to create strong relationships with each person they supervise, not just those they may automatically get along with, but every employee, to provide the most effective form of supervision. On the supervisor's part, they must begin this sort of relationship from the beginning of the onboarding process. Beginning with the recruitment period, the supervisor can

practice open communication and focus on the needs of the individual as well as explain the needs of the institution.

This study found that those who were more likely to be supervised in a synergistic manner were likely to be an engaged employee. This may suggest that, as a field, we need to bolster supervision training to those professionals promoted to supervisory roles. Moreover, specific training and information on supervising new professionals is critical for student affairs professionals. Because past research has shown that supervisory practices primarily come from previous supervisory experiences (Winston & Creamer, 1997), supervision training is crucial to curtail incorrect assumptions and teach the complete synergistic supervision approach.

This training should be hosted before either the NASPA or ACPA national conferences to cast the widest net of reaching the most professionals. This training could also be hosted at more specific conferences such as NACE or NODA. The training day could include pre-homework of the supervisors to provide background knowledge on synergistic supervision and then throughout the day, supervisors would have training on each characteristic identified in the model. Finally, to provide the best support for supervisors in the field, a coach would be assigned to each participant for discussion and to make a plan moving forward. Providing this sort of foundation for professionals can positively influence the field by identifying positive ways to supervise employees and increase retention of new professionals in the field.

Creating a shared understanding of the supervisory relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate is crucial to the success of the relationship. The shared intentionality of the relationship can assist the new professional in speaking open and honestly to the supervisor. This intentional relationship provides room to ask questions and develop a plan for professional development based on the individual rather than the same cookie cutter approach for each new

professional.   It can be challenging for new professionals to know and express their needs, an open, communicative. A trusting relationship with supervisors can help them do so effectively. This foundation begins at the start of the recruitment process with writing the job description.

When writing the job description, departments must ensure that it provides an accurate representation of the department, the office, and the job outlined. When hiring new employees, it is critical to provide an honest depiction of what to expect for those employees. New professionals need training to best understand their specific role, the culture of the institution, the expectations of their supervisor, and their peers in the department (Hillman, 2010). By providing this foundation, supervisors can expect that the new professional will have higher levels of commitment to the institution as well as increased job satisfaction (Major et al., 1995). This research suggests that with this foundation, supervisors may also see higher levels of engagement and lower levels of intent to leave the field from new professionals who work in their department.

New Professionals

It is clear that new professionals in the field of student affairs need to be more aware of their needs as they join the field. When new professionals are unable to speak their needs outloud to a new supervisor, it can cause unintended unmet expectations as well as tension in a supervisory relationship that may not have needed to exist. To assist in this area, current student affairs professionals need to create a more open, honest, and authentic environment for undergraduate and graduate students to ask questions about student affairs and the professional practices associated. Without a clear understanding of the field and how peer and supervisory relationships operate in student affairs, new professionals are unable to outline their needs and expectations when hired in a new role.

New professionals, the participants in this research study, responded to the survey in a way that shows that, if they perceived higher levels of synergistic supervision, they were more likely to be engaged at work as well as report higher job satisfaction. These findings suggest that new professionals need to be more aware of both the synergistic supervision model as well as engagement in the workplace. Seventy-six percent of participants in this study had previously obtained a graduate degree in higher education or student affairs, this suggests that including training in graduate preparation programs would spread the information quickly to the highest number of professionals.

In graduate preparation programs, more specifically in preexisting staffing courses, the curriculum should include an explanation of the model of synergistic supervision. This section of the course should include explanation of the core components of the model including two-way communication, a focus on competence, person and professional skills, work-related skills, a growth mindset, being proactive, and a holistic approach, focusing on both personal and professional support. This section of the course could include assignments such as reflecting on past supervisory relationships, reflections on how to advocate for a positive supervisory relationship, and finally interviews of mid-manager or experienced professionals to ask what they wish they would have known prior to beginning a professional role. Providing this foundation in graduate preparation programs gives the newest professionals in student affairs both an awareness and understanding of this model.

A section on employee engagement as well as understanding the effects and foundations of burnout are also important to discuss in graduate preparation programs. Designing resources for new professionals to best understand burnout, the effects of burnout, and how to mitigate feelings of burnout would not only provide a foundation of support for new professionals but it

would help professionals put words to their experience if they ever find themselves or others with those feelings. Understanding both burnout and engagement may also give new professionals the foundation to recognize when they are not able or willing to engage in synergistic supervision behaviors. Because this type of supervision is centered on two-way communication, when an employee is not able to partake in the relationship, it can have equally adverse effects as when a supervisor does not engage.

Because student affairs professionals are centered around the student experience at their respective institution, helping undergraduate students who are contemplating joining the field of student affairs should be one facet of supervising those students. Because not all student affairs professionals go to graduate school before taking their first role, it is important to help students understand the realities of the field before they leave their undergraduate institution. As reported in chapter four, no significant difference existed between new professionals who had higher education or student affairs graduate school experience and those that did not. This means that understanding the relationship of supervision and engagement needs to happen prior to the student leaving their undergraduate career.

A correlation exists between the likelihood of participants intending to leave the field and not being supervised with synergistic behaviors. Perhaps this type of supervision should begin at the undergraduate level, with student affairs professionals engaging these sorts of practices with their student employees rather than just full-time employees. Because many people supervise in the way they were supervised, the student affairs supervisor should provide supervision in a productive, synergistic manner. This type of supervision has the opportunity to have a trickle-down effect on the field as productive supervision traits become cyclical, handed down from one professional to the next.

While widespread adoption of synergistic supervision behaviors may seem far-fetched for a field as large as student affairs, presentations, academic books, webinars, and deeper education for the field can make this become a best practice among all student affairs professionals. At the root of student affairs are people who love to guide and educate those in their care. Adopting a best practice such as a more productive way to supervise may be challenging but in the end is providing the best experience to the students at each institution as well as the professionals who work at the institution.

Understanding new professional needs and expectations would not only help in the supervisory relationship but also in the onboarding process of new professionals. As discussed previously in chapter two, onboarding practices are crucial to assisting new professionals understand and get to know the culture of the new institution. Because onboarding practices have reportedly impacted higher levels of job satisfaction and better relationships with supervisors (Major et al., 1995), defining and creating a productive onboarding process for new professionals across the board could have a large impact on the field of student affairs. First and foremost, departments must stay on message, starting with the job description, departments must outline the culture of the institution and department as well as the specific job requirements for the role. Staying on message throughout the entire process of recruitment and selection shows the applicant pool what it may be like to work at the institution and will help them decide if they fit within that culture. Finally, when making selections of new hires, departments should make better decisions at the point of hiring. The fit must go both ways, if red flags exist for either the employee or the department, these should be discussed and determined if it may cause a hiccup when the employee works at the institution full time. Being intentional and making better decisions at the point of hiring, will help ensure success with new employees.

Additionally, when employees start at the institution, the department should have a plan to orient them to the institution. This should include an orientation to the community to help provide connection, time for personal connection, in a non-threatening environment, such as a coffee shop or local café, with each peer in the office and the direct supervisor, and finally, building in time for the employee to get to know their surroundings and learn about the job on their own. Perhaps most crucial is the beginning of the relationship between the supervisor and the new employee. Starting the relationship off right, outlining expectations of one another and the relationship moving forward will cement the foundation to a productive relationship in the future.

Another factor of this research that deeply affects new professionals is the feeling of burnout. Both low levels of job satisfaction and synergistic supervision behaviors are predictors of burnout in the workplace. The term burnout is often thrown around when times are stressful, or emotions are high, but the field of student affairs needs to develop an understanding of burnout and the true emotions expressed by professionals. This research only focuses on new professionals, but the researcher would venture to say that professionals of all levels of experience may feel burnout at some point in their career. Having an honest conversation about burnout and the true effects for those experiencing burnout all professional organizations and researchers to mediate the impact of burnout of student affairs professionals.

Developing peer-reviewed resources that define burnout, its identifiers, the effects on the individual, the economic effects on the institution, and ways to mitigate those experiences could have a great impact on the field. Burnout is still something that so many people do not understand and therefore do not see as a true experience. Providing these types of resources could assist supervisors and professionals understand their personal experience and those of their

peers. With this knowledge, burnout could then be dealt with in a productive way rather than the individual feel like they are dealing with it alone. Additionally, as more professionals begin to understand burnout, individuals can advocate for themselves and have wording that is understood and accepted by the profession.

In each of the instances reviewed, the perception of synergistic supervision behaviors was significantly correlated to employee engagement and job satisfaction. This finding cannot be ignored. As student affairs professionals are promoted to roles that supervise other people, they must be aware of the impact they can have on an individual. This study shows that when new professionals reported lower levels of engagement, it correlated to low perceptions of synergistic supervision behaviors from their supervisor. To those in this study, supervisors are so much more than just someone who they see at work. These findings may suggest that supervisory relationships are strongly related to how employees view their work, their satisfaction at the institution, and their engagement in the workplace.

Employee Engagement

Like burnout, employee engagement is something that can be assumed as hard to measure because it is a fluctuating feeling for individual employees. The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*, used in this study, measures this feeling of engagement for employees. It is very specific to the individual employee and it is so much more than showing up to work on time, working a full workweek, or attending evening events. Without employee engagement, the institution is not getting the best of the employee. Their productivity will be lower, their notion to go above and beyond is nonexistent, and they are less likely to interact positively with coworkers (Lee et al., 2017; Martin & Ottemann, 2015). Moreover, without engagement a lack of motivation to do well exists. As supervisors work to better engage employees, they must also factor in motivation

for those same employees. Providing meaningful and challenging work can motivate the employee in the workplace (Herzberg, 2003) and can increase their engagement.

Both supervisors and employees need to better understand the factors associated with motivation in the workplace. Being paid well, a good benefits package, and challenging, meaningful work, are key for employees to be motivated in the workplace (Herzberg, 2003). Employees and supervisors must work together to understand the core motivators for individual employees. In the event employees are showing a lack of engagement, the supervisor then should make suggestions that work for the individual that may help them be more motivated. Additionally, supervisors should make a point to show appreciation for the work that is being done by their employees. When an employee feels appreciated, it can motivate them to do more and work harder in their role.

To best understand employee engagement in the workplace, supervisors should utilize the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* at year-end review with each supervisee. If concerns on engagement arise, the supervisor and the employee can work together to find the best solution to those concerns. Not only will this provide a foundation for the supervisor to know where their employees stand in terms of engagement, but it can also open the door for more open communication about the needs of the professional. By using open communication between the supervisor and employee, there is a high likelihood that the employee can share concerns and can work with the supervisor to find remedies to any situations related to engagement. Utilizing synergistic behaviors, the supervisor is already focused on the aspirations of the employee, and in effect, better laying a foundation for a productive conversation about engagement in the workplace.

Areas of Future Research

Research often leads to more questions than answers. This research project is no different. Future research on this subject and those closely related are crucial for future scholars to explore to add to the knowledgebase of the field of student affairs. One area of future research includes the exploration of new professionals' onboarding experience and how that may be related to job satisfaction. A second area is how perceived synergistic supervision behaviors are related to innovation in the workplace. A third area of future research could be an exploration of those who have previously left the field of student affairs and why they made that conclusion. Another area of future research could be to see if student affairs professionals have heard of and are aware of synergistic supervision. If people are not aware of it, they are unable to practice it. Finally, a replication of the current methodology to see if the same findings exist.

Onboarding and Job Satisfaction

While research has been done on job satisfaction and onboarding, more research inquiries should be conducted so institutions can garner a deeper understanding of the need for the practice. Because not every institution has an onboarding policy or plan, research that outlines the importance of the practice and its long-lasting effects on professionals is crucial as the field moves forward. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies should be used in future research to understand not only the rated responses of participants but the stories of individuals in the field as well. This research should also examine all levels of student affairs professionals, not just new professionals. Student affairs is an ever-changing field and understanding how one population experienced something will not provide a complete scope of understanding.

Synergistic Supervision and Innovation

Throughout the research conducted on engagement and burnout related to supervision, research on innovation kept coming up in the fields of both business and health professions. The researcher was unable to find any research related to supervision and innovation in student affairs. To further understand the effects supervisors have on employees in the workplace, understanding the correlation between supervision practices and innovation would be quite interesting. Past research has shown that employees take a considerable number of cues from their direct supervisor and the leadership of the organization (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012; Montani et al., 2012). When managers afford opportunities for creativity to their teams, the teams exude higher levels of creativity in the workplace (Ramstad, 2014). When managers allow 'decentralized decision-making,' employees implement problem solving and, in turn, are more creative (Ramstad, 2014). When an employee has high coworker support and high supervisor support, they are more likely to be creative on the job which promotes efficiency, problem-solving, and new ideas.

Not all supervisor relationships lead to increased amounts of creativity in the workplace. Ramstad (2014) found that sometimes, with specific management encouragement, there was no increase in innovation. Like Ramstad (2014), Liu and colleagues (2012) found that in abusive supervisory situations, employees did not feel led to be innovative in the workplace. These employees showed higher signs of negative work ethic, seemingly because of their lack of support in the workplace (Liu et al., 2012). In such organizations, when the abusive supervision stemmed from the top of the organization, there was a trickle-down effect that negatively impacted every level. Ramstad's (2014) research echoed this message in that not all types of encouragement, or perceived forms of encouragement, result in higher levels of innovation. When employees feel that there is effective communication throughout an organization, they are

more trusting of the hierarchy and are more willing to be creative in their jobs (Liu et al., 2012; Montani, 2012; Ramstad, 2014). Future research in student affairs related to innovation in the workplace will provide more of a foundation to how supervisors impact employees in the workplace.

Expatriates of Student Affairs

This study sought to understand the intentions of those new professionals who were still in the field of student affairs. Future research should focus on those professionals who have already left the field of student affairs. A two-part study, both quantitative and qualitative, could be conducted to understand those professionals' perceptions of their supervisor and their engagement while in the field, but also why they decided to leave. This study demonstrated that supervisors do in fact relate to professionals' intentions to leave the field, but it would be very interesting to take the study a step further to ask those who have already left the field. These findings could further add to the literature of how important synergistic supervision behaviors with new professionals are in student affairs. Ineffective supervision is not the only reason professionals choose to leave the field; it is just one of many reasons. Future research that allows the field of student affairs to understand and know those reasons can help create change needed to retain professionals.

Conclusion

In a three-week period between mid-September and mid-October 2019, the researcher surveyed over 350 new professionals on their perceptions of their supervisor's synergistic supervision behaviors. Using two existing instruments along with researcher-developed items, the researcher examined engagement in the workplace, satisfaction and level of burnout, and intent to leave the field of student affairs within the next three years.

The purpose of this research study was to answer research questions related to new professionals' perception of synergistic supervision behaviors and employee engagement, job satisfaction, intent to leave the field, and the factors that influence rated levels of burnout. Findings from this study suggest that perceived synergistic supervision behaviors have a direct correlation to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and burnout in new professionals. Additionally, this research suggests the supervisors have a relationship to new professionals' intent to leave the field of student affairs. This research serves as foundational work related to understanding the effects of the supervisory relationship on employee engagement in the field of student affairs on new professionals.

As an entire field of student affairs, we need to do better. The problem is that people do not stay working in the field, leaving us with gaps in knowledge and unfilled positions at institutions. Professionals leave jobs for all sorts of reasons, but this research suggests that the relationship between supervision and intent to leave the field is not something that can be ignored. We can't fix everything to ensure professionals stop leaving but of the things we can control, supervision is one of them!

Providing a positive supervisory relationship to employees, especially new professionals, builds a strong foundation for the field. Professionals typically supervise how they were supervised so if we want long-term influence, we must begin providing positive supervisory experiences now. A change is needed to better serve our current professionals and to change the future directions of retention in the field of student affairs. We know that when professionals feel valued as an employee and have a trusting relationship with their supervisor, they are more likely to be engaged in their work. We can no longer ignore the types of supervision that new professionals are receiving in our field. Widespread training of the synergistic supervision model

is needed to serve our newest professionals. Building a foundation of trust and two-way communication pushes our field to understand the professionals coming into our institutions and will hopefully alter the percentage of new professionals that leave before they reach five years.

This research study shows a strong relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision and employee engagement. Why wouldn't we want mid-level and experienced professionals to engage in this way of supervision? We cannot remedy every reason someone chooses to leave the field, but we must do something to fix that which is in our control, supervision.

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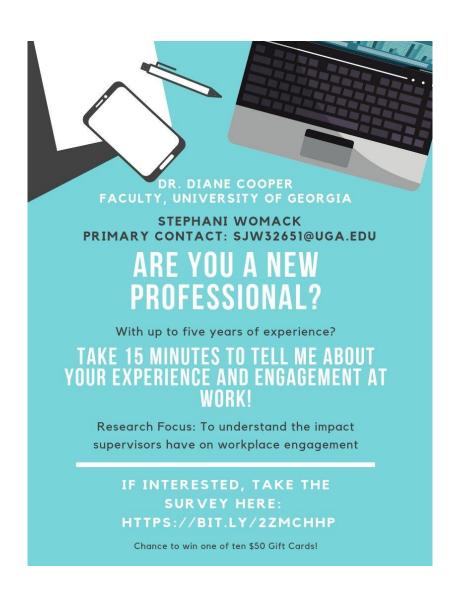Taris, T. W., Feij, J. A., & Capel S. (2006). Great expectations – and what comes of it: The effects of unmet expectations on work motivation and outcomes among newcomers. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 14*(3), 256-268.

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Appendix A

Social Media Announcement

"Hey there! I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia and it's time to conduct my research! I am looking for new professionals to fill out my 15-minute survey on their experience in student affairs regarding their relationship with their supervisor and their engagement within the office. For my study, new professionals are those who have worked in the field five years or less, not inclusive of graduate school. If this is you, please click this link to fill out the quick survey. If you have friends who also match the criteria, please send along to them. I would really appreciate it!! Those who complete the survey will be entered to win one of 10, $50 gift cards! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out at stephanie.womack@uga.edu. Thank you!!"

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

Researcher's Statement:

We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to provide you information about the study so that you may decide whether to participate or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please email one of the researchers if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information. When all of your questions have been answered, you can determine if you would like to participate. This process is called "informed consent." You are welcome to print this form for your records.

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Study Details:

This study is being conducted to learn more about the influence supervisors might have on employee engagement in new professionals within the field of student affairs to and to fulfill part of the requirements of the co-investigator's doctoral dissertation.

You are being asked to participate because you are eighteen years of age or older. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to a total of 49 questions about yourself, your perception of your supervisor, and your perceived engagement within your workplace. Completion of this study should take 10 – 15 minutes for most participants. Participation is not expected to result in any risk or discomfort. You may learn more about yourself and your environment through study participation, and this study will help the research community learn more about new professionals in the workplace. Each participant that completes the study will be entered to win one of 10 $50 gift cards, disbursed after the study has closed. Participation in the study is not required to be eligible in the drawing. Please email the co-PI at stephanie.womack@uga.edu if you would like to enter the drawing without participating in research activities.

Privacy/Confidentiality:

This research involves the transmission of data over the internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology to protect your privacy; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. Your IP address may be recorded when you take this survey; it will not be retained after the data have been downloaded. Data from this survey may be used in publications, conference presentations, trainings, or presented through similar media. Any information will be shared in aggregate form; individual responses will not be shared and only the research team and university research oversight board

(if requested) will be able to access individual responses. You will not be asked to share your name, institution, or other such identifying information.

Taking Part is Voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or stop participation at any time without penalty. If you decide to stop the survey, the information collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed. If you would like to have your response permanently deleted, please email the research team.

Questions?

The main researchers conducting this study are Diane Cooper, a professor, and Stephanie Womack, an Ed.D. student, at the University of Georgia. If you have questions, you may contact Stephanie at stephanie.womack@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at (706) 542-3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Participation

By clicking on the "begin survey" button, you indicate that you meet the entrance criteria listed above, that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, and that you understand the information in this consent form. You have not waived any legal rights you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study.

Appendix C

Employee Engagement Research Survey

The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, choose the "0" (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by choosing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
3. Time flies when I'm working.
4. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.
6. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
7. My job inspires me.
8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
10. I am proud of the work that I do.
11. I am immersed in my work.
12. I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
13. To me, my job is challenging.
14. I get carried away when I'm working.
15. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
16. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
17. At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

For each item, select the one response that most closely reflects your experience with your current supervisor. Respond using the following scale:

Never (almost never)	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always (almost always)
1	2	3	4	5

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 the 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 she/he 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 (e.g., 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'm not careful, my supervisor may allow things that aren't 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 each item, select the one response that most closely reflects your experience. Respond using the following scale:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. I am confident I will be working in the field of student affairs three years from now.
2. I feel burned out from my work.
3. I am confident I will soon begin a job search.
4. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning thinking about going into work.
5. I intend to leave the field of student affairs within the next three years.
6. I am satisfied with my current experience in the field of student affairs.

Demographic Questions

1. How long have you worked at your current institution?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. 1 – 2 years
    c. 2 – 3 years
    d. 3 – 4 years
    e. 4 – 5 years
2. How long have you worked under your current supervisor?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. 1 – 2 years
    c. 2 – 3 years
    d. 3 – 4 years
    e. 4 – 5 years
3. What is your age in years?
    a. Fill in the blank
4. I have obtained a graduate degree in higher education/student affairs.
    a. Yes or No
5. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Self-Describe (write in space)
    d. Prefer not to say