AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISION AND JOB SATISFACTION FACTORS AMONG RESIDENCE DIRECTORS AND RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

by

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISION AND JOB SATISFACTION FACTORS AMONG RESIDENCE DIRECTORS AND RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

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Supervising Resident Assistants (RAs) on college campuses is one of the most critical roles of housing staff members. The RA position is difficult based on the number of responsibilities the job requires; it is filled with multiple stressors, such as role ambiguity and role conflict. Supervision is a critical skill for student affairs professionals to possess yet there remains little research on the supervision of RAs. In this study, the relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision, training, and job satisfaction factors was examined among residence directors (RDs) and RAs.

The researcher sought to fill this gap the in the research by surveying both RAs and RDs in Texas and Oklahoma. Data were gathered by a survey incorporating the following scales: Synergistic Supervision Scale, Michigan

Organizational Assessment Questionnaire's Job Satisfaction and Intention to Turnover Scales, and Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale. Correlation analyses revealed a strong to moderate negative relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received by RAs and role conflict, role ambiguity, and intention to turnover. Additionally, there was a moderate to strong positive relationship between RAs' perceived level of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction and amount of training received by RDs. There was no significant relationship found between job satisfaction levels or perceptions of synergistic supervision of RDs and RAs.

The findings have implications on the importance of supervision on the experience and retention of RAs. RAs who reported higher levels of synergistic supervision received were more likely to report lower intention to turnover, role conflict, and role ambiguity, and higher job satisfaction. Additionally, the findings suggest a continued lack of supervision training for entry-level professionals, which has an impact on the quality of the supervision delivered. Finally, the study furthers the research on the synergistic supervision model in student affairs by expanding the research to paraprofessional staff members.

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DEDICATION

To my father who was guiding me from above with a red pencil in his hand. His love and support got me to the point where I could even consider going on this journey.

To my children, Caleb and Camden, whose unconditional love sustains me each and every day.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The successful completion of a degree in higher education plays a critical role in the future success of individuals in terms of income potential and employment opportunities (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Student success on a college campus requires the efforts of both offices of academic affairs and student affairs to provide student expectations (e.g., student code of conduct and academic responsibilities), support, feedback on progress, and involvement for students (Tinto, 2012). The greatest asset universities have in carrying out their mission and values are the people that they hire (Winston & Creamer, 1997). In particular, student affairs staff members work primarily with students outside of the classroom to enhance the students' overall college experience.

There are numerous departments associated with student affairs that address different aspects of the student experience. However, the department with the closest direct contact to students is student housing. Housing departments are responsible for the emotional and physical wellbeing of students living on campus as well as for providing an environment that is conducive to academic success (Blimling, 2003). Over 2.5 million students who live in residence halls on university campuses are supervised by university staff members (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). Because of the potential impact housing can have on students' success, housing departments have a number of job positions in place to support

students' residential experience, including paraprofessionals called resident assistants (RAs).

RAs are key members of the housing staff who are often viewed as the first line of contact with students living on campus (Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gown, 2005). There are many facets to the RA position including: connecting residents with campus resources (e.g., tutoring, clubs, counseling, and psychological services) (Blimling, 2003); enforcing community policies (Everett & Loftus, 2011); and planning student events (Renz, 1974; Winston & Ender, 1988). This diversity of responsibilities in the RA position and their sometimes competing priorities can lead to role ambiguity and conflict (Deluga & Winters, 1990). Additionally, RAs who do not experience job satisfaction are more likely to perform poorly and have increased job stress (Deluga & Winters, 1990).

Supervision has been recognized as a critical staff competency area and skill for student affairs professionals (Bresciani & Todd, 2010) and is one factor that is associated with job performance and retention of staff members (Tull, 2006). Residence directors (RDs) who serve as full-time entry-level professionals supervise RAs as part of their many responsibilities. However, these early career staff members often have limited supervisory experience (Upcraft, 1982) and little training (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Burkard, Cole, Ott, & Stoflet, 2004; Shupp & Arminio, 2012). Many have been employed at the university for less than one year and thus have little institutional knowledge (Saunders & Cooper, 2003;

Upcraft, 1982). The supervision that RAs receive is often inadequate to assist them in being successful in their respective positions while balancing their dual role as student-employee. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of supervision on job satisfaction factors in the RA position.

Statement of the Problem

The RA position is difficult based on the number of responsibilities it contains and its many stressors, including role ambiguity and role conflict (Deluga & Winters, 1990). Invested parties, such as residents, supervisors, and parents, have varied opinions as to the characteristics of an effective RA. This can make satisfying all constituents difficult (Winston & Buckner, 1984). RAs who struggle with the stress of the job are more likely to experience burnout and not perform well in the position (Nowack & Hanson, 1983), and RAs with low job satisfaction are more likely to consider leaving the position (Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001). RA attrition can negatively impact both the residents they serve and the other staff members on the team. While researchers have shown that effective supervision increases overall professional staff retention (Tull, 2006), there has been no research found that specifically explores the impact of supervision on RA retention. Therefore, the gap in the research concerns the relationship of supervision on role conflict and role ambiguity in the successful job performance and retention of paraprofessionals in the RA role.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine the relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, training received, job turnover, role conflict, and role ambiguity in RAs. Additionally, the study included an exploration of RAs' perceptions of synergistic supervision received compared to the RDs' self-perception of synergistic supervision given. The population studied was RAs and RDs employed at four-year institutions in the southwestern part of the United States. The sample included staff members from universities who are members of the Southwest Association of Colleges and Universities Housing Officers (SWACUHO).

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and the amount of previous supervision training received by the residence director?
2. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role conflict?
3. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role ambiguity?
4. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and intention to turn over?

5. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction?
6. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the residence director?
7. Is there a relationship between job satisfaction of the resident assistant and the job satisfaction of his or her supervisor?

Significance of the Study

Most of the literature on supervision in student affairs is theoretical or founded on the experiences of the authors and not empirically based (Cooper, Saunders, Howell, & Bates, 2001). Further, while there are number of books that discuss the supervision of RAs by RDs (e.g., Upcraft, 1982; Winston & Fitch, 1993), there is a limited number of empirically researched studies about this relationship (e.g., Komives, 1991a; Renz, 1974). This study adds to the literature on supervision in student affairs in the area of paraprofessional staff. Further, the study provides insight into the impact of the synergistic supervision model with paraprofessionals. Findings may impact how RDs are trained to supervise their staff members. Additionally, the impact of supervision on RA job satisfaction and intention of RA staff to turnover could help university housing departments address concerns with RA job performance and retention.

Methodology

In this study, a quantitative survey design was utilized to measure the correlation relationship between its variables. The study included surveys of both RDs and RAs currently working in student housing at a university located in either Texas or Oklahoma. In this study, the following scales were utilized: Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire's (MOAQ) Job Satisfaction and Intention to Turnover Scales, and Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (RCAS). Additionally, demographic information was gathered from each of the participants. The following sections address the data collection process and the treatment of the data.

Collection of Data

After receiving approval from both the University of Texas at Arlington and the participating universities' Institutional Review Boards, approval was gained from each housing department for the study. RAs and RDs of the participating departments were sent surveys to complete. Participants who chose to could enter a drawing for a $50 gift card upon completion of the data collection. Data were coded with all identifying information removed.

Treatment of the Data

After the data were collected, the following procedures were performed. Descriptive statistics were run on each of the scales along with the demographic information. Using the statistical analysis program Statistical Package for the

Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21, correlations were run for each of the research questions. Correlations findings with an alpha level of .05 or less were considered to be significant. Analysis of the data collected was conducted based on the results.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study.

Housing. There are a number of names given to the departments that oversee the students living on university campuses, including: residence life, residential services, and resident life. The term housing was used in this study to represent departments within a university that have direct oversight over the residence directors and resident assistants living in on-campus residential facilities.

Resident assistants (RAs). RAs are student staff members who live in a community with other students and who provide assistance, engagement opportunities, resources, policy enforcement, and emergency response (Upcraft, 1982).

Residence directors (RDs). Residence directors are staff members who work in university-run apartments or residence halls and oversee the daily function of a given community. As part of their job, residence directors are responsible for the supervision of a staff of RAs. Residence directors are referred to by various titles (e.g., area coordinator or head resident) (Upcraft, 1982).

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The generalizability of the study was limited because the sample consisted of only universities located in the southwest part of the United States and did not include other geographic locations that could have impacted the findings. Another limitation was that the Synergistic Supervision Scale measures the perception of resident assistants, which does not equate the full reality of the supervision that the individuals have received (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000). Additionally, the sample size was small; one school's participants were overrepresented compared to the other institutions' participants. Finally, a correlational study may be used to determine the relationship between variables (positive or negative); however, in a correlational study, the researcher is unable to determine a cause and effect relationship (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Delimitations

The study was delimited to RAs from a chosen region who completed the surveys. The population was selected from universities in Texas and Oklahoma that were members of the Southwest Association of Colleges and Universities Housing Officers. This limiting of the population was done intentionally to increase chances that the researcher would gain access to the potential participants. Additionally, while there are multiple theories of supervision, in this study synergistic supervision was used as the theoretical framework. Finally, the

study involved going through individual universities instead of using a professional organization to gain access to the participants in order to be able to identify the relationship between both the RA and the RD and not limit the sample to one or the other.

Assumptions

The following are the assumptions for the study. First, it was assumed that the participants were honest and truthful when responding to the surveys. Second, it was assumed that those receiving supervision viewed synergistic supervision positively. While there may be individual preferences when it comes to supervision, this study operated on the assumption that those who perceive their supervisor as utilizing the synergistic supervision approach find this style of supervision helpful.

Background of the Researcher

The researcher has an interest in the subject of synergistic supervision after having spent 16 years as a supervisor. In his current professional role, he directly and indirectly supervises 140 university staff members. Having spent the past 13 years working in student housing, he is intimately familiar with challenges that come with providing oversight of a residential community.

Organization of Dissertation Chapters

The organization of the dissertation chapters is as follows. Chapter 2 includes relevant research pertaining to supervision and RA attrition. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the methods used in this this study including research design, data collection, instrumentation, and treatment of data. In Chapter 4 is a description of the study's data analysis as well as the resulting descriptive statistics and a report of the findings. The dissertation concludes in Chapter 5 with a discussion of the findings, implications, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Resident assistant (RA) supervision is an integral responsibility for housing professionals. The responsibilities of RAs range from policy enforcer to counselor, lending the position to burnout, role ambiguity, and role conflict. RAs are supervised by residence directors (RDs) who are entry-level professionals responsible for oversight of residential facilities on university campuses. The supervisory relationship between RAs and RDs is important to ensure that needs are met for both the educational institution and the respective RA. The following literature review includes an exploration of studies on RA attrition and supervision.

RA Attrition

Tenure is short for most individuals employed as RAs (Upcraft, 1982). The position of RA is generally filled by undergraduate students who are at least of sophomore academic standing (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). With undergraduate students only typically spending four to five years in college, in addition to the job responsibilities of the position, the tenure of an RA typically lasts from one semester to three years. Interest in the position and retention often are impacted by internships, study abroad experiences, campus involvement, and other job opportunities (Brecheisen, 2015). All of these factors lead to a high unplanned turnover rate of RA staff each year. University housing staff members, therefore,

spend a fair amount of time recruiting and hiring new RAs (Berg & Stoner, 2016). However, while a certain level of annual staff turnover is expected to occur at the completion of each year, residential communities and staff teams are impacted differently when an RA unexpectedly leaves during the academic term. Stronger retention of potential mid-term RA vacancies could mean that supervisors would spend less time training new RAs mid-term and more time developing staff members in other areas.

Much of the student affairs literature on turnover focuses on new university professionals and on those who leave the field of student affairs (Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). However, there is little research on RA departure. One potential reason for this lack of attention to RA departure is financial cost. While there is a cost of time to hire and train a new RA (Jaeger & Caison, 2006), the financial stakes are much lower than the recruitment and hiring of new professional staff members (Taylor, 2012). The cost associated with RA attrition is not financial; the cost is the impact on residents when there is no RA to fill an open position or when an inexperienced RA assumes the position and is unable to support the residents' needs.

The literature associated with RA attrition has focused primarily on three areas: (a) burnout, (b) role ambiguity, and (c) role conflict. These three areas all have distinct attributes that are caused by the many responsibilities RAs are asked to perform (Deluga & Winters, 1990).

Burnout

Burnout is an area in the literature that has been shown to contribute to job attrition of staff members (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) defined burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity" (p. 4). In the 1970s, the concept of employee burnout began to emerge from the literature, with researchers seeking to understand better how job stressors impact employees in and out of the workplace and gave attention to helping field occupations such as nursing, counseling, and social services (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Maslach (1976) asserted that jobs in which staff members are required to hear about another person's life issues can challenge the employee's coping skills because of the emotional intensity of the relationship. The relationship is often not balanced, as the person in need is often not in a position to reciprocate the help being given (Freudenberger, 1975).

Freudenberger (1975), an early researcher of burnout, described how individuals in helping field professions experience burnout differently than individuals in other professions. He found that those in helping fields experience stress specific to: (a) societal issues, (b) the needs of others, and (c) their own needs (Freudenberger, 1975). Maslach (1976) wrote, "Burnout is inevitable when a professional must care for too many people. There's higher and higher

emotional overload" (p. 20). With the expectation of those in the RA position to provide support for students while dealing with their own life issues, researchers in student affairs have used the concept of burnout to examine the RA position and the impact that it has on job satisfaction and performance (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Hornak, 1982; Nowack & Hanson, 1983).

Additional elements specific to the RA job that make the position susceptible to burnout include the counseling role RAs have with students, policy enforcement, and the 24-hour a day nature of the job. Because they live with their residents, RAs are surrounded by their peers and their supervisors both at home and at work (Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989). This leads to little separation from the stressors of work; their work surrounds most of their day (Hardy & Dodd, 1998).

In the 1980s, student affairs researchers began to explore the impact that burnout had on individuals employed in RA positions. Nowack and Hanson (1983) conducted one of the first studies of RA burnout. The researchers studied 37 RAs who were employed at the University of California Los Angeles and examined the relationship between the RAs' stress, burnout, and job performance. Nowack and Hanson (1983) found that RAs who experienced higher amounts of burnout were more likely to be rated lower in job performance by the residents.

Other researchers have investigated links between the amount of time an RA spent in the position and burnout. Benedict and Mondloch (1989) found in

their study of approximately 66 RAs at a mid-sized university in the southeast that there was no relationship between burnout and time spent in the position. However, their findings on the impact of the residence hall environment on retention in the RA position were consistent with other researchers. For example, Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) studied 281 RAs at a mid-sized Midwestern university and found that RAs in all-freshmen residence halls experienced more burnout than those in upper-class residence halls. Hardy and Dodd (1998) examined the experiences of 57 RAs from a private university in the Midwest and found that RAs who served on freshmen floors experienced more burnout than RAs with mixed-grade level floors. Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gohn (2005) conducted a study with 150 RAs at a large southeastern university and 40 RAs at mid-sized southern university and found that RAs were more likely to experience burnout based on residence hall style (traditional) and type (first-year students).

Additional researchers have explored gender differences with mixed results (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Hetherington et al., 1989). Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) found that females experienced more stress than males in conflicts arising from situations where their personal values and priorities intersected with the values and priorities of their residents; however, women did not report experiencing burnout with any more frequency than men. Similarly, Hardy and Dodd (1998) found no conclusive difference between males and females in experiencing burnout. In contrast, Paladino et al. (2005) concluded

that males and RAs of color were more likely to experience burnout than RAs who are women and Caucasian. The authors of these studies indicated that the type of residence hall was more predictive of burnout than was gender, which suggests there is complex relationship between stress, community type, and burnout (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988). While there is only limited recent research on these topics, the issue of RA burnout is relevant based on the lack of significant changes in the structure of the RA position.

Role Ambiguity and Conflict

In addition to burnout, role ambiguity and role conflict can contribute to employee attrition. The following section includes an exploration of the literature surrounding role theory. Role theory was developed by social scientists to explain "the relationship between the individual and society" ("Role Theory," 2008, p. 275). Biddle (1986) described role theory as "explain[ing] roles by presuming that persons are members of social position and hold expectations for their own behaviors and those of other persons" (p. 67). Each role (e.g., son/daughter, friend, employee) brings with it a set of expectations and societal norms that guide behaviors. There are a number of approaches to role theory including functional, interactionalist, structural, organizational, and cognitive approach (Biddle, 1986). Organizational theory examines the roles of individuals within formal organizations and often is used when researching work environments (Biddle, 1986).

Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) used organizational role theory when introducing the concepts of role conflict and role ambiguity. Kahn et al. (1964) defined role conflict as "the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" (p. 19). Biddle (1986) defined role ambiguity as "a condition in which expectations are incomplete or insufficient to guide behavior" (p. 83). The nature of the RA position creates a number of different roles such as student, peer, employee, and supervisor, which makes them susceptible to both role ambiguity and role conflict (Duluga & Winters, 1990).

A number of researchers of studies in student affairs have examined the impact of role ambiguity and conflict on RAs (Brecheisen, 2015; Deluga & Winters, 1990; Everett & Loftus, 2011). Duluga and Winters (1990) conducted a study of role ambiguity, stress, job satisfaction, and job performance of 42 RAs employed at a northeastern college. They found that RAs often were "uncertain about the dimensions of their position and responsibilities" (Duluga & Winters, 1990, p. 230). The researchers also found that there were correlations between RAs who experienced high role ambiguity and both conflict and lower job satisfaction. In another study, Schaller and Wagner (2007) examined the experiences of RAs in their sophomore year. The researchers found that the RAs did not understand fully the position in which they were employed and were not fully prepared to address all situations by the training and supervision they

received. Brecheisen (2015) studied 1,443 sophomore RAs and found a strong correlation between the satisfaction of clear job expectations and working and living conditions. Brecheisen (2015) found that the clearer the expectations and the greater the understanding of the roles associated with the position, the greater likelihood RAs were to have higher job satisfaction.

Another area examined by researchers is role conflict. Role conflict can occur when RAs are friends with their residents but also are expected to document any policy violation by these friends. Everett and Loftus (2011) examined the role conflicts of 32 RAs at a private college in the southeast. They found that a majority of the RAs had difficulty documenting policy violations committed by students they knew. The RAs also reported that they wanted to form relationships with their residents, but their role as an RA created a distance between them unlike that found in other peer-to-peer relationships.

Some research has also been done on the challenges RAs face to balance the time demands of their job with their own academic requirements (Duluga & Winters, 1990). Schaller and Wagner (2007) found that the RAs' inability to manage their time effectively led either to diminished academic or job performance. Brecheisen (2015) found that RAs who voluntarily departed from the position had higher grade point averages (GPAs) while an RA than those who stayed in the position. Brecheisen (2015) hypothesized that the departure was related to RAs in more rigorous academic programs wanting to focus more

attention on their academics, which they found was harder to do in the RA position. In addition, Schaller and Wagner (2007) found that RAs in their sophomore year faced uncertainty over their choice of major, causing them additional stress when they were undecided on a major. These researchers (Brecheisen, 2015; Schaller & Wagner, 2007) indicated that role conflict between high academic achievement and strong job performance is a reality for RAs and can impact their longevity in the position.

While there are other factors that lead to RAs leaving the position such as racism (Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011) and gender (Komives, 1991b), burnout, role ambiguity, and role conflict are the most prevalent in the literature. The complex nature of the RA position lends itself to this RA attrition. Further, the complex nature of peers overseeing peers can create conflict for RAs and add stress to the position (Everett & Loftus, 2011).

Job Satisfaction

Burnout, role ambiguity, and role conflict can lead to reduced job satisfaction and attrition. This section includes a discussion of the literature on job satisfaction as well as additional factors that can contribute to attrition. Job satisfaction has been extensively studied in the behavioral sciences (Gruneberg, 1979; Locke, 1976; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Research on job satisfaction in psychology has been around since the early 1900s, producing countless articles and books on the subject (Locke & Latham, 1990). Among the many variables

related to job satisfaction that have been studied, some of the more frequent have been how job satisfaction relates to performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), turnover (Lambert et al., 2001), and organizational commitment (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

A popular definition of job satisfaction was developed by Locke (1976) who described job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state, resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300). Job satisfaction according to Gruneberg (1979) is the "individual's emotional reactions to a particular job" (p. 3). There are a number of different scales available that measure job satisfaction, and they often are not long scales; therefore, including them in a study can be done easily. While job satisfaction has been well researched, little research has been conducted in the field of higher education specific to RAs' job satisfaction (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, & Morrell, 2000).

Most researchers in the area of job satisfaction in higher education have focused on faculty rather than on student affairs administrators or paraprofessionals (Anderson et al., 2000; Tarver, Canada, & Lim, 1999). In a study of student affairs professionals, Winston and Creamer (1997) found that, overall, staff members appeared to be satisfied in their jobs and that 82% of the staff members surveyed (n = 937) were either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. In a study of 158 new student affairs professionals at four-year institutions,

Ward (1995) found that job satisfaction was negatively correlated with role conflict, role ambiguity, and the propensity of the staff members to leave their positions. Rosser and Javinar (2003), study of 1,166 mid-level student affairs employees, found that job satisfaction was correlated with the intent to leave the position. Additionally, their study found that recognition of work was correlated with job satisfaction.

Several researchers have looked specifically at job satisfaction in student housing. In addition to the studies already discussed (Brecheisen, 2015; Deluga & Winters, 1990) in which the relationship between job satisfaction and role ambiguity and role conflict were explored, other researchers have explored RA job satisfaction through different lenses. In a study of 68 RAs, Butters and Gade (1982) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and leadership behaviors. The researchers found that job satisfaction was correlated with both task and relationship leadership dimensions, which supported the notion that RAs in the job are more satisfied if they are equipped to handle the different types of situations they may face (Butters & Gade, 1982). In their study of 144 RAs, Deluga and Winters (1991) explored the relationship between job satisfaction and RA motivational factors. They found that the two factors of *helping behaviors* and *RA cohesiveness* were correlated positively with job satisfaction (Deluga & Winters, 1991). Davidson (2012) surveyed 118 entry-level housing professionals and found that the biggest predictor of job satisfaction was opportunities for

promotion. Overall, the employees surveyed by Davidson were satisfied in their job, which was consistent with one of the first studies on job satisfaction of student affairs professionals conducted by Bender (1980).

In a study of 165 RAs from public universities in Massachusetts, Onofrietti (2000) found that high job satisfaction negatively correlated with stress. Additionally, Onofrietti (2000) found that RAs with higher job satisfaction were more likely to choose to return to their jobs the following academic year. Morris (2009), in a study of 200 RAs at public universities in Mississippi, found that RA satisfaction was related to the leadership style of their residence director. While more research on job satisfaction in student affairs is needed, the research that has been completed has demonstrated it as a useful measure when exploring staff attrition.

Supervision

One way organizations can attempt to mitigate the impacts of low job satisfaction is through quality supervision (Tull, 2006). There are multiple accepted definitions of the act of supervision. In many settings, the terms *teacher*, *boss*, and *manager* are used interchangeably with the term *supervisor*. According to Merriam-Webster, a general definition of supervision is "the action or process of watching and directing what someone does or how something is done" ("Supervision," 2016). In their book about social service organizational management, *Strategic Supervision: A Brief Guide for Managing Social Service*

Organizations, Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, and de Jesus Arguello (2010) defined a supervisor as a "staff person to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate on-the-job performance of one or more line staff" (p. 13). Supervisors are responsible for oversight of work done by others, which implies a level of authority of the supervisor over the subordinate (Pecora et al., 2010). Based on these definitions, most people in employment settings have familiarity with or have been in a supervisory relationship.

Supervision has been researched in many different academic disciplines and fields. Research on psychotherapy supervision (e.g., counseling and social work) has included an exploration of the effectiveness of graduate student and new professional supervision practices (Carifio & Hess, 1987). Researchers in the field of education have examined the impact of supervision on students participating in a student-teaching field placement (Richardson-Koehler, 1988). As expected, the nature of the supervisory relationship and expectations varies based on the work being completed in each area of study (Bunker & Wijnberg, 1988). For the purposes of the this study, the role of an RD was a supervisory one due to the authority and the oversight of RAs' work; however, the nature of the RD/RA supervisory relationship differs from other supervisory dyads because it features entry-level staff and student workers.

Models of Supervision

Supervisors approach their role in different ways depending on their personal style and experience. Models of supervision help to conceptualize the supervisory relationship in a more comprehensive way. In the literature there are a number of approaches and models used to explain the best approaches to achieve quality supervision. The following supervision models will be discussed: common approaches, developmental theory, and integrated developmental model.

Winston, Ullom, and Warren (1984) posited that there are four approaches that are typically used when supervising RAs. The approaches include: materialistic, authoritarian, laissez-faire, and synergistic. Materialistic, or what Winston and Creamer (1997) later termed "companionable supervision" (p. 195), is where the supervisor's primary goal is to be liked. He or she works to develop relationships without focusing on the job responsibilities of the staff members and avoids feedback that might cause a strain in the relationship (Winston, Ullom, & Warren, 1984). The authoritarian style of supervision operates with little trust in the ability of the employee and includes the need to micromanage staff members to make sure they are completing tasks in the correct way (Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston et al., 1984). Laissez-faire is a hands-off approach to supervision with the belief that staff members have the skills to complete tasks on their own, and the supervisor needs to give staff the autonomy to succeed on their own. The supervisor in this model only engages or is asked to engage when there is an issue

that has become out of control and represents a failure on the part of the employee (Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston et al., 1984). Finally, the synergistic supervision model focuses on joint efforts of the supervisor and employee to work together not only to further the goals of the organization but also to accomplish the goals of the employee (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

An additional model of supervision that focused on developmental theory in supervision was developed by Ricci, Porterfield, and Piper (1987). The creators of the model suggested that if a supervisor utilizes instrumentation to assess his or her staff members on personality type and intellectual development, he or she will be better able to understand his or her staff members (Ricci et al., 1987). The model utilizes both Perry's (1970) scheme of intellectual and ethical development and Myers and Briggs (1980) personality type to help guide the supervisor in his or her interactions with an employee. For example, if a supervisor has an employee who is assessed as a *feeling type* as opposed to a *thinking type* on the Myers Briggs Inventory, when giving feedback he or she should be aware that the employee might have a more emotional reaction. The supervisor then can adjust his or her approach accordingly (Ricci et al., 1987). This model uses development theory to help guide the supervision to be more effective.

The integrated developmental model (IDM) is a model of supervision that has been utilized with clinical supervision. Stock-Ward and Javorek (2003) suggested that IDM is a good model for supervisors in student affairs. The model

focuses on staff members who fall in one of three levels: (a) unsure of their job duties or how to complete assigned tasks, (b) alternate between autonomy and dependence, or (c) need less direction and are able to collaborate more with their supervisor (Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). Employees in the first level need more guidance, direction, and support to help them learn and complete given tasks. Employees in the second level need a less directive approach and need to be allowed to problem solve in a more collaborative way with their supervisor. Supervisors in this stage can be more developmental because they are past the basic task assignment and have moved toward more insight into why the task is important or how it might be done differently. Finally, the third level employees are ready for a collaborative approach to supervision and an increased focus on professional development. This model of supervision can be useful in conceptualizing how to supervise entry-level staff member such as resident directors differently, depending on their current experience level.

Synergistic Supervision: Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theories of effective supervision. One theory that is found in student affairs literature is synergistic supervision. Synergistic supervision is the model of supervision that focuses on both the development of the employee and achieving the departmental goals (Janosik & Creamer, 2003). Winston and Creamer (1997) expanded on the concept of synergistic supervision and defined it as "a cooperative effort between the supervisor and staff members

that allows the effect of their joint efforts to be greater than the sum of their individual contributions" (p. 196). The researchers surveyed 122 vice presidents of student affairs and 816 staff members on topics of staffing, including recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision in student affairs. Winston and Creamer (1997) found that a synergistic approach to supervision relies on the supervisory relationship to include the following components:

1. Dual focus: valuing both the institution's goals and the employee's personal and professional goals;
2. Joint effort: creating collaborations with both parties investing time and energy into achieving established goals;
3. Two-way communication: trusting each other in order to be able to provide honest feedback;
4. Focus on competence: focusing on four areas of competence: knowledge and information, work-related skills, personal and professional skills, and attitudes;
5. Growth orientation: assisting the employee in career development;
6. Proactivity: identifying problems early and being proactive in solving them;
7. Goal based: mutually understanding and agreeing upon goals that are reviewed biannually;

8. Systematic and ongoing process: holding regular one- on-one and group supervisory sessions; and
9. Holism: a rounded approach of not separating an employee's attitudes and beliefs from his or her work. (Winston & Creamer, 1997, pp. 197-211)

Synergistic supervision emphasizes the responsibility of the supervisor to include an employee in creating shared goals. Winston and Creamer (1997) placed importance on the need for the supervisor to dedicate time to the supervisee and to be invested not only in the work that the supervisee does but also in his or her development in the position and as a person.

Other researchers have used synergistic supervision as the framework of their studies. Tull (2006) asserted that synergistic supervision leads to the creation of improved organizational communication that can lead to lower attrition of staff members. Shupp and Arminio's (2012) qualitative study linked the needs of entry-level employees with characteristics of synergistic supervision. The model of synergistic supervision is seen as a useful framework to use when supervising student affairs staff members (Dalton, 2003; Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Winston & Hirt, 2003).

The theoretical framework of a study serves to narrow the scope of the study and provides a "lens through which your research is viewed" (Roberts, 2010, p. 129). Synergistic supervision was the framework used in this study and

was utilized to understand better the relationship supervision has with factors that impact job satisfaction. Synergistic supervision was a particularly good fit for this study as its dual-focus emphasis aligns with the supervision of RAs who are focused on pursuing their education while serving in the RA position.

Supervision in Student Affairs

Supervision and personal management take up a considerable amount of a student affairs professional's time (Cooper, Saunders, Howell, & Bates 2001). Supervision is seen as an important skill in student affairs, yet there remains limited research and literature on the topic (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Janosik & Creamer, 2003). Janosik and Creamer (2003) hypothesized that the lack of research on supervision in student affairs is because staff members are often recognized for their work directly with the students on campus and this takes away from the staff management that makes many of these student services possible. The literature on supervision in student affairs includes focus areas such as entry-level professionals (Barham & Winston, 2006; Tull, 2006), human resources (Dalton, 2003), gender identity (Porterfield, 1988), theory and model development (Ricci, Porterfield, & Piper, 1987; Winston & Creamer, 1997), and quality (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Shupp & Arminio, 2012).

There are a number of models of supervision; however, the most predominant approach explored in the area of student affairs is synergistic supervision. Building on the findings of Winston and Creamer (1997) on

synergistic supervision, Saunders, Cooper, Winston, and Chernow (2000) developed the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), which measures "the extent to which staff perceive that their supervisor focuses on the twin areas of advancement of the institutional mission and goals and the personal and professional advancement of individual staff members" (p. 181). Saunders et al. (2000) surveyed 380 student affairs professionals from 15 institutions on the frequency that they observed different supervisory behaviors associated with synergistic supervision. Results from this study showed that 47% of respondents reported that they had less than five supervisory sessions over the past year. Further, Saunders et al. (2000) found that poor job performance was not always addressed by the supervisor when meeting with the supervisee, thus potentially inhibiting the growth of the employee. The majority of the variance in the regression analysis was explained by the supervisor giving positive feedback to the staff members by acknowledging their good work (Saunders et al., 2000).

Tull (2006) surveyed 435 ACPA members who had worked in the student affairs field for fewer than five years. Using the SSS, Tull (2006) found that there was a positive correlation between synergistic supervision and job satisfaction and negative correlation between synergistic supervision and intention to turnover. The researcher showed the positive effect that supervision can have on the retention of professional staff members.

With the development of the SSS, much of the research on synergistic supervision has been quantitative; however, Arminio and Creamer (2001) and Shupp and Arminio (2012) utilized qualitative methods in their investigation. Arminio and Creamer (2001) interviewed 25 student affairs staff members who were identified by respected professionals in the field as being highly qualified supervisors. The authors defined high-quality supervision as:

> An educational endeavor demonstrated through principled practices with a dual focus on institutional and individual needs. It requires (a) synergistic relationship between supervisor and staff members, (b) ubiquitous involvement and constant nurturing of staff members and (c) a stable and supportive institutional environment to be effective. (Arminio & Creamer, 2001, p. 42)

As identified in the work of other researchers (Saunders et al., 2000; Tull, 2006), Arminio and Creamer (2001) found that it is paramount in effective supervision that the supervisor focuses on each individual staff member. The researchers (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Saunders et al., 2000; Tull, 2006) demonstrated the importance of supervisors investing time in their staff members on both personal and professional development. In another study, Shupp and Arminio (2012) interviewed five new professionals who recently had graduated with master's degrees from higher education-related programs. The researchers identified themes on what employees were looking for from their supervisory

relationship. The themes that emerged included supervisor accessibility, meaningful interaction with the supervisor, proper utilization of formal evaluation, unique supervision, and a priority placed on professional development (Shupp & Arminio, 2012). These themes were consistent with the constructs of other research on synergistic supervision.

Supervision of Resident Assistants

Supervision research is scarce both in student affairs and specifically in the area of student housing. Despite the fact that supervision is named a core competency in the leading professional organization for housing professionals – the Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (Cawthon & Schreiber, 2012) – there has been relatively little research conducted on the topic. Researchers who have studied supervision in student affairs primarily have examined the role that supervision has played on the attrition and development of professional staff (Barham & Winston, 2006; Dalton, 2003; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003; Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston & Hirt, 2003), but largely have not researched the impact of supervision on the attrition and development of paraprofessionals.

In an early examination of the supervision in housing, Renz (1974) examined the performance evaluations of 75 RAs and 12 head residents (RDs) and linked the effectiveness of RDs in their job to the effectiveness of their RA staffs. Effectiveness for both RDs and RAs was determined through job

performance evaluations completed by their respective supervisors. Renz (1974) found that RAs supervised by more effective RDs were perceived to be more effective in their positions (Renz, 1974). While dated, this study was one of the few in which the author looked specifically at how the supervision of an RD impacts RA performance. Additionally, because the nature of the RD/RA supervisory relationship has remained relatively static, the findings are still relevant.

Komives (1991a) found that the approach used by RDs in supervising RAs impacted RAs' motivation in the position. She surveyed 84 RDs and 806 RAs and examined the impact of transformational versus transaction leadership in the supervision of RAs. Komives (1991a) found that an individual approach that focused on the RAs' needs had a significant impact on RA motivation. The study was important as it examined the RD/RA supervisee relationship and how the RD leadership impacted RA motivation and job satisfaction. However, the study did not examine how RD supervisory style might affect RA job performance.

Summary

Each year housing departments face RA attrition. Burnout, role ambiguity, and role conflict contribute to the issue of attrition among RAs. Supervision has been found to impact turnover among professional staff members (Tull, 2006); however, the actual impact of quality supervision on job satisfaction and retention of RAs remains unknown.

The next chapter includes details of the methodology used in in the study including research design, site selection, participation, data collection, and instrumentation. Chapter 4 includes details pertaining to the analysis of the data that were collected. This chapter also includes a report of the descriptive statistics and the study's findings. Finally, in Chapter 5 is a discussion of the study's findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Supervision of resident assistants (RAs) by resident directors (RDs) has not been explored extensively by researchers in the field. RAs play an important role for universities, and based on the multiple roles their positions require, RAs are susceptible to many stressors. RDs as their supervisor play a role in trying to mitigate those stressors and maintain their job satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived level of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, the intention to turnover, and the levels of role conflict and ambiguity in resident assistants (RAs). Additionally, the study included an exploration of the perception of synergistic supervision received by RAs compared to the self-perception of the residence directors (RDs) on the same scale. The following section is divided into seven parts: (a) design of study, (b) research questions, (c) instrumentation, (d) sample selection, (d) study site, (e) date collection, and (f) treatment of data.

Design of the Study

To best answer the research questions of this study, a quantitative survey design was utilized. Quantitative methods are most appropriate when examining a relationship between variables (Creswell, 2009). In this study, surveys were used to examine the perspectives of the sample and to generalize from the sample to the overall population (Creswell, 2009). Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski,

Singer, and Tourangean (2004) defined the survey method as a "systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members" (p. 2). The study included an examination of the relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision and RA job satisfaction, the intention to turnover, role conflict, role ambiguity, and amount of supervision training received by the RD. Additionally, demographic variables including gender, length of supervisory relationship, and ethnicity were examined. A correlational design allowed for the variables to be analyzed and determine if "either singly or in combination, affect the pattern of behavior" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 324). Correlation-designed studies are appropriate when a researcher seeks to describe the relationship between variables without attempting to control or manipulate the variables (Gall et al., 2003).

Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and the amount of previous supervision training received by the residence director?
2. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role conflict?

3. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role ambiguity?
4. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and intention to turn over?
5. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction?
6. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the residence director?
7. Is there a relationship between job satisfaction of the resident assistant and the job satisfaction of his or her supervisor?

Instrumentation

Three previously-established instruments and one new measure were used in this study. The titles of the instruments were the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), The Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire's (MOAQ) Job Satisfaction and Intention to Turnover Scales, and the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (RCAS). The SSS was used to measure the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by RAs surveyed (see Appendix A) (Saunders et al., 2000). The researcher adapted the SSS (Saunders et al., 2000) to be taken by residence directors (RDs) to measure their self-perception of the level of synergistic supervision they provide to their staff members (see Appendix B). To

validate each of the items in the scale, a panel of RDs was sent a list of items and asked to rank the clarity and consistency with their understanding of the attributes of supervisory behaviors. The RDs who were asked to participate in the panel were university staff members who were not participating in the study and who directly supervise RAs. The MOAQ was used to measure RA job satisfaction and their intentions to leave the position (see Appendix C) (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983). The RCAS were used to measure the RA level of role conflict and ambiguity (see Appendix D) (House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983).

Synergistic Supervision Scale. The Synergistic Supervision Scale (see Appendix A) consisted of 22 items and was used to measure the perception the RAs has of their supervisors' focus on both the needs of the institution and of personal and professional goals of the RA. (Saunders et al., 2000). For example, one item in the survey that is used to gage the supervision commitment to the staff members' development is "my supervisor shows interests in promoting my professional or career advancement." An example of an item that shows the supervisor focus on institutional goals is "my supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution." Permission was granted to use, edit, and reproduce the SSS by the researchers (see Appendix E). The scale was designed by Saunders et al. (2000) to "help researchers better understand the components of effective staff supervision in higher education setting" (p. 183). The scale was first administered to student affair professionals, support staff, and staff who worked with student

affairs on campus. While Saunders et al. (2000) did not specifically use paraprofessionals to validate the scale, the scale remained a good fit as the supervisory relationship was led by a professional staff in the area of student affairs. Further, according to Winston and Fitch (1993), synergistic supervision is the most effective approach to supervise RAs. Responses were scored from 1, *never* (or almost never) to 5, *always* (or almost always). The SSS's internal consistency was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient .94 with a range of correlation of .44 to .75 (Saunders et al., 2000). Validity of the scale was done by correlating scores with SSS and the Index of Organizational Reaction (Smith, 1976) .91 and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Porter & Smith, 1970), which had a correlation of .64 (Saunders et al., 2000). Permission to use, edit, and reproduce was granted by Dr. Sue Saunders, creator of the instrument.

Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. Job satisfaction and intention to turn over (see Appendix C) were measured using the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ) (Cammann et al., 1983). Bowling and Hammond (2008) found the mean sample-weighted internal consistency reliability of the MOAQ job satisfaction scale to be .84. The scale positively correlated with satisfaction with work itself (r =.74) and supervision (r =.57) and negatively correlated with job tension (r = -.42) and depression (r = -.41) (Bowling & Hammond, 2008). Reliability for the Intention to Turnover Scale was established by a coefficient alpha with an internal reliability of .83 and

validated with correlations with job satisfaction (r = -.58) and job involvement (r = -.27) measures (Cammann et al., 1983).

Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale. The Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (see Appendix D) was developed by House, Schuler, and Levanoni (1983) and consists of 18 items (11 for ambiguity and 7 for conflict) to measure the level of role ambiguity and conflict by employees in a complex organization. The Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale was developed in order to update a former scale. The former scale was criticized because the role conflict items were written with a perceived negative connotation (stress worded) and the ambiguity items were worded positively (comfort worded) (House et al., 1983). The revised Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale balanced the items so that they consisted of both stress and comfort-type words (Field, 2002; House et al., 1983). The reliability of the scale's Cronbach's alpha for role ambiguity was .90 and for role conflict .84 (House et al., 1983). Both role ambiguity (r = .60) and conflict (r = .32) correlated negatively with job satisfaction (p < .01) (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994).

Sample Selection

The target population for this study was RAs who worked for university-run housing offices and full-time RDs who had master's degrees and supervised RAs. Members of the sampling frame were individuals who had a chance to be part of the study. For this study, the sample consisted of members of the Southwest Association of Colleges and Universities Housing Officers

(SWACUHO) organization. SWACUHO is the regional organization affiliated with Association for College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I), which is the largest professional organization for university housing professionals. The sample was selected from housing departments within SWACUHO of both private and public institutions. Having the participation of both private and public departments in the study increased the diversity of the sample. Access was sought at more institutions, however the researcher was not able to gain access to conduct the study at a number of universities that fit the study's parameters. Therefore, while there was diversity in the schools participating, there was more possibility of oversampling one type of institution.

A $50 Visa gift card was used as an incentive for participants to respond. One gift card was given to one participant at each university. Participants were given the opportunity to register for a drawing to win the card by using a separate link to enter their email addresses. The information gathered at the separate link was not tied to survey responses. The funds to purchase the gift cards came directly from the primary researcher; no university funds were utilized.

Participants in this study were both RAs and RDs. The statistical test used in this study was the Pearson correlation. For an alpha level of .05, the following sample sizes were needed in detecting effect size: (a) small 384; (b) medium, 42; and (c) large, 15 (Olejnik, 1984). The target number of RAs to complete the study was 300. At the time of the study, the participating RAs were supervised by a full

time professional who had earned a master's degree. The target number of RDs for the study was 50. The RDs selected for the study were full-time professional staff members who directly supervise the RAs who participated in the study.

Study Site

The departments approached for participation in the study were located in either Texas or Oklahoma. In order to have a large enough sample to detect a medium effect size, a total of four sites were utilized for this study (see Table 3.1). Directors of these departments were contacted to seek their approval to conduct the study with their staff members. After receiving permission from each department, approval was sought from each university's Institutional Review Board.

Participating departments were asked to provide the email address for each RD (university staff member) and RA (student employee) they supervised. The email address was used to send out the survey link directly to possible participants. Before the survey was sent to prospective participants, heads of housing departments were asked to forward to the prospective participants the researchers' recruitment email. Participants used the link to the survey to respond to the survey questions and participants were not asked to provide specific identifying information (e.g., name, birthdate). The email addresses of participants were deleted after the close of the data collection period.

Table 3.1

Research Sites

University	# of RDs	# of RAs	Public/Private
A	13	125	Private
B	9	61	Private
C	5	56	Public
D	5	55	Public
Total	32	297	

Data Collection

After receiving Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval from the University of Texas at Arlington (see Appendix H) approval from a number of universities in Texas and Oklahoma was sought. Access was not granted to a number of the universities based on IRB policies of the universities and access was not granted by some of the housing departments. Staff members of four of the universities that were contacted approved the study to proceed. A separate survey link was sent to both RDs (see appendix F) and RAs (see Appendix G) for them to complete. Electronic surveys rather than paper surveys were used to increase the level of anonymity felt by the participants. Additionally, because the RAs were asked about their perceptions of their respective supervisors, the ability to complete the survey on their computer and not on paper in front of their supervisors was preferred. Finally, electronic survey collection was more cost effective, saved time with uploading data, and allowed for easier formatting of filtered questions (Gall et al., 2003). RAs who were supervised by a specific RD

were sent a unique link to complete the survey to allow for data of the supervisee and supervisor to be linked together. Both RAs and RDs were sent the initial email asking them to participate in the study. Two reminder emails were sent to those who had not completed the survey. Each participant was provided with the opportunity to register to win a $50 Visa gift card as an incentive to complete the survey. Registering for the gift card was on a separate link and was not tied to the survey submitted by the participant.

Treatment of Data

Quantitative analysis of the data was done by using the statistical analysis program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. Descriptive statistics for each of the tests was run. The first research question was analyzed using Spearman's rho correlation. The second through seventh research questions were analyzed using the Pearson correlation of the means of the composite scores for the given scale (see Table 3.2). The Spearman rho correlation was used for the first research question because the data for the training variable was ranked and therefore did not meet the assumptions of the Pearson correlation. For all of the other research questions, the Pearson correlation was the most appropriate test as the scores for each of the scaled were summed. The range of the correlations valued from +1 to -1, with a 0 indicating no covariability (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013).

Table 3.2

Testing Research Questions

Research Question	Measures	Test
Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and the amount of previous supervision training received by the residence director?	Amount of RD Training and SSS	Spearman's Correlation
Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role conflict?	SSS and Role Conflict	Pearson Correlation
Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role ambiguity?	SSS and Role Ambiguity	Pearson Correlation
Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and intention to turn over?	SSS and MSAQ Intention to turn over	Pearson Correlation
Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction?	SSS and MSAQ Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation
Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the residence director?	SSS and SSS RD self-perception	Pearson Correlation
Is there a relationship between job satisfaction of the resident assistant and the job satisfaction of his or her supervisor?	MSAQ Job Satisfaction of RA and of RD	Pearson Correlation

Summary

This study included an examination of the perceived level of synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, the intention to turnover, levels of role conflict, and ambiguity in RAs. Additionally, the study included an exploration of the perception of synergistic supervision received by RAs compared to the self-perception of the RDs on the same scale. A correlational survey design was used

with RAs and RDs participating in the study from universities in Texas and Oklahoma. The survey for the RA included the SSS, Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale, MSAQ (intention to turn over and job satisfaction), and demographic questions. The survey for the RD included the SSS self-perceptions, MSAQ job satisfaction, and demographic questions.

In the following chapter, the results of the study are shared, including a report of the descriptive statistics and the study's findings. In chapter 5, the results of this study are discussed, including implications for research, practice, and theory.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Synergistic supervision is a model of supervision developed to help the employee and the organization achieve goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997). While supervision is viewed as an important skill for housing professionals, it often is overlooked when it comes to the training of staff members (Arminio & Creamer, 2001). The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the relationship between synergistic supervision and amount of training received, job satisfaction, the intention to turnover, and the levels of role conflict and ambiguity in resident assistants (RA). Additionally, the study included an exploration of the perception of synergistic supervision received by RAs compared to the self-perception of the residence directors (RD).

Synergistic supervision is an approach to supervision that focuses on the personal and professional development of the employee as well as the fulfillment of organizational goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The RA position has key functions related to the physical and emotional wellbeing of students living on campus (Blimling, 2003). The RA position is performed by students and often is supervised by an entry-level professional staff member. The leading professional organization specifically for housing professional, the Association of College and University Housing Officers–International, named supervision as one of the core competencies for those working in student housing (Cawthon & Schreiber, 2012).

This study was designed to study and examine the supervisory relationship between RDs and RAs. This chapter includes the results of an analysis of data collected during the spring of 2016. The chapter has four sections: data collection, descriptive statistics, scale reliability, and findings.

Data Collection

The study focused on resident assistants and residence directors employed at public and private universities in the southwestern region of the United States. The researcher contacted universities in this region and gained access to individuals at four institutions. Two publically funded and two privately funded universities gave permission for their RAs and RDs to be contacted. Both of the private universities were religiously affiliated.

Data were collected using electronic surveys developed for both RDs and RAs. The RD surveys included the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction (3 items) and Intention to Turnover Scale (3 items), Residence Director Self-Assessment Synergistic Supervision Scale (22 items), and demographic questions (5 items). The RA survey included Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction (3 items) and Intention to Turnover Scale (3 items), Residence Director Self-Assessment Synergistic Supervision Scale (22 items), Role Ambiguity (11 items) and Role Conflict (7 items) Scales, and demographic questions (5 items). Surveys were sent to 297

RAs and 32 RDs; there were 63 RAs (21%) and 20 RDs who responded (62.5%) with a total of 83 participants.

Descriptive Statistics

The following sections include a description of the demographics of the participants. Additionally, the mean and standard deviation of the responses were reported for each of the scales.

Demographics

Each survey included demographic questions which were asked to better understand the participants. For this study, there were two different sets of participants, RAs and RDs. There were a total of 63 RA respondents (21.2% return rate): 46 (73.0%) identified as female, 16 (25.4%) as male, and 1 (1.6%) as transgender. Of the four research sites, *University A* had the highest RA return rate (27.2%) and respondents (n = 34) with *University B* having second largest return rate (19.6%) with 12 respondents (see Table 4.1). A majority of the respondents identified as White or Caucasian (61.9%, n = 39). The next highest percentage of participants was Hispanic or Hispanic American at 14.4% (n = 9). Five (7.9%) of the participants identified as Black/African American and an additional 5 identified as Native American/Asian American/Pacific Islander. Of the remaining participants, 6.3% (n = 4) identified as Biracial/Multiracial, and 1 participant (1.6%) provided a write-in response, identifying as Haitian American.

Table 4.1

Site Location of RA Respondents

University	# of Respondents	Response Rate
A	34	27.2
B	12	19.6
C	10	17.9
D	7	12.7

Participants were asked how long they had reported to their current supervisor. A majority of participants had reported to their current supervisor for two semesters (63.5%, *n* = 40). Only 9 participants (14.3%) reported to their current supervisory for one semester. The remaining participants reported to their supervisor for more than two semesters (22.3%, *n* = 14). For a majority of the participants (71.5%), the academic standing of the participants was considered upperclassmen (juniors or seniors), and about a quarter (25.4%) of the participants were considered sophomore (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Academic Standing of RA Respondents

Academic Standing	Frequency	Percent
Sophomore	16	25.4
Junior	27	42.9
Senior	18	28.6
Graduate	2	3.2
Total	63	100.0

There were 20 RDs who participated; the return rate was 62.5%. Just over half the participants (55%, *n* = 11) identified their gender as male and 45% (*n* = 9) as female. The majority of the participants (70%, *n* = 14) identified their ethnicity as White or Caucasian. Only one other ethnicity had more than one participant, which was Hispanic or Hispanic American (10%, *n* = 2). For the rest of the ethnic categories, Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Biracial/ Multiracial, one participant identified with each; in addition, one individual did not respond to the question. Participants' years of experience of supervising RAs in their current position varied. A plurality (45%, *n* = 9) of the participants were in their first year of employment in the position. RDs in their third year as an RD were the next highest with 5 (25%) participants in this category. The remaining participants fell into three categories: second year, fourth year, and in the position more than four years. Two participants (10%) fell into each of these categories.

When asked where they had received formal supervision training, 60% (*n* = 12) of the RDs responded that they had received training in graduate school while 50% (*n* = 10) were trained at places of previous employment, and 60% (*n* = 12) in their current job. There were 20% (*n* = 4) of RDs who had received no formal supervision training. The amount of training the RDs reported that they had received is included in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

RDs' Formal Supervision Training

Amount of Trainings per Semester	Graduate School	Previous Employment	Current Employment
No Training	40%	50%	40%
Once	30%	40%	40%
Twice	15%	10%	10%
Three times	10%	0%	0%
Four times	0%	0%	0%
Five or mover times	5%	0%	10%

Scale Reliability

To test for internal consistency, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, a commonly used test of reliability, was used for each test (Gall Gall, & Borg, 2003). Internal consistency is used to measure the correlation between the questions on the test that are measuring for the same characteristic (Simon & Goes, 2013). A common threshold for positive internal reliability when using Cronbach's alpha is .70 on a scale ranging from 0 to 1.0 (Simon & Goes, 2013).

In this study, six different measures were utilized, including the following scales: Synergistic Supervision, Residence Director Self-Assessment Synergistic Supervision, Intention to Turnover scale, Job Satisfaction, Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity. The overall means and standard deviations for each scale are included in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Mean Scores for Scales Used in Study

Scale	*N*	Min.	Max.	*M*	*SD*
SSS	63	43	107	89.32	13.04
RA JS	63	3	21	18.00	3.28
Role Ambiguity	61	11	61	26.84	11.65
RC	63	7	42	19.29	8.56
ITT	63	3	21	8.67	5.71
RD JS	20	7	21	17.25	3.54
RD SS	19	74	101	89.45	6.62

Note. SSS = Synergistic Supervision Scale; RA JS = Resident Assistant Job Satisfaction; RC = Role Conflict; ITT = Intention to Turnover; RD JS = Residence Director Job Satisfaction; RD SS = Residence Director Self-Assessed Synergistic Supervision.

The Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) consisted of 22 items on a five-point scale ranging from never to always (see Appendix A). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was .922. Consistent with previous studies the SSS was above the .7 reliability threshold (Devillis, 2003). Means and standard deviations for the SSS are listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Synergistic Supervision Scale – Descriptive Statistics (N=63)

Question	*M*	*SD*
My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.	4.05	0.867
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.	3.89	0.914
My supervisor criticizes staff members in public. (R)	4.11	1.010

Question	*M*	*SD*
My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution.	4.23	0.891
My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal or professional.	4.63	0.698
My supervisor shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement.	4.34	0.889
My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions. (R)	4.00	1.080
My supervisor shows that she/he cares about me as a person.	4.57	0.809
My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution.	4.62	0.630
My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat." (R)	3.28	1.110
My supervisor has favorites on the staff. (R)	3.45	1.300
My supervisor breaks confidences. (R)	4.47	1.010
My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.	3.58	0.993
When faced with a conflict between external constituents (for example parent or donor) and staff members, my supervisor supports external constituents even if they are wrong. (R)	4.00	0.977
My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.	4.38	0.818
If I'm not careful, my supervisor may allow things that aren't my fault to be blamed on me. (R)	4.32	1.050
My supervisor rewards teamwork.	3.85	0.899
When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.	3.75	1.020
My supervisor looks for me to make a mistake. (R)	4.52	0.881
My supervisor and I develop yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses or blind spots.	3.06	1.260
When problem solving, my supervisor expects staff to present and advocate differing points of view.	4.12	0.814
In conflicts with staff members, my supervisor takes students' sides (even when they are wrong). (R)	4.32	0.807

Note. Response options: 1 = *Never* (almost never); 2 = *Seldom*; 3 = *Sometimes*; 4 = *Often*; 5 = *Always* (almost always); (R) = Reversed item.

The Residence Director Self-Assessment Synergistic Supervision scale also had 22 items with the same Likert scale as the SSS (see Appendix B). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .696 for the RD Self-Assessment Supervision Scale. Means and standard deviation for the scale are listed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

RD Self-Assessment Supervision Scale – Descriptive Statistics (N=22)

Question	*M*	*SD*
I include my staff in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.	3.89	.737
I work with staff members to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing the information I feel is important.	3.84	.688
I criticize staff members in public. (R)	4.47	.612
I make certain that my staff is fully knowledgeable about the goals of the department, division, and institution.	3.89	.937
I willingly listen to whatever is on the mind of my staff members, whether it is personal, professional or academic.	4.84	0.375
I show interest in promoting my staff members professional or career advancement.	4.53	0.513
I am personally offended if staff members question the wisdom of my decisions. (R)	3.58	1.120
I show that I care about staff members as people.	4.58	0.692
I advocate for my residential community.	4.52	0.612
I expect staff members to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat." (R)	3.26	0.872
I have favorites on the staff. (R)	3.16	1.500
I break confidences. (R)	4.53	0.697
I take negative evaluations of programs or staff and use them to make improvements.	3.94	0.524
When faced with a conflict between an external constituent (for example, parents) and staff members, I support external constituents even if they are wrong. (R)	3.84	1.010

Question	*M*	*SD*
I am open and honest with my staff members about their strengths and weaknesses.	4.26	0.806
If a staff member is not careful, I may allow things that aren't his/her fault to be blamed on him/her. (R)	4.42	0.692
I reward teamwork.	4.00	0.817
When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, I help staff members to devise ways to overcome barriers.	4.00	0.471
I look for staff members to make a mistake. (R)	4.11	1.050
My staff members and I develop semesterly professional development plans that address the staff members' weaknesses or blind spots.	2.84	1.070
When problem solving, I expect staff to present and advocate differing points of view.	4.32	0.478
In conflicts with staff members, I take students' sides (even when they are wrong). (R)	4.10	0.809

Note. Response options: 1 = *Never* (almost never); 2 = *Seldom*; 3 = *Sometimes*; 4 = *Often*; 5 = *Always* (almost always); (R) = Reversed item.

There were two scales that came from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire the Intention to Turnover Scale and the Job Satisfaction scale (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983). The Intention to Turnover Scale consisted of three items on a seven-point scale. Two of the items ranged from *not at all likely* to *extremely likely* and one item ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .844. The means and standard deviations for the scale can be found on Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Intention to Turnover (N=63)

Question	*M*	*SD*
How likely is it that you will actively look for a new job in the next year?	3.11	2.40
I often think about quitting*	2.46	1.71
I will probably look for a new job in the next year	3.10	2.36

Note. Anchored Response options (1) *Not at all likely*; (3) *Somewhat likely*; (5) *Quite likely*; (7) *Extremely likely*; *Response options: 1 = *Strongly agree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Slightly disagree*; 4 = *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5 = *Slightly agree*; 6 = *Agree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*.

The Job Satisfaction scale consisted of three items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .902. The means and standard deviation are included in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Job Satisfaction–Descriptive Statistics (N=63)

Question	*M*	*SD*
All in all, I am satisfied with my job	5.98	1.21
In general, I don't like my job (R)	5.94	1.29
In general, I like working here	6.08	1.07

Response options: 1 = *Strongly agree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Slightly disagree*; 4 = *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5 = *Slightly agree*; 6 = *Agree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*; (R) = Reversed item.

The Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity scales consisted of 11 and seven items respectively. For all items the seven-point scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for Role Conflict was .889 and for Role Ambiguity was .924. The means and standard deviation for both scales can be found on Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict (N=63)

Question	*M*	*SD*
Role Ambiguity		
My authority matches the responsibilities assigned to me (R)	2.76	1.60
I don't know what is expected of me	2.17	1.44
My responsibilities are clearly defined (R)	2.30	1.38
I feel certain about how much authority I have (R)	2.50	1.26
I know what my responsibilities are (R)	1.97	0.86
I have clear planned goals and objectives for my job (R)	2.49	1.16
The planned goals and objectives are not clear	2.56	1.41
I don't know how I will be evaluated for a raise or promotion	3.14	1.88
I know what is expected of me (R)	2.17	1.20
Explanations are clear of what has to be done (R)	2.40	1.40
My boss makes it clear how he will evaluate my performance (R)	2.32	1.47
Role Conflict		
I often get myself involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements	3.10	1.67
There are unreasonable pressures for better performance	2.84	1.62
I am often asked to do things that are against my better judgment	2.14	1.34
I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it	2.90	1.61
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	2.43	1.45
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	2.73	1.60
I have to do things that should be done differently under different conditions	3.14	1.73

Note. Response options: 1 = *Strongly agree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Slightly disagree*; 4 = *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5 = *Slightly agree*; 6 = *Agree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*; (R) = Reversed item.

Findings

There were seven research questions that this study attempted to answer. For each statistical test, an alpha level of .05 was used to determine if the finding was statically significant. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 21

was used for analyses of the data using Pearson's correlation coefficient and Spearman rho correlation tests. The range of a correlation is from +1 to -1. Correlations coefficient are considered strong at -1 to -.5 or 1 to .5, moderate at -.3 to -.5 and .3 to .5, weak from -.1 to -.3 and .1 to .3. In the following section the data from each of the research questions are presented.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked if there was a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and the amount of previous supervision training received by the residence director. The RDs reported how often they received formal supervision training (see Table 4.2). The responses for the amount of supervision the respondents received in their current position and in graduate school were coded for analysis. The responses were coded as follows: 1: zero training, 2: training once a semester in either grad or current position, 3: training once a semester in both grad and current position, 4: multiple training per semester in either grad or current position, 5: multiple in either grad or current position and once a semester in either grad or current, and 6: multiple training a semester in both grad or current position. Spearman's correlation was used to determine the relationship between the amount of training received by the RD and RA perception of synergistic supervision received. There was a moderate positive relationship, $r = .393$, $p < .01$, between training received and synergistic supervision. The positive

correlation between the training and synergistic supervision indicated the more training that the RDs received the higher the level of synergistic supervisions the RAs perceived receiving.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked if there was a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role conflict. Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and their level of role conflict. There was a strong negative relationship, $r = -.702$, $p < .001$, between the synergistic supervision and role conflict. This means that participants who reported higher levels of role conflict reported lower levels of perceived synergistic supervision.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked whether there was a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role ambiguity. A Pearson's correlation between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and their level of role ambiguity indicated there was a strong negative relationship, $r = -.792$, $p < .001$, between the synergistic supervision and role ambiguity. This means that participants who reported higher levels of role ambiguity reported lower levels of perceived synergistic supervision.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked whether there was a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and intention to turnover. Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and their level of intention to turnover. There was a moderate negative relationship, $r = -.465$, $p < .001$, between the synergistic supervision and intention to turnover. This means that participants who reported higher levels of intention to turnover reported lower levels of perceived synergistic supervision.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question asked if there was a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction. Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and their level of job satisfaction. There was a strong positive relationship, $r = .827$, $p < .001$, between the synergistic supervision and job satisfaction. This means that participants who reported higher levels of job satisfaction reported higher levels of perceived synergistic supervision.

Research Question 6

The sixth research question asked if there was a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and

perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the residence director. Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and the perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the RD. There was a weak positive relationship (r = .233) between the synergistic supervision and job satisfaction; however, this correlation was not found to be statistically significant (p = .233). A relationship between RA perception of synergistic supervision received and RD perception of synergistic supervision given could not be determined.

Research Question 7

The seventh research question asked if there was a relationship between job satisfaction of the resident assistant and the job satisfaction of his or her supervisor. A Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed between the perceived level of job satisfaction of the RA and the level of job satisfaction of the RD. There was a weak positive relationship, r =.173, between the job satisfaction of the staff members; however, this correlation was not found to be statistically significant (p = .240). A relationship could not be determined.

Summary

This chapter included a presentation of the study's demographics, descriptive statistics, and data analysis. The population of the study included both RAs (n = 63) and RDs (n =20). Each RA participant completed an online survey with questions from five different scales: Synergistic Supervision, Intention to

Turnover, Job Satisfaction, Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity. Each RD completed an online survey that included questions from two different scales: Residence Director Self-Assessment Synergistic Supervision and Job Satisfaction.

An analysis of each research question was performed. A significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between synergistic supervision and training, job satisfaction, intention to turnover, role ambiguity, and role conflict. The relationship between RD Job satisfaction and RA Job Satisfaction was not found to be significant. Additionally, the relationship between the perception Synergistic Supervision received by the RA and the perceived Synergistic Supervision given was not found to be significant.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the finding found in this chapter and relates them to previous research. Additionally, implications for practice, research and theory are discussed. The limitations for the current study also are addressed.

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, and Implications

The supervision of resident assistants (RAs) is an important function of the job of the residence director (RD). This study examined the relationship between supervision and measurements of job satisfaction. This chapter begins with a summary of the previous four chapters including the purpose of the study, research questions, review of the literature, and methodology. In addition, major findings of the study are discussed. Finally, the implications and conclusions from the study are presented.

Summary of the Study

This study included an exploration of the supervisory relationship between residence directors (RD) and resident assistants (RA). Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and the amount of supervision training received, job satisfaction, intentions of staff to leave their position, role conflict, and ambiguity. Additionally, the study included an exploration of the RAs' perceptions of synergistic supervision received compared to the RDs self-perception of synergistic supervision given. Finally, the relationship between job satisfaction of the RA and job satisfaction of the RD was explored. There has been little research on the supervisory relationship between RAs and RDs (Cooper, Saunders, Howell, & Bates, 2001). While it appears from the research

that synergistic supervision has a positive impact on the supervisory relationship, the impact of this model is not known between an RD and an RA. Tull (2006) found a correlation between synergistic supervision and job satisfaction and intention to turnover, but it was limited to entry-level professionals. Additionally, a relationship between role ambiguity and role conflict and job satisfaction were found to be negatively correlated, but synergistic supervision was not included in the analysis (Deluga & Winters, 1990). This study addressed this gap in the literature.

The research questions explored in this study were:

1. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and the amount of previous supervision training received by the residence director?
2. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role conflict?
3. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and role ambiguity?
4. Is there a relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and intention to turn over?
5. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received and job satisfaction?

6. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of synergistic supervision received by the resident assistant and perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the residence director?
7. Is there a relationship between job satisfaction of the resident assistant and the job satisfaction of his or her supervisor?

The RA position is held by students whose role is to provide oversight of students who live on campus. Students are typically on campus for a relatively short amount of time and this combined with other opportunities (e.g., study abroad, internships) that students can take advantage of, contributes to a necessarily short tenure for those in the RA position (Brecheisen, 2015). The naturally short tenure for an RA combined with factors such as position burnout and role ambiguity and role conflict contribute to high attrition in the position.

There are three main emotional causes of burnout in the workplace: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and, reduced personal accomplishment. These have been well researched in the helping fields (e.g., counseling, social work, and nursing) (Freudenberger, 1975; Maslach, 1976). The job responsibilities in the RA position such as 24-hour on-call responsibilities, confronting student policy violations, and peer counseling contribute to those in this position being susceptible to burnout (Hardy & Dodd, 1998). Two areas that contribute to burnout and stress are role ambiguity and role conflict (Duluga & Winters, 1990).

Role ambiguity occurs when expectations are not clear, and it leads to a difficulty in completing the tasks of one's job (Biddle, 1986). Role conflict occurs when there are two sets of expectations that appear to be competing and meeting one set of expectations makes it more difficult to complete the other set (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). RAs who experience high levels of role ambiguity and role conflict are more likely to have lower job satisfaction (Brecheisen, 2015; Duluga & Winters, 1990) and reduced academic performance (Brecheisen, 2015; Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Additionally, role conflict can make developing peer to peer relationships harder because of the responsibility to enforce policy (Everett & Loftus, 2011).

Supervision is an important job responsibility for student affairs staff members and in particular for RDs. The literature on supervision in student affairs was explored. Research on supervision has occurred in a number of disciplines, including psychotherapy, human resources, and K12 education (Bunker & Wijnberg , 1988; Carifio & Hess, 1987; Richardson-Koehler, 1988). Supervision research in student affairs has focused primarily on professional staff members supervising other professional staff members (e.g., Barham & Winston, 2006; Tull, 2006). Few articles have been published specifically on the RA/RD supervisory relationship.

The vast amount of research in student affairs on supervision focused on a concept popularized by Winston and Creamer (1997) called synergistic

supervision. Synergistic supervision was used as the theoretical framework for this study. There are nine components to synergistic supervision including dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication, focus on competence, growth orientation, proactivity, goal based, systematic and ongoing process, and holism (1997). As a model of supervision, researchers have found synergistic supervision to be useful in the field of student affairs (Dalton, 2003; Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000). Saunders et al. (2000) developed a scale, named the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS), to measure the synergistic supervision qualities of a supervisor as perceived by the supervisee. Using the SSS, Tull (2006) found a positive correlation between synergistic supervision and job satisfaction and a negative correlation between synergistic supervision and intention to turnover among entry-level professionals in student affairs. Overall, there has been little research on the supervisory relationship between RAs and RDs. While it appears from the research that synergistic supervision has a positive impact on the supervisory relationship, the impact of this model is not known between an RD and a RA. This study addressed this gap in the literature.

A quantitative survey design was utilized in this study. There were six different scales used in the study: Synergistic Supervision Scale, Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire's Job Satisfaction and Intention to Turnover Scales, Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scales, and Residence Director Self-Assessment of Synergistic Supervision. In addition to demographic

questions asked of both RAs and RDs, RDs were asked questions about how often they received formal supervision training.

There were four universities located in either Oklahoma or Texas that participated in this study. There were 20 RD participants with a response rate of 62.5%. Additionally, there were 63 RAs participants with a response rate of 21.2%. The surveys included 30 questions for the RD participants and 51 for the RA participants. For each research question, correlation was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 21 to determine the relationship between the two variables in each research question.

Summary of the Findings

After conducting statistical tests for each research question the following results were found. From the first research question, there was a moderate positive correlation ($r = .393$, $p < .01$) found between RAs' perception of synergistic supervision and the amount of training received by RDs. Per the second research question, RAs' perception of synergistic supervision had a strong negative correlation ($r = -.702$, $p < .001$) with role conflict. Similarly, for the third research question, RAs' perception of synergistic supervision had a strong negative correlation ($r = -.792$, $p < .001$) with role ambiguity. RAs' perception of synergistic supervision had a moderate negative correlation ($r = -.465$, $p < .001$) with intention to turnover for the fourth research question. For the fifth research question, the relationship between RAs' perception of synergistic supervision and

job satisfaction was a strong positive correlation ($r = .827$, $p < .001$). There was a weak positive relationship ($r = .233$, $p = .119$) for the sixth research question between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by the RAs and the perceived level of synergistic supervision given by the RDs. Finally, for the seventh research question, there was a weak positive relationship ($r = .173$, $p = .240$) between RD and RA job satisfaction.

Discussion

In the following sections, analysis of the findings in this study is provided. First, the demographics of the participants are discussed. Next, the research questions are divided into four sections: training, role ambiguity and role conflict, intention to turnover and job satisfaction, and relationship between RDs and RAs. Each section includes a discussion of the findings and relates the findings back to previous research.

Demographics

Participants for this study came from four universities in Oklahoma and Texas. All of the universities were member institutions of the Southwest Association of Colleges and Universities Housing Officers. The study included privately and publically funded institutions. Participation in the study was voluntary and varied from university to university. The following sections include a discussion of the details of the demographics in the follow categories: gender, ethnicity, amount of training, and institutional.

Gender. Females represented a majority of the RA participants compared to males and transgendered participants. However, over half of the RD participants identified as male. While only one participant identified as transgendered, this may have been because RAs and RDs often are placed in their designated communities based on gender, making it difficult in this culture not to identify as either male or female.

Ethnicity. Just over half of the RA participants identified as White or Caucasian. There were at least four participants from four other ethnicities including Hispanic American, Black/African American, and Native American/Asian American/Pacific Islander. The sample was pretty representative of the U.S. population with White and Caucasian and Black/African American being lower than the U.S. population and Biracial/Multiracial and Native American/Asian American/Pacific Islander being slightly higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). The original survey design had Native American as a separate classification from Asian American/Pacific Islander; however, an error in loading the survey in data collection software resulted in the three ethnicities listed in one category.

Amount of training. RDs were asked how often they received formal supervision training and where they received the training. Of the RDs that received training in their current position, 40% indicated receiving it once a semester; however, another 40% reported receiving no supervision training.

Similar numbers were reported when the RDs were asked about the training they received in graduate school. Of the RD participants, 40% had received no training in their current position, and 30% reported receiving training once a semester. Four participants reported receiving no training at any level.

Training

The first research question addressed the relationship between the amount of formal supervision training the RD had participated in and RA perception of synergistic supervision received. Consistent with other research, this study found that entry-level student affairs staff members received little professional development in supervision training (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Shupp & Arminio, 2012). For RDs, like most student affairs professionals, supervision encompasses much of their job responsibilities (Cooper et al., 2001), yet 40% of the RD participants had not received supervision training in graduate school and 40% had received no formal training in their current position. The findings of this study, that there is a positive correlation between perceived levels of synergistic supervision and the amount of training received, supports the belief that increased training can improve the level of supervision delivered by entry-level professionals.

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

The second and third research questions examined the relationship between synergistic supervision and role ambiguity and role conflict. From

previous research we know that less role ambiguity is correlated with higher job satisfaction (Brecheisen, 2015; Duluga & Winters, 1990). The findings in this study show that those RAs that report receiving a higher level of synergistic supervision reported lower level of role ambiguity. This is an important finding as the RA position has a lot of responsibilities that may lend itself to greater amount of job ambiguity and job dissatisfaction. This study shows that supervision is associated with the amount of role ambiguity in the RA position.

The RA position has many different responsibilities such as policy enforcement, community engagement, mediator, and counselor (Blimling, 2003). By of the nature of these responsibilities, there will be a time when there are competing priorities. For example, when an RA is helping a student that is dealing with homesickness one day and documenting them for violating policy the next day, there can be appear to be competing priorities. The caring compassionate role the RA is playing for the student is competing with the policy enforcement role where the student likely faces consequence for being documented for policy (e.g., university warning or fine). Role conflict can also impact RAs academically as the role of an RA can compete with their role as a student, which can lead to early departure from the RA position (Brecheisen, 2015; Schaller & Wagner, 2007).

Based on the impact that role conflict can play on the experience in the RA position, the findings in this study are important. Synergistic supervision emphasizes the importance of the dual focus on both the personal and professional

growth of the RA, and the current study found that the higher level of perceived level of synergistic supervision the RA received correlated to the less the amount of role conflict they have. Role conflict is a natural part of the RA position and the findings show that supervision may play a role in minimizing its impact on the RA.

Intention to Turnover and Job Satisfaction

The fourth and fifth research questions examined the relationship between synergistic supervision and both the intention to turnover and job satisfaction. When examining RA attrition, two important factors are intention of the staff member to leave their position and their job satisfaction (Tull, 2006). Collecting data from staff members that have already left a position can be difficult (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999). Using the Intention to Turnover scale gauges where the staff currently stands with whether they plan on leaving the job or not. RAs' perceived level of synergistic supervision received being negatively correlated with intention to turnover indicates that there is a relationship between supervision and intention to turnover between RDs and RAs. Tull (2006) found a significant relationship between synergistic supervision and intention to turnover with entry-level professionals in student affairs. This study's findings are consistent with that; however, the strength of the relationship was greater in this study. This indicates that the importance of synergistic supervision decreases the

intention of staff to leaving the position appear greater for paraprofessionals than for entry-level professionals.

Job satisfaction has shown to be positively correlated with perceived level of synergistic supervision received with entry-level professionals (Tull, 2006). In this current study, job satisfaction of RAs had a strong positive relationship with synergistic supervision. The strength of the relationship was higher than in Tull's (2006) study of entry-level professionals, suggesting the importance of good supervision is even more important for paraprofessionals.

Relationship between RDs and RAs

One area that had not been previously researched was the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and the self-perception of synergistic supervision delivered. Additionally, the study looked at the relationship between the job satisfactions of the RD and the RA. In order to be able to measure both of these relationships, the researcher needed to know which RAs were supervised by which RDs. Unlike other studies conducted (e.g., Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997), which were able to gather larger data sets based on only needing one end of the supervisory dyad, this study required having both sides of the dyad. The difficulty of this kind of data collection contributed to the lower total number of participants in the study.

This study developed a tool to measure the perceptions of the RD of their own synergistic supervision level based on Saunders et al.'s (2000) synergistic

supervision scale. There was not a significant relationship between synergistic supervision perceived by the RA versus the perceived level of synergistic supervision delivered by the RD, indicating that RA perceptions of the supervision they received is not related to how the RD perceives themselves administering the supervision. This is important as it underlines the complexity of the supervisory relationship and the difference between how a supervisor feels that they are interacting with their staff member and how the staff member perceives these interactions.

While a number of researchers have examined job satisfaction as it relates to supervision in student affairs (Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997), the relationship between job satisfaction between the RA and an RD had not been examined. This is likely because of the difficulty of setting up a study that collects data from both the employee and the supervisor. In the current study, no significant relationship was found between the job satisfaction of the RA and the job satisfaction of the RD. An explanation for this is that the job satisfaction for the overall RD job did not impact their supervision of the staff members, therefore not impacting the job satisfaction of the RA. For example, the RD may be very satisfied with supervising the RA staff members and not really enjoy the position because of the other administrative work they have to do or their relationship with their own supervisor. Another explanation is that the RDs with lower job

satisfaction in this study did not allow it to impact their performance in the position, including supervision.

Implications

The finding in this study showed significant relationships between the variables. There has been a limited amount of research conducted on supervision in student affairs, particularly on the supervisory relationship between RDs and RAs. In this study, research on synergistic supervision was built upon and expanded to the paraprofessional student staff population. Previous researchers of synergistic supervision had not focused specifically on the RA position, but instead focused on entry-level and mid-level staff members. The following section includes the implication of this study for research, practice, and theory.

Implications for Practice

In this study it was found that significant correlations exist between synergistic supervision and role conflict, role ambiguity, job satisfaction, and intention to turnover, illustrating that there is a relationship between supervision and job satisfaction factors. Synergistic supervision requires an investment of time by both the supervisor and supervisee. Communication, personal and professional development, and constructive feedback are difficult to do without consistently meeting and developing a solid working relationship (Winston & Creamer, 1997). RDs are responsible for a staff of RAs and those staff sizes vary. Supervision of the staff is an important responsibility of the RD; however, there

are a lot of other responsibilities that take up their time as well (Cawthon & Schreiber, 2012). Having a large staff makes the time the RD can spend with each RA staff member necessarily less when working the same amount of hours. Housing departments should monitor what the ideal staff size is for their campus based on the expectation they have for their RDs.

There have not been a lot of changes to the basic responsibilities by most housing departments over the past 30 years. RAs are the first line of contact with students for housing departments; therefore, it is important to have experienced staff able to handle the various situations that can occur in a residential community (Blimling, 2003). Reducing role ambiguity and role conflict and increasing job satisfaction (Brecheisen, 2015) increases the likelihood of keeping more experienced RAs on staff. Reducing the number of roles RAs are responsible for could reduce the role conflict they experience and allow for supervision and training of the RA to focus on fewer areas, helping to further reduce the role ambiguity experienced by RAs.

RDs typically live in the communities that they work and have a lot of responsibilities, including being on call for crisis response, administrative, community development, and staff hiring (Upcraft, 1982). With new overtime and salary restrictions brought on by a change in the Fair Labor Standards Act, campuses have been examining roles and responsibilities of their staff members. The nature of the RD position and compensation can make housing departments

make some tough decisions. Based on this study, departments should consider the supervision as an important role of the RD and consider what other roles they might alter to reduce the responsibilities in the RD position.

Due to the multifaceted work that is done by RDs and RAs, housing departments spend significant time in training. However, consistent with other studies, RDs are not getting much training either in graduate preparation programs or in their entry-level position (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Shupp & Arminio, 2012). While synergistic supervision is discussed frequently in supervision literature in student affairs, it is not widely known among practitioners in the field (Shupp & Arminio, 2012). While practitioners might be practicing elements of the synergistic supervision model, they may improve. The implementation of synergistic supervision training can help housing departments introduce the synergistic supervision model and supply language so that staff members can better understand the intentionality behind their supervision approach.

In a study of entry-level professionals, Davidson (2012) found that opportunities for promotions were better predictors of job satisfaction. While promotions may be different on the paraprofessional level than on the professional level, housing departments should look at ways to provide opportunities for RAs to receive promotions in their departments. For example, a lead or senior RA position that provides some peer-to-peer supervision could be created, or additional responsibilities such as oversight of the front desk of the

community could be offered to high functioning RAs. Combining opportunities for promotion with the synergistic supervision approach, which promotes growth and development areas for the RA, may increase RA job satisfaction.

Supervision is seen as an important role of student affairs professionals (Cawthon & Schreiber, 2012). In this study a number of positive relationships associated with synergistic supervision were highlighted. For greater improvement to occur in the quality of supervision, there needs to be a greater emphasis on training and skill development of supervisors.

Implications for Research

This study included an exploration of the literature in student affairs and student housing on supervision and attrition. Consistent with previous research, there was a significant relationship between synergistic supervision job satisfaction and the intention to turnover (Tull, 2006). Moreover, this study expanded the research on synergistic supervision to include paraprofessionals. More research utilizing a larger sample size to explore the supervision of paraprofessionals is merited based on these results. Additionally, there have been a number of researchers who examined role conflict and role ambiguity with RAs (Brecheisen, 2015; Deluga & Winters, 1990; Everett & Loftus, 2011). This study builds off of those studies to show a significant relationship with synergistic supervision.

The findings in this study support the findings of previous researchers who demonstrated a need for student affairs professionals to receive additional supervision training (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Shupp & Arminio, 2012). It is striking that 40% of the RDs surveyed had not received formal supervision training in their current job. Supervision of staff is a large part of the job of RD. However, while there is a relationship between higher levels of synergistic supervision and training in this study, the types of training that have the greatest impact are not known. This study provided additional evidence that there is a need for training on supervision, particularly for entry-level RDs.

Since Winston and Creamer (1997) conducted a large study that introduced student affairs to synergistic supervision, there have been a number of research articles published with positive results on the use of synergistic supervision. Additionally, there are number of dissertations that have been written over the years using synergistic supervision as its framework (e.g., Hall-Jones, 2011; Lane, 2010; Morgan, 2015). Unfortunately, these dissertations were not published in peer-reviewed journals. It is unknown whether the authors attempted to publish this research or if journals boards did not accept them for publication. Either way, those researchers writing their dissertations on synergistic supervision need to submit them for publication, and journal boards need to see the great importance that supervision plays in the field of student affairs. More published research on synergistic supervision can help practitioners and researchers

understand this theory and its implications in more depth. The major student affairs and housing professional organizations list supervision as one of their competencies for staff members. These professional organizations should consider funding research focused on supervision to help advance the research in student affairs. Supervision plays an important role in student affairs and additional research is needed on the impacts of training

This study for the first time looked at a supervisor's self-perception of synergistic supervision delivered. Past studies that have used the Synergistic Supervision Scale have listed as a limitation being that it only the measures the perceptions of the supervisee (Saunders et al., 2000). Utilizing the self-perception scale allows for further examination of the supervisory relationship from a different perspective than has been previously done. One suggested area for future research would be a study on the self-perception of synergistic supervision compared to the amount of training the supervisors have received, utilizing a large sample size.

Role ambiguity and role conflict are two important factors in the RA position related to job satisfaction (Deluga & Winters, 1990). In this study, the data showed a relationship between role ambiguity and role conflict with synergistic supervision. Future researchers should examine specific aspects of supervision, such as availability and approachability to see how they relate to role ambiguity and role conflict. This could help researchers better understand the

relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity and specific supervisory behaviors.

Implications for Theory

Winston and Creamer (1997) popularized the model of supervision called synergistic supervision. As of 2016, it continued to be the preferred model for researchers in student affairs. This study has two main implications for the theory of synergistic supervision: (a) extending the literature to the RD and RA relationship, and, (b) added a scale to explore the RD perception of the supervision they are delivering to RAs.

Winston and Creamer (1997) studied 937 university employees and looked at staffing practices in student affairs, but the study's most lasting effect was the advancement of theory of synergistic supervision. Saunders et al. (2000) advanced the synergistic supervision model by developing the Synergistic Supervision Scale, which helped researchers to understand better the perceptions of staff members receiving supervision. The research on synergistic supervision up to this point has focused on full-time staff members and their perceptions of the supervision that they have received. These findings expanded the research to include paraprofessionals who play a lot of important roles on campus. This is an important advancement of the theory as a whole.

The Synergistic Supervision Scale developed by Saunders et al. (2000) has been used in previous studies on synergistic supervision in student affairs (e.g.,

Tull, 2006). In this study, the survey was adjusted so that it could be used to gather the RDs' self-perceptions of their delivery of synergistic supervision. While the data did not show a statistically significant relationship between the RDs' and RAs' perception of synergistic supervision, it merits additional research. The lack of relationship supports the notion that the perceptions of the supervisee may not be the complete reality of the supervisory relationship (Saunders et al., 2000). Further research could help better understand where the difference lay between the perception of the supervisor and the supervisee. However, the use of the scale to measure the RDs' perception of synergistic supervision delivered provides new direction for possible research. Synergistic supervision appears still to be a good fit for not only student affairs professionals as a whole, but to housing staff specifically. While this study helped to advance the theory of synergistic supervision, there is still much more research needed.

Summary

Supervision is an important job function of student affairs professionals, including RDs (Cawthon & Schreiber, 2012). The supervision of RAs is particularly challenging as the RAs have a number of roles including being part-time employees and full-time students (Upcraft, 1982). Despite the importance of good supervision and difficulty of supervising RAs, there remains little research (Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003).

In this study, the job satisfaction factors that played into an RA's decision to stay in the position were examined as they related to synergistic supervision. The findings of this study showed that there is a relationship between synergistic supervision and lower role conflict, role ambiguity, lower intent to turnover, and higher job satisfaction. Additionally, it was found that the more supervision training received by the RD, the higher level of perceived synergistic supervision received by the RA. Role ambiguity, role conflict, intention to turnover, and job satisfaction literature showed that they are important measures for the retention of staff members. The findings showed that higher levels of synergistic supervision are related to the desired relationship with all of these factors. Additionally, consistent with the literature, the data showed that there is a lack of formal supervision training with entry-level staff members. However, the positive relationship between the amount of training received and the level of synergistic supervision received is encouraging.

This study contributes to Winston and Creamer's (1997) research on the synergistic model of supervision. There is a still much to learn about the impacts of supervision and the qualities of an effective supervisor. However, supervision is a skill that can be developed; the more tools given to a supervisor, the more likely he or she is to be successful. Additional research is needed on the impact of training and what areas of supervision are the most important for supervisors to develop. However, the findings of this study showed that there is a relationship

between supervision and job satisfaction factors among residence directors and resident assistants.

Appendix A

Synergistic Supervision Scale

Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston & Chernow, 2000)

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

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

1. My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
2. My supervisor works with me to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information he she feels is important.
3. My supervisor criticizes staff members in public.
4. My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution.
5. My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal or professional
6. My supervisor shows interests 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 (for example, parent or donor) and staff members, my supervisor supports external constituents even if they are wrong.
15. My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.
16. If I'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).

Appendix B

Residence Director Self-Assessment Supervision Scale

Residence Director Self-Assessment Supervision Scale

Directions: For each item select the one response that most closely reflects your approach as a supervisor. Respond using the following scale:

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

1. I include my staff in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
2. I work with staff members to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing the information I feel is important.
3. I criticize staff members in public.
4. I make certain that my staff is fully knowledgeable about the goals of the department, division, and institution.
5. I willingly listen to whatever is on the mind of my staff members, whether it is personal, professional or academic.
6. I show interest in promoting my staff members professional or career advancement.
7. I am personally offended if staff members question the wisdom of my decisions.
8. I show that I care about staff members as people.
9. I advocate for my residential community.
10. I expect staff members to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat."
11. I have favorites on the staff.
12. I break confidences.
13. I take negative evaluations of programs or staff and use them to make improvements.
14. When faced with a conflict between an external constituent (for example, parents) and staff members, I support external constituents even if they are wrong.
15. I am open and honest with my staff members about their strengths and weaknesses.
16. If a staff member is not careful, I may allow things that aren't their fault to be blamed on them.
17. I reward teamwork.
18. When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, I help staff members to devise ways to overcome barriers.

19. I look for staff members to make a mistake.
20. My staff members and I develop semesterly professional development plans that address the staff members' weaknesses or blind spots.
21. When problem solving, I expect staff to present and advocate differing points of view.
22. In conflicts with staff members, I take students' sides (even when they are wrong).

Appendix C

Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire

Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983)

Job Satisfaction

1. All in all, I am satisfied with my job
2. In general, I don't like my job
3. In general, I like working here

Intention to Turnover

1. How likely is it that you will actively look for a new job in the next year?
2. I often think about quitting
3. I will probably look for a new job in the next year.

Appendix D

Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale

Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983)

Responses are scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree).

Role Ambiguity

1. My authority matches the responsibilities assigned to me (R)
2. I don't know what is expected of me
3. My responsibilities are clearly defined (R)
4. I feel certain about how much authority I have (R)
5. I know what is my responsibilities are (R)
6. I have clear planned goals and objectives for my job (R)
7. The planned goals and objectives are not clear
8. I don't know how I will be evaluated for a raise or promotion
9. I know what is expected of me (R)
10. Explanations are clear of what has to be done (R)
11. My boss makes it clear how he will evaluate my performance (R)

Role Conflict

1. I often get myself involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements
2. There are unreasonable pressures for better performance
3. I am often asked to do things that are against my better judgment
4. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it
5. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment
6. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people
7. I have to do things that should be done differently under different conditions

Appendix E

Permission to Use the Synergistic Supervision Scale

Permission to Use the Synergistic Supervision Scale

Berg, Stephen A

To: Saunders, Sue
Subject: RE: Synergistic Supervision Scale

Dear Stephen,

You have my permission to use, edit, and reproduce the Synergistic Supervision Scale for the research described in your email.

I look forward to receiving the results of your study.

With best wishes,

Sue A. Saunders, Ph.D.
Extension Professor & Coordinator
Higher Education and Student Affairs Masters Program
Neag School of Education
Department of Educational Leadership
249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 3093
Storrs, CT 06260-3093

860-486-1241 (phone)
860-386-4028 (fax)

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Appendix F

Residence Director Survey

Residence Director Survey

Directions: For each item select the one response that most closely reflects your approach as a supervisor. Respond using the following scale:

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

1. I include my staff in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
2. I work with staff members to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing the information I feel is important.
3. I criticize staff members in public.
4. I make certain that my staff is fully knowledgeable about the goals of the department, division, and institution.
5. I willingly listen to whatever is on the mind of my staff members, whether it is personal, professional or academic.
6. I show interest in promoting my staff members professional or career advancement.
7. I am personally offended if staff members question the wisdom of my decisions.
8. I show that I care about staff members as people.
9. I advocate for my residential community.
10. I expect staff members to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat."
11. I have favorites on the staff.
12. I break confidences.
13. I take negative evaluations of programs or staff and use them to make improvements.
14. When faced with a conflict between an external constituent (for example, parents) and staff members, I support external constituents even if they are wrong.
15. I am open and honest with my staff members about their strengths and weaknesses.
16. If a staff member is not careful, I may allow things that aren't his/her fault to be blamed on him/her.
17. I reward teamwork.
18. When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, I help staff members to devise ways to overcome barriers.
19. I look for staff members to make a mistake.
20. My staff members and I develop semesterly professional development plans that address the staff members weaknesses or blind spots.

21. When problem solving, I expect staff to present and advocate differing points of view.
22. In conflicts with staff members, I take students' sides (even when they are wrong).
Directions: For each item select one response using the following scale:
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = neither agree nor disagree 5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree
23. All in all, I am satisfied with my job
24. In general, I don't like my job
25. In general, I like working here
Please complete the following demographic questions
26. Gender: Male, Female, Transgender
27. How long have you been in your current position: 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, more than 4 years
28. Where did you receive formal training on supervision (check all that apply): graduate school, previous employment, current job training, I have not received formal supervision training
a. If in graduate school ask: On average how many times a semester did you receive formal training on supervision in graduate school (check one)? Once a semester, Twice a semester, Three a semester, 4 times a semester, 5 or more times a semester
b. If in previous employment ask: On average how many times a semester did you receive formal training on supervision in your previous employment (check one)? Once a semester, Twice a semester, Three a semester, 4 times a semester, 5 or more times a semester
c. If in current job ask: On average how many times a semester do you receive formal training on supervision in your current job (check one)? Once a semester, Twice a semester, Three a semester, 4 times a semester, 5 or more times a semester
29. Please check the category that best describes your racial or ethnic background: White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Hispanic American, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Bi-racial or multiracial, Other-Specify
30. I would like to participate in a drawing for a visa gift card: Yes, No

Appendix G

Resident Assistant Survey

Resident Assistant Survey

Directions: For each item select the one response that most closely reflects your experience with your current supervisor. Respond using the following scale:
1 = Never (almost never) 2 = Seldom 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Always (almost always)

1. My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.
2. My supervisor works with me to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information he/she feels is important.
3. My supervisor criticizes staff members in public.
4. My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the department, division and institution.
5. My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal, professional, or academic.
6. My supervisor shows interests 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 advocates for my residential community.
10. My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat."
11. My supervisor has favorites on the staff.
12. My supervisor breaks confidences.
13. My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.
14. When faced with a conflict between an external constituent (for example, parents) 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).
Directions: For each item select one response using the following scale:
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = neither agree nor disagree 5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree
23. All in all, I am satisfied with my job
24. In general, I don't like my job
25. In general, I like working here
26. I often think about quitting
27. My authority matches the responsibilities assigned to me
28. I don't know what is expected of me
29. My responsibilities are clearly defined
30. I feel certain about how much authority I have
31. I know what my responsibilities are
32. I have clear planned goals and objectives for my job
33. The planned goals and objectives are not clear
34. I don't know how I will be evaluated for a raise or promotion
35. I know what is expected of me
36. Explanations are clear of what has to be done
37. My boss makes it clear how he/she will evaluate my performance
38. I often get myself involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements
39. There are unreasonable pressures for better performance
40. I am often asked to do things that are against my better judgment
41. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it
42. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment
43. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people
44. I have to do things that should be done differently under different conditions
For the following questions indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree using the following scale:
(1) Not at all likely (2) (3) Somewhat likely (4) (5) Quite Likely (6) (7) Extremely Likely
45. How likely is it that you will actively look for a new job in the next year?
46. I will probably look for a new job in the next year
Please complete the following demographics questions
47. Gender: Male, Female, Transgender

48. How long have you reported to your current direct supervisor (count the current semester as a full semester)? 1 semester 2 semesters, 3 semesters, 4 semesters, More than 4 semesters
49. Please check the category that best describes your racial or ethnic background: White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Hispanic American, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Bi-racial or multiracial, Other-Specify
50. What is your current academic standing: First year, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate Student
51. I would like to participate in a drawing for a visa gift card: Yes, No

Appendix H

Institutional Review Board Permission

Institutional Review Board Notification of Exemption

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ARLINGTON

March 7, 2016

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION REGULATORY SERVICES

Stephen A. Berg
Dr. Casey Graham Brown
Educational
Leadership & Policy
Studies Box 19575

Protocol Number: 2016-0251

Protocol Title: *An Exploration of the Relationship between Supervision and Job Satisfaction Indicators among Residence Directors and Resident Assistants*

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, or designee, has reviewed the above referenced study and found that it qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You are therefore authorized to begin the research as of **March 7, 2016**.

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(iii), investigators are required to, "promptly report to the IRB ***any*** proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval**

except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject." All proposed changes to the research must be submitted via the electronic submission system prior to implementation. Please also be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services within 24 hours of the occurrence or upon acknowledgement of the occurrence. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subject Protection (HSP) Training on file with this office. Completion certificates are valid for 2 years from completion date.

Since you are recruiting students who are enrolled in universities outside of UTA, you must contact their IRB office to see if their university has additional policies for recruiting students. If there are any updates that you need to make to this IRB protocol before recruiting their students (based on their policies), please send a modification request to UTA IRB for this protocol.

REGULATORY SERVICES SERVICES

The University of Texas at Arlington, Center for Innovation
202 E. Border Street, Ste. 201, Arlington, Texas 76010, Box#19188
(T) 817-272-3723 (F) 817-272-5808 (E) regulatoryservices@uta.edu (W) www.uta.edu/rs

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Regulatory Services at regulatoryservices@uta.edu or 817-272-210

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