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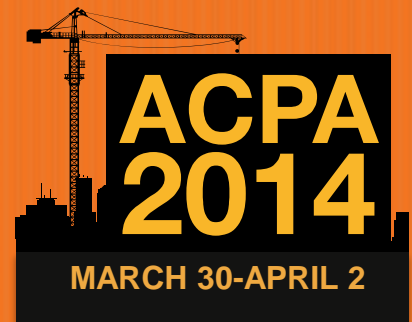
Synergistic Supervision…
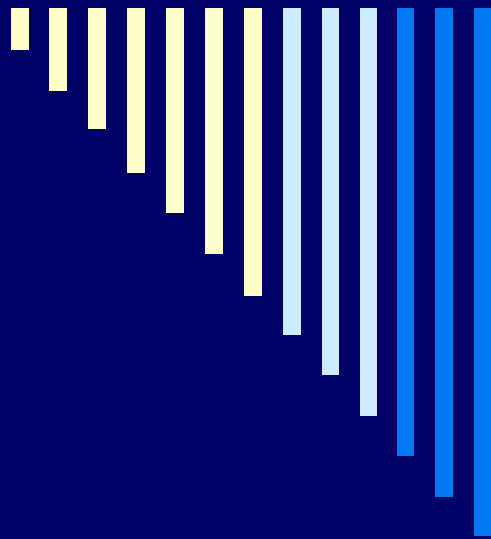
…in the Supervisory Relationship

RETAINING ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS
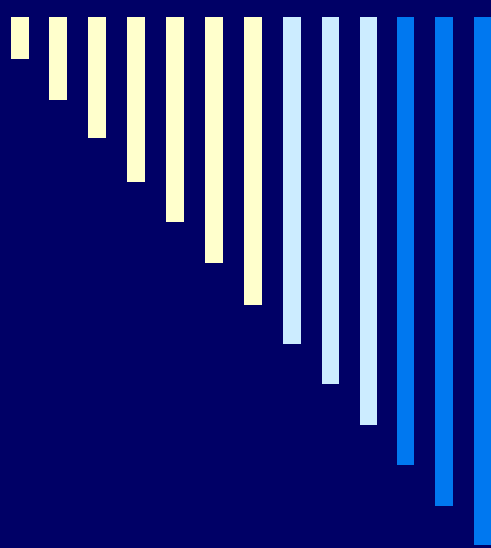
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April, 2014

Goals of Presentation

- **Define** *Synergistic Supervision*
- **Recognize valuable practices of supervision**
- **Frame these practices within the** *Synergistic Supervision* **model**
- **Provide recommendations to supervisors**

Office Space, 1999

Background / Personal Reflection
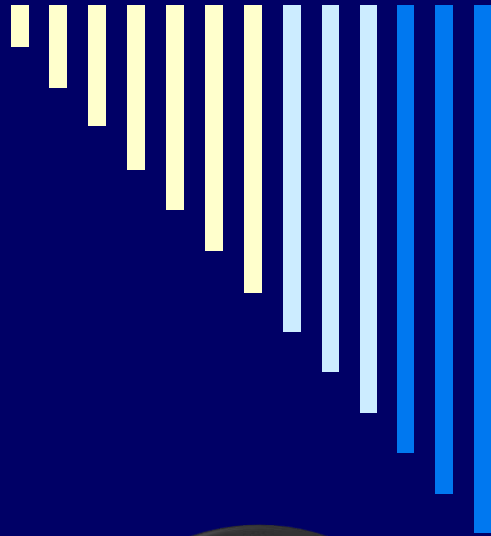
Memories of Supervision

- **Effective / Competent Supervisors**
  - What made them effective or competent?

- **Ineffective / Incompetent Supervisors**
  - What made them ineffective or incompetent?

Genesis of Presentation

Entry-level…staff are the profession's future and seasoned professionals must lay a strong supervisory foundation. Supervision has received little attention in the literature even though practitioners spend substantial time supervising.

Supervision

An ongoing process providing guidance and direction while overseeing the performance or operation of a person or group with the intended outcome of both employee and institutional accomplishment (Shupp, 2008)
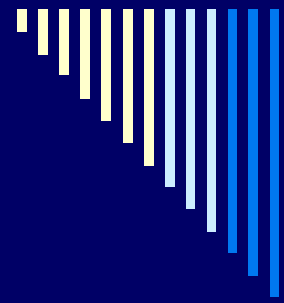
Supervision

An ongoing process providing guidance and direction while overseeing the performance or operation of a person or group with the intended outcome of both employee and institutional accomplishment (Shupp, 2008)

Receiving Supervision – and Receiving it Early – is Important: Some of the Research

• "Personal and professional education begins in graduate preparation programs and extends throughout a person's professional career" (Bryan and Schwartz, 1998, p. 99)

• "With the right supervisor, all kinds of opportunities to explore the [higher education] field…become available" (Birch, 1984, p. 46).

• "The supervision that developing professionals receive is important for learning and mastering the craft of their profession" (Ignelzi, 1998, p. 2).

But…

Genesis of Presentation
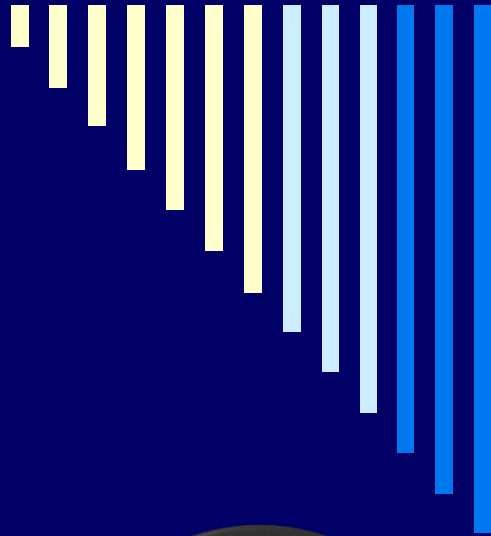
Supervision has received little attention in the literature even though practitioners spend substantial time supervising.

Barriers to Supervision
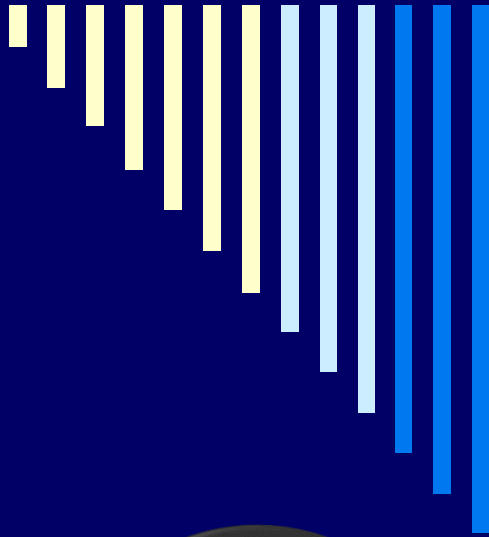
- **Lack of supervision / direction out of graduate school for new professionals**
- **Supervisor with a lack of understanding of the profession**
- **Lack of communication**
- **Lack of focus on supervisee / lack of time spent with supervisee**
- **Close mindedness and lack of trust**

A Bug's Life, 1998

Synergistic Supervision

A cooperative effort between the supervisor and supervisee with a focus on *joint-effort, two-way communication, and competency and goals* (for the betterment of the organization and individual) (Winston and Creamer, 1998)

Emergent Themes Compared with Characteristics of Synergistic Supervision

- Supervisor Accessibility

   (Helping Process)

- Meaningful Interaction with Supervisor

   (Cooperative Effort)

- Utilization of Formal Evaluations

   (Focus on Competence / Goals)

- Providing Unique Supervision

   (Joint Effort / Two-way Communication)

- Providing Professional Development Opportunities
   (Focus on Competence and Goals)
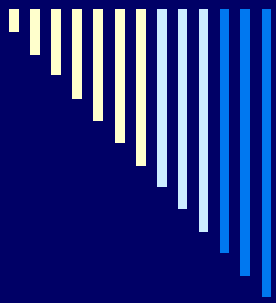
Emergent Themes Explained…

- **Claire**: *"I enjoyed my weekly supervision because we…discussed…information from [my graduate] classes that I was learning and could incorporate into my position."*

- **Jack**: *"Supervision was viewed as a very beneficial tool in our study / professional development. We were able to discuss content from class and apply it directly to our internship experiences."*

- **Claire**: *"…When I had ideas of programming, I was usually awarded those opportunities [to pursue them]."*

- **Sun**: *"I liked that I had a set time to meet with my supervisor."*

- **Jack**: *"The most frustrating part of my supervision is that my supervisor is very involved in a lot of different things…I typically just get a few minutes to briefly describe a situation instead of having a complete conversation."*

Case Study – Meet Charlye

Charlye is an entry-level student affairs professional, a recent graduate from a prestigious higher education graduate program, and has been hired as the new Admissions Counselor in your office. You are the Director of Enrollment Services at a satellite campus of a large 4-year institution. You have seen a steady decrease in student enrollment over the last 4 years and it has taken the institution 1.5 years to fill Charlye's position. Financial constraints held up the hiring process for quite some time and you had to fight for this position not to be eliminated. You are well-aware of how important this position is to your recruitment schedule and you need Charlye out on the road "making the numbers." However, while Charlye was, by far, the "shining star" among the others in the candidate pool, Charlye expressed the need/want/desire for a great deal of supervisor contact while in the office. Charlye is able to function - in fact, thrive - in this autonomous position, but finds greatest success from a supervisory relationship grounded in the tenets of SS.

Questions to consider:

- How might you approach supervision with Charlye using a Synergistic Supervision lens?
    - Is this even possible given the unique model of Enrollment Services?
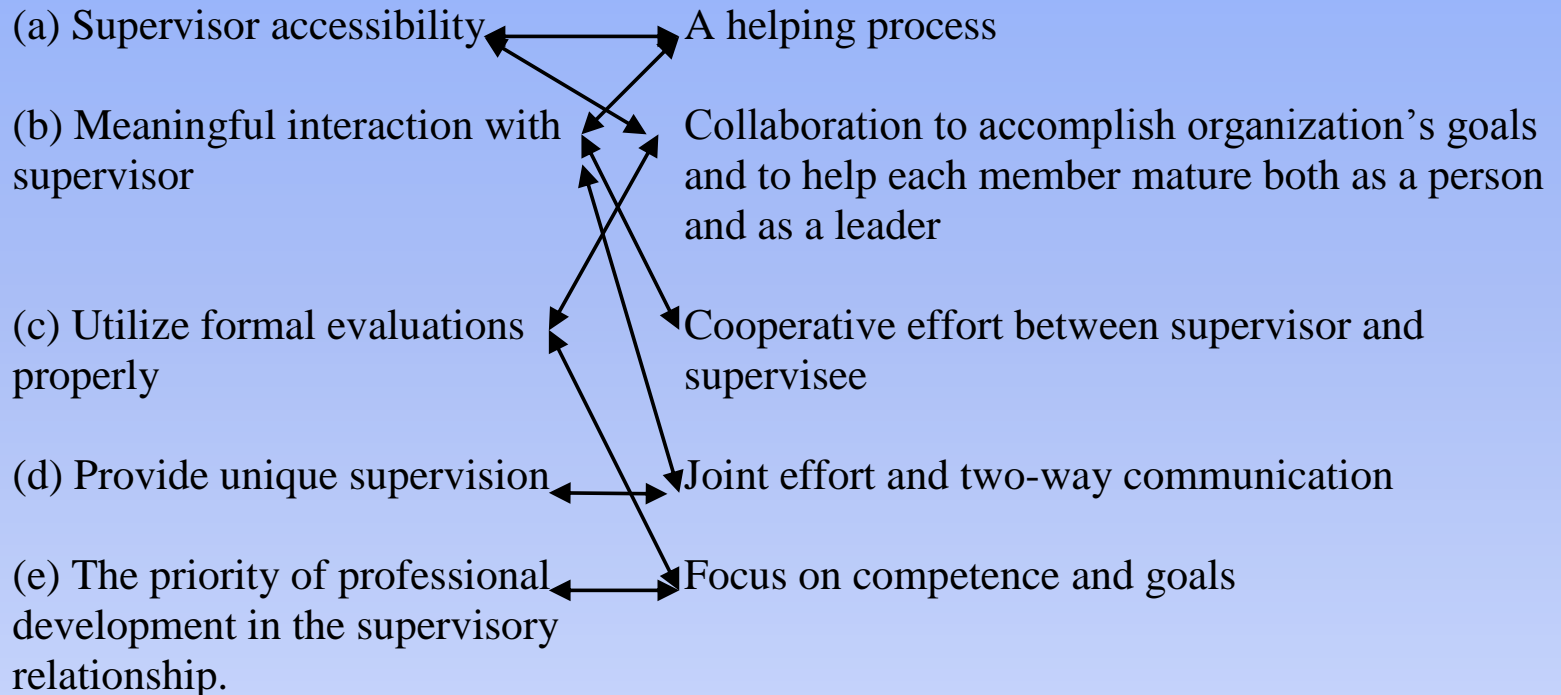- What else might you need to consider in this situation?
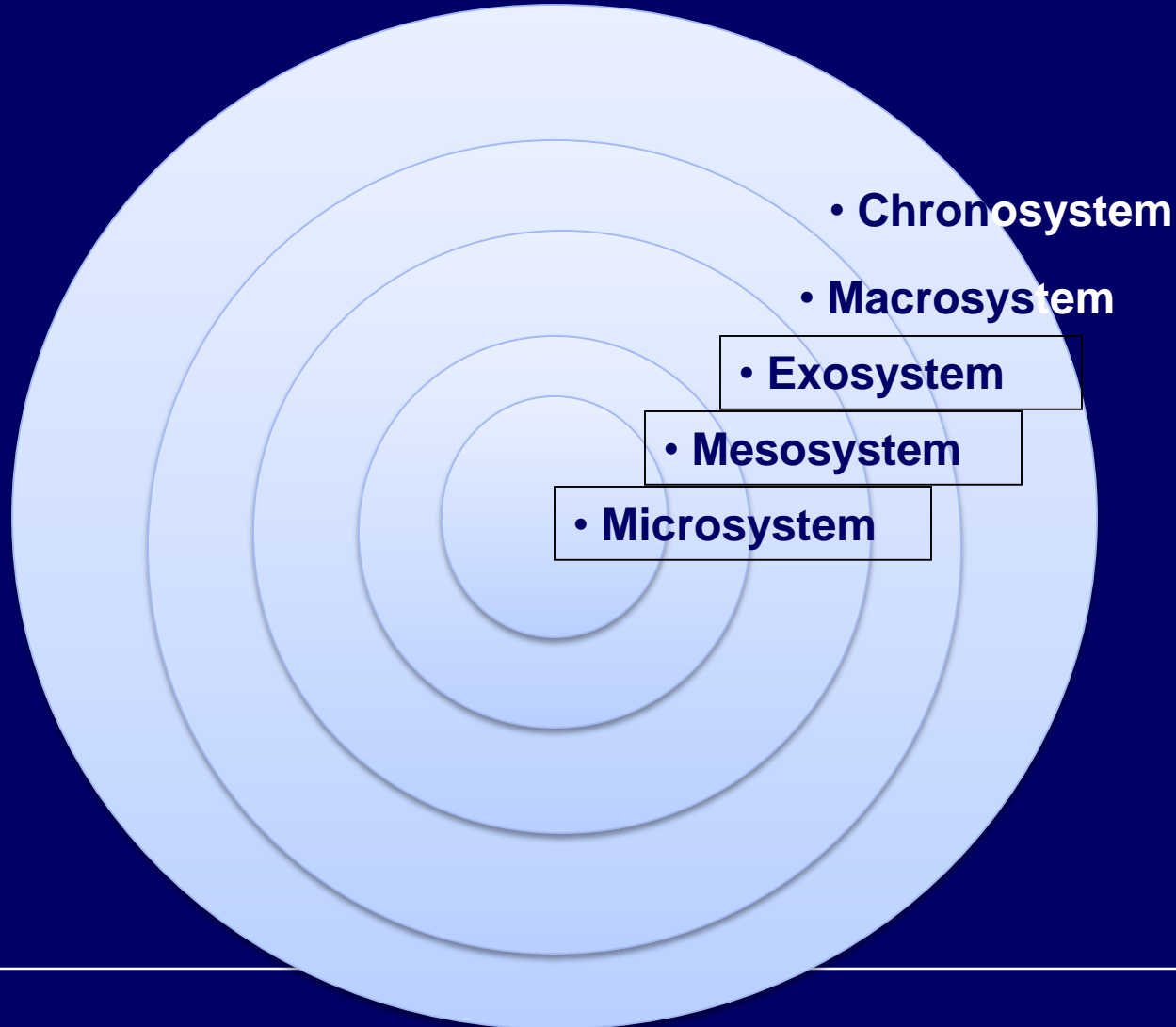
Bronfenbrenner's Spheres of Influence

- Decade, generation
- Ideologies
- Indirect contact
- Direct
- Immediate
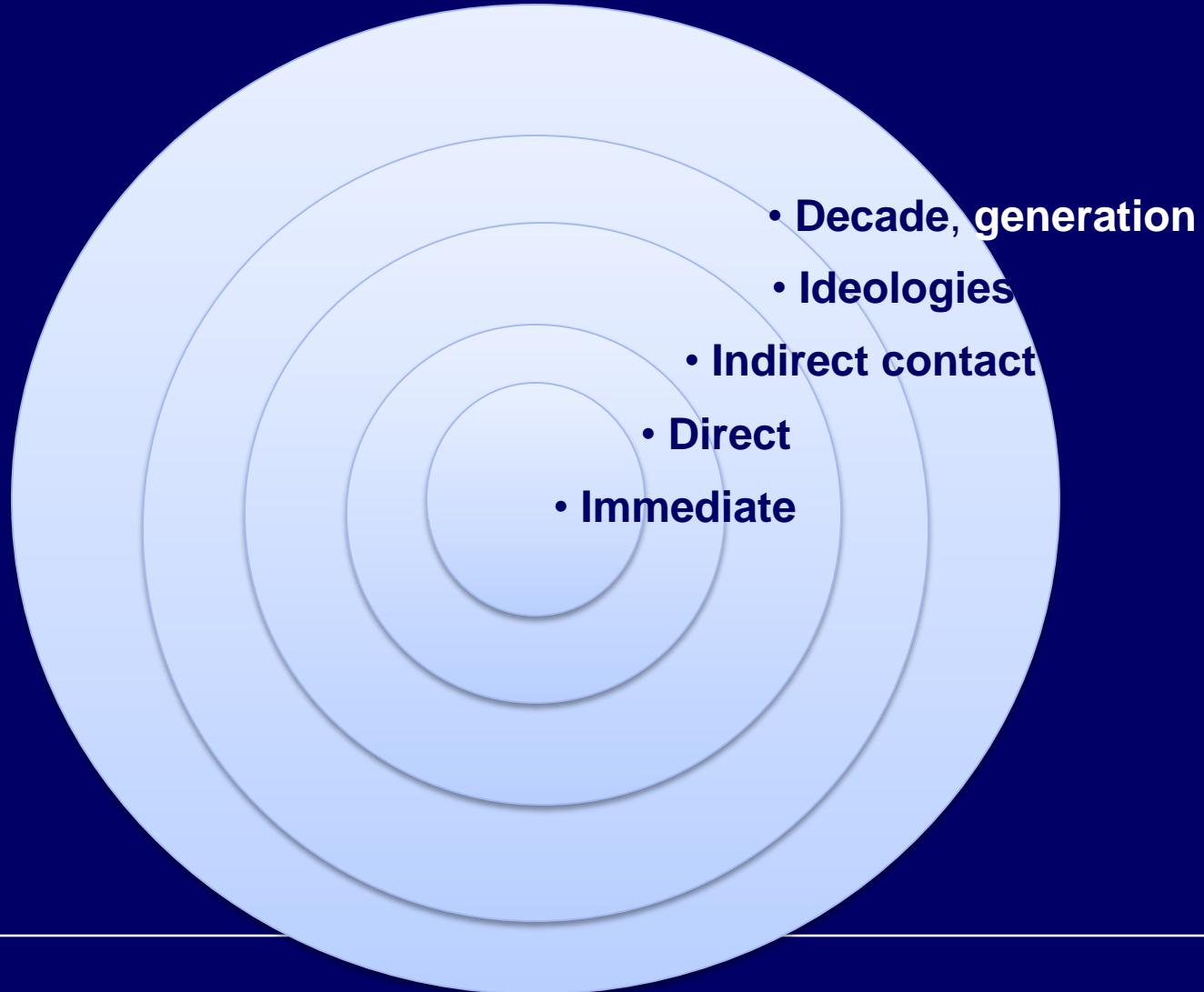
Comparison of Supervisee Needs That Emerged From Qualitative Interviews with Characteristics of Synergistic Supervision.
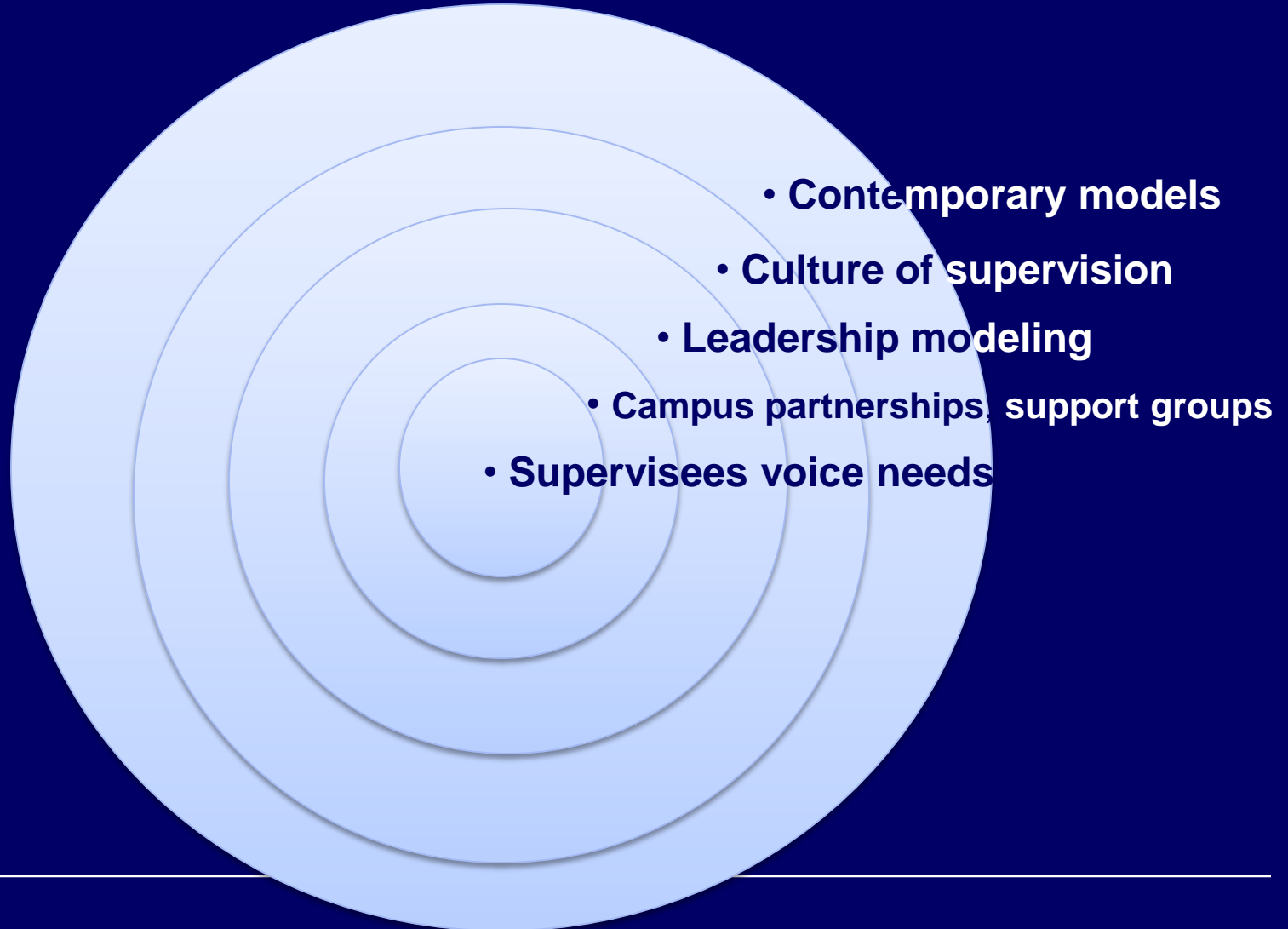
Qualitative interview themes   Characteristics of synergistic supervision

(a) Supervisor accessibility   A helping process

(b) Meaningful interaction with   Collaboration to accomplish organization's goals
supervisor   and to help each member mature both as a person
                                                and as a leader

(c) Utilize formal evaluations   Cooperative effort between supervisor and
properly   supervisee

(d) Provide unique supervision   Joint effort and two-way communication

(e) The priority of professional   Focus on competence and goals
development in the supervisory
relationship.

Bronfenbrenner's Spheres of Influence

- Chronosystem

- Macrosystem

- Exosystem

- Mesosystem

- Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner's Spheres of Influence

- Contemporary models
- Culture of supervision
- Leadership modeling
- Campus partnerships, support groups
- Supervisees voice needs

Implications for Future Practice – Bronfenbrenner's Model (1979)

Giving voice to

supervision needs

- Creating mesosystems that encourage Synergistic Supervision by establishing campus partnerships

# Implications for Future Practice – Bronfenbrenner's Model (1979)

- Influencing the exosystem to encourage Synergistic Supervision
  - Make an institutional commitment to formal and structured supervision at all levels
  - Find value in administering formal performance evaluations
  - Provide on-going supervisory training and staff development
  - Conduct on-going assessment of supervision
  - Strengthen graduate school internship field placement supervision
  - Focus on theory to practice

Implications for Future Research
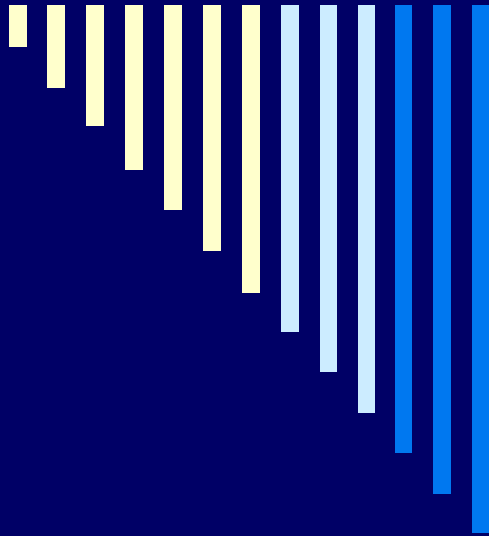
- ***Synergistic Supervision: A Cross-Cultural Study***
- **Similar sample size**
- **Same method of participant inclusion with *additional criteria***
- **Same Methodology**
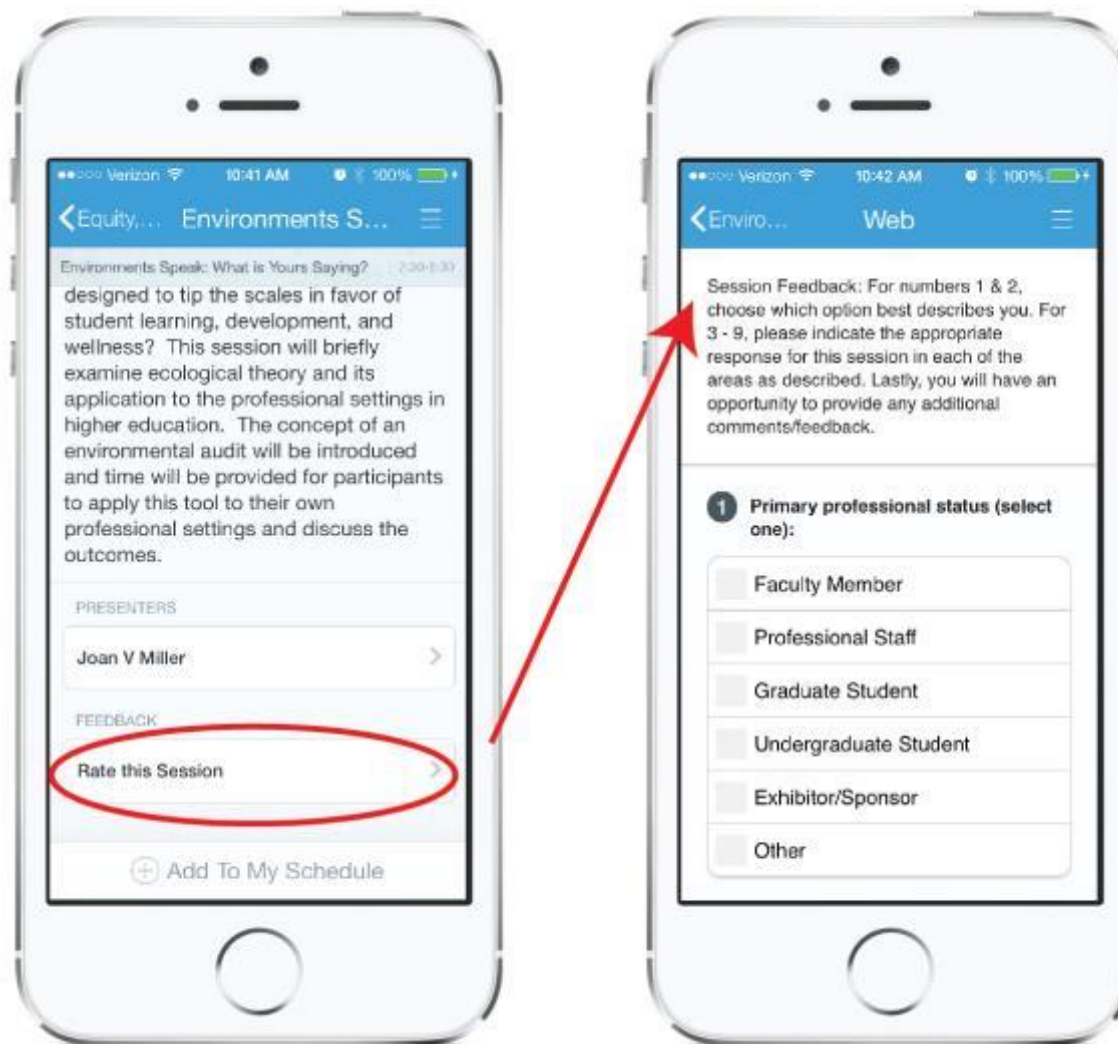- **Timeline: Spring '14 – Fall '14**

Questions? Thank you!
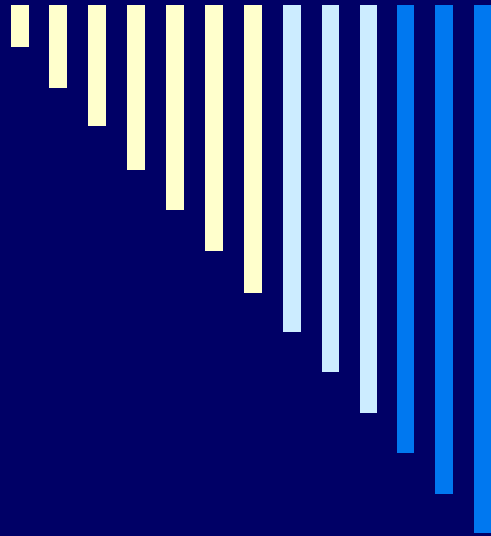
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