

INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PREDICTORS OF VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AMONG STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

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Staff participation in professional development is critical for the success of divisions of student affairs and institutions of higher education at large. However, mandating participation can lead to adverse effects and hostile workplace climates. This study examined what individual and organizational culture factors predicted participation in voluntary professional development activities among 354 student affairs professionals at 14 public and private higher education institutions. Implications for higher education leadership and recommendations for best practice are discussed.

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As organizations, institutions of higher education are experiencing rapid amounts of change that impacts staff (College Student Educators International; Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2015). Stakeholders in government and industry are pressuring institutions to be more accountable, more efficient, and more productive while maintaining a focus on quality (Blakewood Pascale & Morse, 2018; King & Alexander, 2000; Huisman & Currie, 2004). Increased calls for accountability in institutions of higher education, from various stakeholders including students, parents, community members, and law makers require campuses to be transparent regarding performance (Mallory & Clement, 2016).

Meeting these accountability demands and pressures requires employees at institutions to change and adapt to keep current with changes in state and federal governments. Unfortunately, however, change and adaptation does not occur naturally in professional settings on higher education campuses— training and development opportunities must be offered, encouraged, and in some instances required by administration. Furthermore, researchers who advocate for ample training and development opportunities in divisions of student affairs warn that without, student affairs staff are apt to become less motivated and prepared in their positions (Winston & Creamer, 1997), more resistant to change (Burke, 2014), and are more susceptible to burnout and turnover (Renn & Hodges, 2007). Overall, the welfare and success of divisions of student affairs, and by proxy institutions of higher education at large, depends on student affairs personnel doing their jobs well, carrying out their duties and responsibilities with excellence, and without error (Winston & Creamer, 1998). To achieve these outcomes, staff training and development is integral. If highly skilled and talented staff members are not “nurtured, supported, and challenged once employed, they will generally regress to the institutional norm of mediocrity or leave

for a more hospitable professional environment” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 18).

Though the need for training and development opportunities in higher education is evident, simply providing opportunities does not guarantee employee participation. Furthermore, forced participation in trainings and professional development activities can lead to frustration among staff and can promote militant or inhospitable cultural climates (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

This study leans on Kurt Lewin’s field theory, which explains behavior as a function of the person and the environment (Lewin, 1976) to approach inquiry into the problem of student affairs staff training and development voluntary participation. From Lewin’s perspective, to create professional milieus most conducive to training and development, it is important to identify the factors at both individual and organizational cultural levels that are predictive of participatory behavior (Lewin, 1976). While there has been an abundance of research investigating training and development participation in professional organizational or in corporate settings, far less empirical information is available to aid student affairs administrators who seek to increase levels of training and development within their institutions (Winston & Creamer, 1997). This study is designed to provide insight into this problem and to provide informed recommendations for increasing levels of voluntary student affairs staff training and development participation. Two questions guide this inquiry:

1. What individual factors are predictive of student affairs employee voluntary participation in training and professional development?
2. What organizational factors are predictive of student affairs employee voluntary participation in training and professional development?

Theoretical Framework

Lewin’s field theory has been used by various researchers and practitioners to

understand behavior and implement behavioral change (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Elie-Dit-Cosaque, Pallud & Kalika, 2012). Lewin believed that all behavior stems from the psychological forces in a person's life space, and that behavioral change is highly influenced by the changes to those psychological forces (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Cartwright, 1976; Elie-Dit-Cosaque et al., 2012). To fully comprehend this concept, it is important to understand "life space" and how it is developed. Life space is inclusive of the aspects of a person's environment that are perceived either consciously or unconsciously (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Elie-Dit-Cosaque et al., 2012). Lewin suggested that by looking at people holistically— as individuals who contain both internal and external psychological forces—and including interactions with their environment you could construct their life space, and in turn, predict and/or modify human behavior (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Elie-Dit-Cosaque et al., 2012). Furthermore, Lewin asserted that changes in behavior are dependent on modifications to the environment (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Elie-Dit-Cosaque et al., 2012). Lewin summed up field theory with an equation where he describes behavior as a function of the person and his or her environment, or $B = f(P, E)$. For student affairs professionals, their university work environment can be conceived of as critical to their life space, as are their personal, individual characteristics. Thus, from a Lewinian frame, it stands that altering the student affairs work environment (i.e., organizational culture) can lead to changes in behavior (e.g., voluntary participation in professional development).

Review of Relevant Literature

The review of relevant literature is guided by the theoretical framework, Kurt Lewin's field theory, and can generally be arranged into the following three areas: (a) studies about individual level factors influencing participation in training and development, (b) studies about organizational level factors that influence participation in

training and development, and (c) studies describing the current contextual climates of divisions of student affairs and the role of staff training and development. Together these bodies of literature inform the conceptual model for this study.

Individual Level Predictors of Training and Development

A large body of research has examined how individual level characteristics such as age or position level (Renaud, Lakhdari, & Morin, 2004; Tharenou, 1997), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Birdi, Allan, & Warr 1997; Dubin, 1990; Maurer, Wess, & Barbeite, 2003; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Sankey & Machin, 2014; Tharenou, 1997; Tharenou, 2001) and learning preparedness (Hezlett, Koonce, & Kuncel, 1996; Maurer et al., 2003; Noe & Wilk, 1993) are related to corporate employee participation in training and development. For example, several researchers found inverse relationships between age and employee participation in training and development (Maurer et al., 2003; Renaud et al., 2004; Tharenou, 1997). That is, the older the employee, the less inclined they were to participate. However, position level tends to be positively correlated with participation in training with those holding higher level positions more inclined to participate (Maurer et al., 2003; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Renaud et al., 2004; Tharenou, 1997). Additionally, factors such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and learning preparedness have been shown to be related to participation and development. While some literature supports the idea that internal factors such as motivation can mediate the effects that work environment factors have on participation (Maurer et al., 2003; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 2001), additional research successfully models direct relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and training and development participation (Renaud et al., 2004; Tharenou, 1997). Previous participation in training in development (e.g., learning preparedness) has also been shown to be a powerful indicator of future

participation (Maurer et al., 2003).

Organizational Level Predictors of Training and Development

A substantial amount of research has been conducted to analyze the relationship between organizational culture and the effects certain factors within culture have on employee behavior (Baek-Kyoo & Ji, 2010; Drzensky, Egold, & Van, 2012; Erwin, 2011; Mahal, 2009; Mohanty & Rath, 2012; Nayir & Herzig, 2012; Santos, Hayward, & Ramos, 2012; Shapiro, Ingols, O'Neill, & Blake-Beard, 2009; Tseng & Fan, 2011; Ye, 2012). These studies indicate that organizational leadership or supervisors can cultivate the organizational culture, and their practices can highly influence employee behavior in numerous ways. By establishing sound values and ethical practices, leaders create a positive working environment that can lead to obtaining desirable effects from their employees (Crain, Martinson, & Thrush, 2013). Several organizational related factors have been shown to have a relationship with employee participation in training and development activities including: (a) supervisor support (Kozlowski & Farr, 1998; Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Maurer et al., 2003; Montesino, 2002; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 1997; Tharenou, 2001), (b) co-worker support (Leibowitz, Farren, & Kaye, 1986; Kozlowski & Farr, 1988; Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Maurer et al., 2003; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou et al., 1994; Tharenou, 1997), (c) situational constraints and barriers (Birdi et al., 1997; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 2001), (d) organizational policies and regulations (Maurer et al., 2003; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Montesino, 2002; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 1997), and (e) job challenge (Kozlowski & Farr, 1988; Kozlowski & Hults, 1987).

Contextual Culture of Student Affairs

While a plethora of research exists regarding training and development of corporate staff, far less information is available related specifically to student affairs.

However, some research within the field has provided insight into current issues and challenges faced by divisions of student affairs on college campuses. For instance, according to Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, and Lowery (2016), 60% of new professionals in student affairs left higher education before within 10 years with extreme hours leading to burnout, non-competitive salaries, or attractive career alternatives cited as the top three reasons for leaving. Another issue facing student affairs organizations, like many other organizations, is a lack of staff preparedness (Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). External pressures can challenge divisions of student affairs to change and adapt with new demands at a rapid rate (Jose & Mampilly, 2015). These organizational changes often require repositioning staff, putting staff in into new positions, giving staff new tasks or completely new roles, and requiring staff to offer new services and different resources based on student needs. Kuk et al., (2010) indicate that staff preparedness is a concept that is often overlooked when staff experience changes in their daily work and tasks.

Together, these bodies of literature form the basis for our study. Drawn from the literature, Figure 1 illustrates how we conceptually organized the individual level and organizational cultural level independent variables in relation to the dependent variable, voluntary participation in training and development among student affairs professionals.

Methods

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument was developed utilizing a web-based survey platform. The full survey consisted of 83 items contained within nine different sections, each aligned to one of the nine variables included in the conceptual model. Survey items were informed by two studies that investigated individual and organizational cultural level factors that predicted training and development participation in the corpo-

rate sector (Tharenou & Conroy, 1994; Tharenou, 2001).

Dependent Variable. Survey items for the dependent variable, voluntary participation in training and development, were selected from Tharenou and Conroy's (1994) instrument. The original instrument asked six questions to measure participation in training and development activities, but for the purposes of this study was modified to three questions which included participation only in on-site, off-site, or at meeting and conferences. According to Tharenou and Conroy (1994), the other three survey items were intended to measure job-related internal training opportunities. Considering the aim of this study is to capture volunteer related participation in training and development, the original instrument was modified to better fit the design of this study.

Independent Variables. The independent variables were arranged into three groups. The first were the individual demographic variables. This section consisted of 11 items and included variables that have been shown to influence training and development in corporate sectors (Tharenou & Conroy, 1994). Some examples of these variables included age, education level, and time with the organization. Additionally, because student affairs attracts individuals from various educational backgrounds (Kuk et al., 2010), a demographic question regarding educational background was added to gain a deeper understanding about how educational background influences participation in professional development in student affairs.

The second individual group section included seven items to measure intrinsic motivation and additional items to measure extrinsic motivation. Items for this section were drawn from Tharenou's (2001) study that measured extrinsic motivation, also known as motivation through expectation.

The third group of items measured various organizational cultural variables that have been shown to predict training and development in corporate settings (Noe &

Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 2001). The supervisor support section included 13 items and measured the perceived level of supervisor support that exists in the participant's organizational culture. The co-worker support section included five items measuring the perceived level of co-worker support that exists in the organization. The policies and regulations section included six items that collected information related to the participant's organizational culture with regard to the management policies. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements related to the supportive nature of the policies and regulations on their campus. The situational constraints section included eight items that collected information regarding the constraints that may exist in a person's work environment. Participants were asked if they believe organizational constraints such as insufficient funds or a lack of time prohibits them from participating in training and development. Finally, the barriers section included 11 items that consisted of questions associated with perceived barriers that exist in the workplace that may prevent participation in training and development activities.

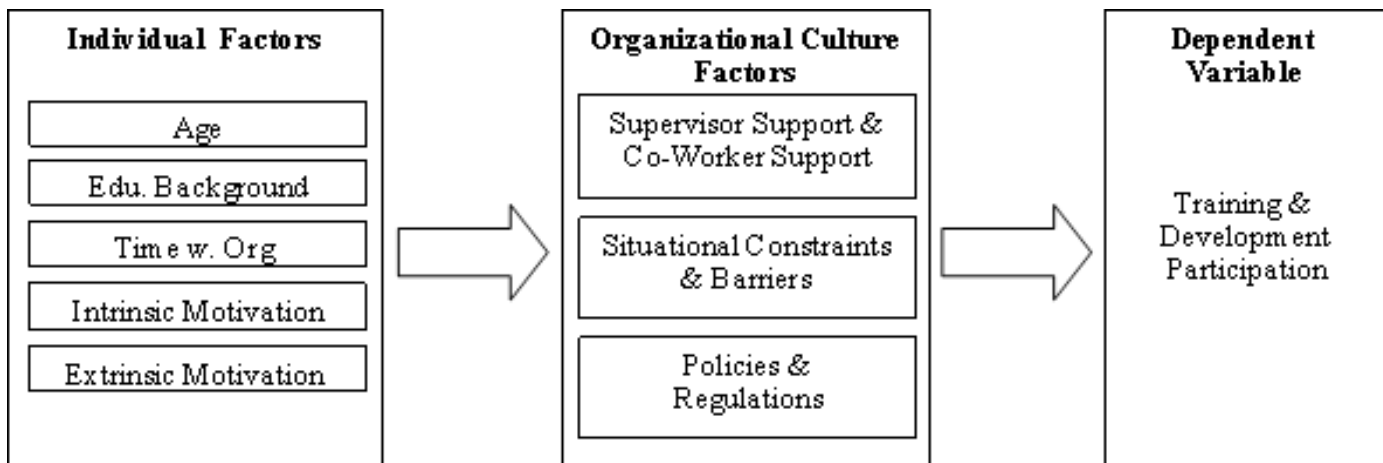
Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative methodological design. The model included individual factors (age, level in organization, time in position, time with organization, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and educational background), and organizational factors (supervisor support, co-worker support, situational constraints and barriers, and policies and regulations). Hierarchical multiple linear (HML) regression was performed to determine if the individual and organizational factors predicted voluntary participation in training and development among student affairs professionals.

Data Collection

The data collection process was executed through email and utilized a web-based survey instrument. The researchers

Figure 1. Student Affairs Training and Development Model



obtained emails for each schools' senior student affairs officers (SSAO) through the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) member directory or the institution's website. The SSAO was emailed an invitation letter that invited them to have their division participate in the study. The email outlined the purpose of the study, outlined the confidentiality measures in place, shared the IRB certificate for the study, and asked the SSAO to serve as the representative for the institution. The school representative communicated the study to their divisional employees by forwarding emails sent from the researchers. Student affairs employees could choose to participate in the study by clicking on the link in their invitation email.

Data Analysis

The responses from the web-based survey were downloaded and exported from the online survey platform (Qualtrics) and transferred to IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. First, data were cleaned and cases with missing data removed for analysis. Next, to prepare for the hierarchical multi-linear (HML) regression analysis, several factor analyses were run to determine if scaling items into larger variables was appropriate. Guided by the

results of the factor analysis, Cronbach's alphas were run to assess reliability of the scales. Table 1 reports the alpha values for all scales.

While most alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold value of .70 (Muijs, 2011), the training and development scale fell slightly below. This is likely because the questions in this section each measured a different aspect of participation in training and professional development activities. For example, question one intentionally measures the amount of divisional participation an employee engages in, while question two measures non-divisional participation, and question three addresses the amount of conference and off-site activity. Despite these differences, considering the intent of this scale was to determine the overall scope of participation in training and development, the slightly low Cronbach's alpha value was non-problematic, and thus the decision to proceed with scaling was justified.

Validity of the survey instrument was addressed by soliciting input from two student affairs experts. The experts were asked to score each section on a scale of 0-10. A score of 10 indicated the section captured the intended content. The scores from each expert were added together and divided by the total sum to derive a percentage of ac-

curacy. The training and development section was rated as .85, intrinsic motivation as .75, extrinsic motivation as .80, supervisor support as .85, co-worker support as .85, policies/regulations as .80, situational constraints as .90, and barriers as .80. Based on their feedback, some of the questions were reworded to aid in readability. Overall, the experts indicated that the survey instrument was valid, acceptable and appropriate for the stated aims of the study.

Next, regression diagnostics were conducted to determine if all six assumptions for regression were met. Diagnostics indicated that there were multicollinearity problems. The multicollinearity problems were resolved by removing conflicting variables and combining the organizational variables of supervisor support and co-worker support to make a new variable (supervisor and co-worker support, $\alpha = .925$), and creating another new variable by combining the situational constraints variable and barriers variables (situational constraints and barriers, $\alpha = .918$).

Analysis of the Analytical Model

Analysis of the analytical model proceeded in two steps. First, descriptive statistics were calculated on all variables. On

average, student affairs professionals reported participating in close to ten training and development activities per year ($M = 9.81$). Means and standard deviations for all variables are included in Table 2.

Step two of the analysis was the HML regression. Variables were entered into the model in two blocks. First, the individual factors (i.e., age, educational background, time with organization, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation) were regressed on voluntary participation in training and development. The individual factors model (Model 1) was statistically significant, $F(5, 348) = 5.140, p < .001$ and explained close to 7% of the variance in student affairs employee voluntary participation in training and development ($R^2 = .069, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .055$). Finally, the full model (Model 2) which included individual factors (age, educational background, time with organization, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation) together with the organizational culture factors (supervisor/co-worker support, situational constraints/barriers, and policies/regulations) was regressed on participation in training and development. Model 2 was also statistically significant, $F(3, 345) = 7.432, p < .001$ and explained 12.5% of the variance in voluntary participation in training

Table 1	
<i>Reliability Statistics for Conceptual Model Variables</i>	
Scales based on survey sections	α
Training and Development	0.572
Intrinsic Motivation	0.771
Extrinsic Motivation	0.844
Supervisor Support	0.943
Co-worker Support	0.797
Policies & Regulations	0.792
Situational Constraints	0.787
Barriers	0.902

Note: Cronbach alphas (α) greater than .70 are acceptable (Muijs, 2011).

and development among student affairs employees ($R^2 = .125$, adjusted $R^2 = .105$). Table 3 includes the HML regression model statistical values.

Two variables, intrinsic motivation ($B = .13$) and extrinsic motivation ($B = .17$) were significant predictors of training and development in model 1. In model 2, significant variables included extrinsic motivation ($B = .16$), situational constraints and barriers ($B = .15$) and policies and regulations ($B = .16$).

Discussion

Kurt Lewin's field theory describes behavior as a function of the person and their environment. In this study, we identified factors at both individual and organizational culture levels that have been known to affect participation in training and development in corporate settings and tested the conceptual model for a sample of 354 student affairs professionals. Findings from this study have important implications for student affairs staff and higher education administrators who seek to improve levels of voluntary participation in training and development among student affairs staff, and in turn foster work environments that are conducive to institutional success.

Individual level factors predictive of training and development

Our first research question asked what individual factors are predictive of student affairs employee participation in training and professional development. Individual factors age, educational background, and employee time within the organization, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation were analyzed in an HML regression model along with organizational culture factors supervisor and co-worker support, barriers and constraints, and policies and regulations. While the overall model was significant, extrinsic motivation was the only individual factor to significantly predict student affairs employee participation in training and development. This finding is interesting particularly when also considering that intrinsic motivation was significant in the individual level model but not in the full model. It is possible that the personal desire to improve (intrinsic motivation) may actually be driven by more externally motivating factors (e.g., salary increase, promotion, or supervisor praise). If this is accurate, this finding has important implications for student affairs administrators. To increase voluntary participation in training and development it should be made clear how such participation can and does play a role in promotions, raises, praise and other extrinsic motivation

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Analytical Model

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Dependent Variable:			
Training and Development	9.81	3.63	354
Independent Variables:			
Age	40.45	11.58	354
Educational Background	0.4	0.48	354
Years with Organization	7.68	7.91	354
Intrinsic Motivation	29.56	3.57	354
Extrinsic Motivation	71.36	9.38	354
Support Scale (Supervisor & Co-workers)	68.60	12.28	354
Barriers Scale (Situational Constraints & Barriers)	67.64	13.59	354
Policies & Regulations Scale	23.30	4.61	354

Variable	Participation in Training & Development			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	β	B	β
Age	.02	.06	.01	.04
Educational Background	.43	.06	.44	.06
Time with Organization	.05	.11	.04	.09
Intrinsic Motivation	.13*	.13*	.09	.09
Extrinsic Motivation	.07**	.17**	.06**	.16**
Supervisor & Coworker Support Scale			-.03	-.10
Situational Constraints & Barriers Scale			.04*	.15*
Policies & Regulations Scale			.13*	.16*
R ²	.069**		.125**	
F	5.14**		6.18**	
ΔR^2	.069**		.057**	
ΔF	5.14**		7.43**	

Note. N=354. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .007$

factors. These findings and subsequent recommendations are consistent with Tharenou's (2001) findings who found that extrinsic motivation was a stronger predictor to participation than intrinsic motivation. Our finding lends support to Tharenou's recommendation that training and development participation be linked to performance appraisals. We recommend this in divisions of student affairs as well. We also suggest supervisors seek opportunities to publicly praise staff for participation in training and development, or when possible offer incentives to increase levels of voluntary participation. Taking these initiatives may also help to inhibit attrition from the field as Marshall et al., (2016) found non-competitive salaries, limited advancement opportunities, and lack of challenge/loss of passion to be among top reasons cited for leaving student affairs.

Organizational Cultural level predictors of training and development

Our second research question asked what organizational factors are predictive of voluntary participation in training and de-

velopment for student affairs professionals. Several organizational culture factors, supervisor and co-worker support, situational constraints and barriers, and policies and regulations were analyzed in an HML regression model together with the individual factors, age, educational background, years within the organization, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. Two organizational cultural level scaled variables were significant in this analysis: (a) situational constraints and barriers and (b) policies and regulations. The situational constraints and barriers scaled variable significantly predicted participation in training and development activities among student affairs professionals. More specifically, this finding points to the notion that for voluntary participation to occur, the organization must do more than simply provide opportunities; student affairs employees must also feel that they are able to complete their work-related tasks, have sufficient resources available to them, have sufficient time, and have adequate equipment. This finding is consistent with Noe and Wilk's (1993) and Tharenou (2001) studies who also found that these work con-

ditions predict participation in training and development in corporate settings. In short, work environments and conditions matter. Student affairs professionals need to have more basic work-related needs supported prior to voluntarily engaging in training and development activities. Ensuring staff are adequately supported in their job responsibilities is a challenge when resources are tight, and universities are asked to take increasing levels of responsibilities with few resources. In some cases, student affairs staff may be the only full time staff member in their department, or one of only a few. In these instances, where full time staff positions are limited, it is recommended that student affairs offices partner with the university and with graduate programs on campus to establish graduate assistantship opportunities for graduate students to learn and gain experience, and also to provide valuable support to student affairs staff. Establishing support systems for student affairs staff will help to meet their basic work needs and allow more time for them to voluntarily participate in professional development.

For student affairs professionals the strongest predictor of participation in training and development was the organizational culture factor, policies and regulations ($B=.13, p <.05$). Organizational policies and regulations have a positive relationship with participation in training and development activities when student affairs employees perceive their organization to value professional development and learning through the communication of the policies and regulations. This finding is most interesting when compared to corporate settings. While policies and regulations do correlate with training and development activity in corporate settings, the strength of the relationship tends to be weaker in corporate settings than in divisions of student affairs (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 1997). Overall, student affairs practitioners are more likely to participate in training and development activities

when organizational leadership establishes policies and regulations that promote and encourage voluntary participation in professional development. For example, student affairs supervisors could create policy that incentives participation in professional development. Clearly and transparently valuing personal and voluntary learning and development via policies and regulations can help to create an organizational culture where professional development becomes a cultural norm.

In this study supervisor and co-worker support did not predict participation in training and development activities among student affairs professionals. This finding is surprising because this factor has shown to be highly influential on an employee's participation in training and development activities in several corporate setting studies (Kozlowski & Farr, 1998; Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Tharenou, 1997; Tharenou, 2001; Maurer et al., 2003; Montesino, 2002; Noe & Wilk, 1993). It is plausible that the helping nature of the student affairs field, allows student affairs professionals to assume there to be support for such activities thus receiving confirmation of support from co-workers or supervisors does not influence participation; whereas corporate setting employees may question if their co-workers or supervisors consider professional development worthwhile.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations that should be addressed. It should be noted that this study included only student affairs professionals at four year institutions. Thus, findings may only be applicable to institutions that are similar to the ones included in this sample. Additionally, in this study individual factors were used as controls for organizational culture factors in predicting voluntary participation in professional development. Future research would benefit from investigating the mediating and/or moderating effects of these variables. Finally, in this study student affairs was examined on the whole,

though it should be noted that organizational culture could, and likely does, vary by departments. Future researchers might consider examining voluntary participation in professional development in specific departments within student affairs divisions.

Conclusions

This study was designed to investigate what individual and organizational factors predicted voluntary participation in professional development for student affairs practitioners. It is known that over half of student affairs professionals exit the profession within 10 years (Marshall et al., (2016), and participating in professional development could help to keep employees more engaged in their jobs (Winston & Creamer, 1997). In conclusion, this study determined that extrinsic motivation in addition to organizational factors, situational constraints and barriers, and policies and regulations, influence participation in training and development activities among student affairs professionals. The results indicate that student affairs professionals who are more extrinsically motivated tend to participate in professional development activities more frequently. This study also shows that when organizational situational constraints and barriers are reduced, professionals are more likely to participate in training and development. Additionally, when organizational policies and regulations are supportive and suggest that the organization and leadership values learning and development, student affairs practitioners are more likely to participate in training and development activities. To increase levels of participation in training and development among student affairs professionals, and in turn the likelihood of overall success of their institution, higher education administration and leadership should find ways to incentivise, without requiring, professional development opportunities for staff. Taking these initiatives would help to create organizational cultures where staff were motivated to engage in opportunities to develop themselves personal-

ly while also contributing to the mission and vision of their college or university.

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