A Sequential Mixed Methods Study: An Exploration of the Use of Emotional Intelligence by Senior Student Affairs Officers in Managing Critical Incidents

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A SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHODS STUDY: AN EXPLORATION of the use of EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE by SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS in MANAGING CRITICAL INCIDENTS

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation work to my family. My wife, Pam, has provided me with tremendous support and encouragement throughout this process. My daughters, Avery and Sophia, have provided me with inspiration to push to the end. My spirit has been buoyed by their love and dedication. My Mother and Coach encouraged and supported this dream for years. Without their unending motivation, this could not have been realized.

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Abstract
A Sequential Mixed Methods Study: An Exploration of the use of Emotional Intelligence by Senior Student Affairs Officers in Managing Critical Incidents

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Emotional intelligence is a relatively new academic discipline that began forming in the early 1990s. Currently, emotional intelligence is used in academia and in business as a new intelligence quotient. This research study investigates how Senior Student Affairs Officers’ use their emotional intelligence ability during critical incidents. The study explored the emotional intelligence of Senior Student Affairs Officers by examining the critical area of managing emotions. Additionally, the study used each participant’s emotional intelligence data to understand and provide meaning to how Senior Student Affairs Officers manage critical incidents using their identified emotional intelligence capabilities.

A sequential mixed methods exploratory research design was used as the framework for this research. The quantitative aspect of the study used the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to establish a baseline set of data regarding Senior Student Affairs Officers’ capabilities for managing emotions. The quantitative data were gathered through in-person interviews conducted with three Senior Student Affairs Officers at their place of employment. The MSCEIT assessment findings indicate that the sample population exhibited a competent rating in their ability to manage their emotions.
The interviews further explored the concept of managing emotions through the lens of critical incidents that occur on campus.

Findings from the sample population of Senior Student Affairs Officers indicated that they have a competent rating for their ability to manage their emotions. Scoring for the competent rating resulted from a comparison of the normative database for the MSCEIT test. In addition, the results indicated that age, gender, education level, and years of experience of the sample population did not statistically impact the participants ability to manage their emotions. Finally, the qualitative aspect of the study deeply revealed how the sample senior student affairs officers manage their emotions in practice.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Senior Student Affairs Officer, Critical Incidents
Chapter 1: Introduction

Leadership is one of the most researched and debated subjects in academia, and the quest to understand which attributes comprise effective leadership is ongoing. Multiple studies have examined leadership in an attempt to identify necessary attributes, such as intellectual quotient (Simonton, 2006), technical expertise (Lee, P., Gillespie, N., Mann, L., & Wearing, A., 2010), superior performance (Boyatzis, 2008), transformational leadership attributes (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003), and transactional leadership attributes, (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Interpersonal skills are also now considered an integral part of a leader’s ability to be effective (Goleman, 1998).

Leaders in higher education are currently facing multiple challenges in the United States, including but not limited to financial constraints, demographic changes, student retention, accountability, and student safety (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). In addition to these relatively predictable demands, critical incidents on college campuses are occurring with greater frequency and intensity (Fierman & Thrower, 2011). The most common critical incidents are catastrophic weather, bomb threats, suicides, and arson (Epstein, 2004). The responsibility of managing these critical incidents as they occur and their aftermath often falls to Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs). A review of the literature, however, indicates that studies examining the extent to which emotional intelligence impacts and informs SSAOs’ ability to respond to critical incidents are severely lacking.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this sequential mixed method study, therefore, is to explore SSAOs’ emotional intelligence (managing emotions) through the lens of critical incident management. A critical incident can be defined as a highly stressful situation that has the
potential to overwhelm an individual’s ability to cope (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). A prime example of a critical incident on a college campus is an active shooter scenario, wherein a person shoots one or more people in a classroom. An additional example might be the suicide of a student on campus that occurs in front of other students or staff.

Critical incidents are multi-dimensional events, often involving a variety of community members with a multitude of emotional reactions and needs. SSAOs assume responsibility for addressing and resolving many of the critical incidents that occur on campus. The unique nature of critical incidents requires flexible, creative leaders who have the skill set necessary to handle the influx of issues related to the changing environment of education and the critical situations that occur on campus (Catullo, Walker, & Floyd, 2009).

Leading as an SSAO during critical incidents requires the ability to manage one’s own emotions and reactions while successfully coordinating the activities of others who are also responding to the situation from their own perspectives. SSAOs must combine their readiness, mindset, and leadership skills to effectively respond to current campus challenges and propose solutions (Newman, Olson, Laws, & Whitney, 2010). As a result, there is a need to understand the relationship between SSAOs’ emotional intelligence competencies and critical incident response abilities.

Emotional intelligence can be defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Emotional intelligence has also been defined by Bar-On and Parker (2000) as the multifunctional array of interconnected emotional, personal, and social abilities that impact our ability to handle stressful
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situations. Goleman (1998) emphatically argued that emotional intelligence is the most important attribute for an effective leader, and reinforced his position by referencing 25 years of empirical studies (AbiSamra, 2000; Bar-On, 2000, 2001, 2002; Blimling & Alschuler, 1996; Caruso, Mayer, Perkins, & Salovey, 1999; Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002; Doyle, 2004; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Epstein, 1999; Goleman, 1995; Keniston, 1971; Kress, Norris, Schoenholtz, Elias, & Seigle, 2004; Mayer & Geher, 1996; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Pfeiffer, 2001; Wechsler, 1958; Zirkel, 2000). Emotional intelligence is a critical ability for any leader, but it is increasingly imperative that SSAOs exhibit and use emotional intelligence when confronted with critical incidents that are emotionally laden for all parties involved.

The role of the SSAO is complicated by the depth and variety of the institutional structures and settings that exist in American higher education. In 2004, there were approximately 6,500 postsecondary institutions in the United States (Eckel & King, 2008). At the majority of these institutions, there is a SSAO who oversees a variety of areas within the institution. Each institution has their own specific mission, resources, and student body; therefore, each setting requires unique skills and insights.

The current environment in higher education demands that SSAOs are versed in the numerous elements that encompass leadership, particularly communication. Sandeen (1991) posited that the ability to communicate is critical for SSAOs to be effective, as the ability to communicate appropriately directly impacts an SSAO’s ability to relay the mission of the institution or division/department. Strong communication skills also support strong working relationships across campus (Streit, 1993).

Successful leadership also requires the ability to see the larger picture of the environment in which they lead. The ability to develop a vision is the ability to discern
individual strengths and insights of the environment and the challenges and opportunities within it. Gardner (1961) argued that able leaders should focus on identifying and relaying how the student affairs mission supports and enhances the academic mission of the institution. Conger (2002) described visionary leaders as those who are able to create long-term goals. Additionally, Schuh (2002) discovered that successful SSAOs rely on their ability to craft a clear vision through the development of clear expectations for serving students while constantly evaluating their leadership approach. It is clear that SSAOs must have a sophisticated ability to analyze and respond to institutional issues through a visionary lens and with a sophisticated world-view (Guido, Chavez, & Lincoln, 2010).

In addition to the ability to look forward and outward, the ability to look inward is also vital; self-understanding plays an equally important role in the skill set of SSAOs. The ability to individually understand one’s own “values, strengths, and weaknesses” and be able to surround yourself with employees that blend with your skill set has been identified as a critical area for leadership development (Cooper, Miller, Saunders, Chernow, & Kulic, 1999, p. 394). Political acumen also represents a key component of a successful SSAOs’ leadership skill set. Lovell and Kosten (2000) noted that understanding the politics at play in an institution enables a SSAO to react quickly and effectively to potential collaboration opportunities. Additionally, political awareness enables SSAOs to respond to competitive environments.

As the efforts of the SSAO should focus on benefitting the students, it is crucial for SSAOs to understand the changing student demographic as access to education and state demographics evolve. Clement and Rickard (1992) suggested that leadership is the most critical element for meeting the needs of the continuously changing demographics of a
student population. Leadership practice must focus on how student affairs can impact the larger issues facing the institution.

Leadership as a change agent is central to the skill set of an SSAO. Fullan and Scott (2009) described change leadership as *turnaround leadership*. More specifically, they contended that the focus of leadership should be on creating consensus based on the data for any given problem. Achieving consensus within the modern workforce requires leaders who are capable of identifying the emotions and feelings of the employees they lead through what is described as a “cycle of review (self study), plan (identify a response), implement (put into practice), monitor (check the outcomes, and improve (retain what works best but address what doesn’t)” (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 87). This model not only requires active monitoring of the plan but also of emotional levels in the work group to produce the best results.

Student affairs professionals have access to best practices and professional guidance through several guiding documents that lend insight to leaders within the profession. The American College Personnel Association/National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (ACPA/NASPA) have authored *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (1996) and *Learning Reconsidered* (2004) to provide insight, best practices and personal operation standards for all levels of student affairs staff. Professional competencies are continually being refined and articulated in the student affairs profession. A joint commission of ACPA/NASPA created the most recent professional competency areas in 2010. The desirable competencies were grouped into 10 major areas: (a) advising and helping; (b) assessment, evaluation, and research; (c) equity, diversity, and inclusion; (d) ethical professional practice; (e) history, philosophy and values; (f) human and
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organizational resources; (g) law, policy, and governance; (h) leadership; (i) personal foundations; and (j) student learning and development.

Four of the competency areas within the ACPA/NASPA (2010) principles of practice relate to leadership and critical incident response/crisis management: (a) advising and helping, (b) human and organizational resources, (c) leadership, and (d) personal foundations. A more in-depth understanding of the relationship between leadership, emotional intelligence, and critical incident response could provide deeper insight for improving skill development within the competency areas directly related to leadership.

The concept of managing one’s emotions is prominent not only in the emotional intelligence research domain, but also in student development theories. Managing emotions is a critical aspect of Chickering’s (1969) seminal seven vectors developmental theory. The seven vectors of the theory are: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward independence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The second vector of managing emotions—including anxiety, anger, depression, desire, guilt, shame, and embarrassment—is critical not only for students, but also for SSAOs. Identifying, understanding, and reflecting on emotions are important as an individual crafts their identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Individual identity development continually evolves as new experiences impact the emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development of the individual. Therefore, uncovering the relationship between managing emotions and responding to critical incidents may be invaluable to SSAOs, as they serve as models for their staff and students.

Despite the value of these insights and the substantial body of literature that has investigated many aspects of leadership, few studies have given particular focus to the
SSAO. Research that seeks to understand how SSAOs manage emotions, a crucial component of effective leadership, during critical incidents is largely absent from the literature. Establishing an understanding of SSAOs ability to manage emotions will provide insight for current and future SSAOs that can enhance and augment existing emotional management skill sets.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore SSAOs’ emotional intelligence (managing emotions) through the lens of critical incident management. Substantial research exists on emotional intelligence and leadership, but only limited research has examined the constructs of managing emotions and leadership while engaging in critical incident response; further, these constructs have not been linked to SSAOs. The primary objective of this study is to gain foundational insight into the emotional management capabilities of SSAOs, and to present these findings as a basis for future research. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the relationship between managing emotions through the lens of critical incident response.

**Research Questions**

The specific research questions that inform this study are as follows:

1. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) an important leadership competency for SSAOs?
2. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) during the management of critical incidents moderated by SSAOs’ years of experience?
3. In what ways do SSAOs use emotional intelligence to manage critical incidents?
Significance of the Study

The frequency and severity of critical incidents that occur at higher education institutions creates multiple challenges for administrators, and SSAOs are on the front line for determining a course of action. Emotional intelligence is the capability of identifying emotions within yourself and within others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). SSAOs must manage their emotions while leveraging their expertise and the evolving information of the critical circumstances into actionable responses.

The current literature provides insufficient research on SSAOs’ emotional intelligence abilities. In particular, research has not investigated how SSAOs manage their emotions during critical incidents. Additionally, the prevalence of dramatic critical incident situations has continued to rise, in new and changing forms, within higher education. Higher education will undoubtedly tap the expertise of senior managers, including SSAOs, to meet the challenges associated with these changes. This study will provide SSAOs with the information necessary to aid them in developing personal development strategies related to managing and leveraging the power of their emotions.

The results of this study will also contribute to institutional practice by providing insights that can be incorporated into higher education policy and programs. The results may provide a basis for crafting more intentional exercises related to critical incident management or inform the development of emotional management skills for graduate students entering the profession. Emphasizing understanding one’s emotional intelligence capabilities and how emotional intelligence capabilities impact leadership may become a critical component in the preparation of future student affairs leaders.

This study will also contribute to the existing body of scholarship that has researched student affairs professionals by developing an awareness of emotions
management in the context of critical incidents that occur on campus. The sequential mixed methods study will determine if there is a need for emotional intelligence competencies to be further developed in SSAOs.

**Conceptual Framework**

The framework for this study is built around the foundation of three constructs: identity development, professional standards within student affairs, and emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions). All three areas specifically relate to managing emotions during critical incidents. Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) student development model serves as the theoretical foundation for the study. Although the development theory targets college students, it is also applicable to professional adults post-college because an individual’s identity is constantly evolving. For the purpose of this research study, only vector two of the student development model will be employed, as it directly speaks to an individual’s ability to manage their emotions. Managing emotions is integral to identity development because individuals must be able to manage and cope with their feelings. Similarly, SSAOs must be adept at successfully navigating their feelings by knowing and becoming aware of their emotions when faced with critical incidents at their institutions.

The framework’s second construct is built around the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), who developed an emotional intelligence model consisting of four branches: (a) perceiving emotions, (b) using emotions, (c) understanding emotions, and (d) managing emotions. For the purpose of this research study, only the fourth branch is included because; this branch is the most complex of the four, and it provides the necessary focus for the management of critical incidents. Emotional management, as defined by Salovey
and Mayer (1990), requires that individuals control their emotions and appropriately respond to the emotions of others to achieve an objective.

The final construct is the professional competency standards for SSAOs established by ACPA/NASPA (2010) that include four areas that inform the understanding of emotional intelligence in the work of student affairs. Will be integrated into the framework of this study. Leadership research in student affairs reveled three themes: complex problem solving, solution construction skills, and social judgment skills. The themes form the basis for establishing that managing emotions is theoretically and cognitively important for SSAOs to master. Figure 1 provides a visual display of the concepts and their conceptual interaction within this framework.

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A Conceptual Framework for Exploring Emotional Intelligence in SSAOs

Theme 1: Complex problem-solving
Theme 2: Solution construction skills (Politics)
Theme 3: Social Judgement Skills

Foundation:
Chickering & Reisser Identity Development Model (1993)
Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Professionals ACPA & NASPA, 2010
```
**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework developed to provide theoretical grounding for managing emotions, emotional intelligence, and the interaction within the identified themes in the literature review.

**Definition of Terms**

**Accountability.** To account for an action is to explain and to justify to others with a legitimate interest the acts and omissions for which one is responsible (ISEA, 1999).

**Critical incidents.** A critical incident can be defined as a highly stressful situation that has the potential to overwhelm an individual’s ability to cope (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2012).

**Emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence is an individual’s ability to navigate emotions and use information from emotions to make decisions or produce actions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

**Exploratory Methodology.** This study will utilize a sequential mixed methods approach to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and the management of critical incidents by SSAOs. A sequential mixed method study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research techniques sequentially and separately before the data interpretation stage (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2006).

**Managing Emotions.** Managing emotions is described as “an individual’s ability to be open to feelings and to modulate them in oneself and others so as to promote personal understanding and growth” (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002).

**Senior student affairs officer.** The single individual responsible for the student affairs division at a college or university. SSAOs are responsible for “divisional and institutional priorities while supervising a limited number of direct reports” (McClellan, Striger, & Barr, 2009, p. 356).
Social Construction Skills. The skills used to make meaning and create knowledge from interactions within society (Schwandt, 2003).

Leadership. A leader is an individual (or, rarely, a set of individuals) who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors of a significant number of individuals. Most acknowledged leaders are "direct." They address their public face-to-face. However, in this study I call attention to a largely unrecognized phenomenon: indirect leadership. In this variety of leadership, individuals exert impact through the works that they create (Gardner, 1995).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions.

1. Participants have a baseline understanding of emotional intelligence and how it impacts the work environment.
2. Participants use emotional intelligence in their decision-making during critical incidents that occur on campus.

Limitations. It is recognized that this study was conducted on a regional level with 27 SSAO participants out of a possible sample population of 153, and while the group provided a solid cross section of SSAOs, the study did not produce generalizable data that can be applied to SSAOs across the nation. The student affairs association NASPA provided access to the membership for sampling purposes, and 153 SSAOs were identified in Region II. The assessment completion rate of 17.6% was a considerably small sampling of the total SSAOs located in Region II.

The individual interview process was limited due to the low number of respondents. Three individuals were selected out of the 12 SSAOs who volunteered to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. The work demands of the SSAO sample coupled with the
challenge of scheduling meetings with the SSAOs created noticeable obstacles for the researcher. In addition, the financial constraints of this study were significant because the researcher was required to travel to the SSAOs’ work locations to interview the participants. Interviews were conducted on-site at the SSAOs’ institutions with complete anonymity because of the nature of the questions.

The MANOVA, linear regression, and MSCEIT assessment were therefore likely impacted due to the small sample size, and the statistical power of the assessments were limited. However, data did reveal insights to the emotional intelligence phenomena in the sample studied.

An additional limitation of the study is simply that baseline data on SSAOs’ emotional intelligence does not exist. Leadership studies are prevalent in higher education research, but relatively few address the construct of emotional intelligence in specific. SSAOs also likely exhibited reluctance to participate given the purpose of the study and the inherent personal nature of the research. SSAOs who did participate demonstrated a great deal of interest in the subjects of emotional intelligence and critical incident application, which was admirable.

A summary of the limitations of this study is as follows:

1. Data gathered for this research was dependent on the honest reporting of feelings and perceptions related to emotional intelligence.
2. SSAOs serve in a variety of roles, depending on their institution, creating a variety of experiences and levels of exposure to critical incidents.
3. Sample size was limited to SSAOs working in NASPA region II.
   Selecting one region of NASPA does not permit the findings to be
   applied to the remaining regions.

4. Outside variables may have also influenced the results. Examples of
   variables include: interaction among participants, previous advanced
   experience with emotional intelligence frameworks and training, and
   psychological challenges with recalling critical incidents.

**Delimitations.** Emotional intelligence is a broad theoretical construct with a variety
of theories that encompass it. The MSCEIT emotional intelligence test was chosen based
on the variety and scientific quality of past studies that have implemented the instrument.
For the purposes of this study, branch four (managing emotions) was selected to be used
exclusively because it specifically addresses an individual’s ability to manage emotions.
SSAOs were chosen as the specific object of this study to create a narrow its focus,
especially considering that higher education institutions typically only employ one SSAO.

**Summary**

The work of student affairs professionals is, by nature, highly interactive people.
Specifically, the intersection of working through student issues and maintaining the
institutional community requires individuals that can appropriately manage their emotions
while impacting the emotions of those around them. As a science, Emotional Intelligence
represents a new way to examine how Senior Student Affairs Officers’ navigate and
employ their emotional management ability through the lens of critical incidents.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Leadership research in higher education, specifically SSAOs leadership, is the core premise for developing an understanding of emotional intelligence abilities of SSAOs. A review of leadership research in student affairs will be analyzed along with a breakdown of the three emerging themes generated from the review. This literature review will address the foundational elements that support the possibility of emotional intelligence being a leadership competency for SSAOs. The foundation areas are specifically Chickering & Reisser’s (1993) identity development theory, emotional intelligence research and professional competencies in the student affairs profession. A history of emotional intelligence and an examination of the validity of emotional intelligence research, including Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso’s (2004) theory of emotional intelligence, will be provided. The goal of this chapter is to provide detail for the conceptual framework established for the study.

Literature Conceptual Framework

Leadership skills have been examined in depth over the years, with results often presented as a set list or long narrative of the exact traits needed for successful leadership to occur. A review of the literature in this theme attempts to dissect the concept of complex problem-solving (guiding change) as a leader. As noted by Pirsig (1991), it should be noted that the essential nature of leadership is built around a framework of both stable and dynamic patterns of value. Patterns of value form the basis for our information on the concepts and application for leadership. The ability for leaders to impact their environment through positive change is a key competency needed, especially as complex environments evolve and new challenges emerge. Former university president Warren Bennis (1989)
identified 10 personal and organizational characteristics that are critical for leaders impacting change:

- Manage the dream,
- Embrace error,
- Encourage reflective backtalk,
- Encourage dissent,
- Possess the Nobel factor (unbridled confidence),
- Understanding the Pygmalion effect in management,
- Have the Gretzky factor (go where the puck is going to be),
- See the long view,
- Understand stakeholder symmetry, and
- Create strategic alliances and partnerships.

Bennis (1989) detailed an impressive list of change-oriented strategies through the use of encouragement, confidence, vision, and collaboration.

Fullan and Scott (2009) described change leadership as turnaround leadership. Specifically, they contend that leadership should aim to create consensus based on the data for any given problem. Their suggested model is a “cycle of review (self study), plan (identify a response), implement (put into practice, monitor (check the outcomes), and improve (retain what works best but address what doesn’t)” (p. 87).

The management author Kotter (2001) also echoed the theme of multiple challenges in the 21st century and the need for leaders to be able to navigate change. According to Kotter (2001), leaders need to recognize the difference between management and leadership. Ultimately, “management is about coping with complexity and leadership,
by contrast, is about coping with change” (p. 86). This description sets a strong foundation for how SSAOs can approach change.

Eddy and Vanderlinden (2006) indicated that a high portion of SSAOs are identified as change agents. They suggested that the SSAOs who are considered change agents is directly proportional to the daily activities that occur within student affairs, or more specifically, the dynamic nature of dealing with students and meeting student needs as they go through the various stages of social and academic development. SSAOs typically oversee departments that are on the frontlines of student and parent engagement. Often, the ability to produce successful results is based on the ability to make frontline decisions quickly that draw on past experience and mutual decision-making.

**Complex problem-solving.** This discussion of change is framed by Senge (1990) in the broader context of individual learning, which should lead to a leader’s increased capacity for solving complex problems. A critical piece to Senge’s (1990) hypothesis is the idea of “reflective openness,” or the ability to know oneself, challenge individually held beliefs, and the ability to critically analyze the beliefs of others (p. 278). SSAOs rely on a cadre of direct reports to carry out their operations. The theme put forth by Senge (1990) has implications that could carry over directly to successful leadership practices.

De La Teja, Dalpes, Swett, and Shank (2010) introduced a similar theme as they reaffirmed that change leadership requires “leadership skills with the ability to create new knowledge by identifying connections and patterns between totally disparate ideas and factors” (p. 13). Navigating and leading through change is a dominant theme in the research on leadership. Thus, SSAOs’ ability to draw conclusions from complex events will likely determine their success as a leader in higher education.
**Solution construction skills (politics).** Leadership in higher education requires a variety of skills in order to be successful. The ability to define and solve complex problems hinges on a leader’s social perceptiveness, including their ability to understand the multitude of needs or wants that exists within the organizational structure (Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991). Solution construction essentially relies on a leader’s ability to navigate the political spectrum of their organization.

Moore (1991) set the foundation for understanding political activity through research that revealed power as a critical tool SSAOs employ during decision-making. Further examination revealed various dimensions exist in the political spectrum, including but not limited to values, ethics, and interactions with the president and senior leadership. It is important to note that student affairs professionals are aware of the negative aspects of political activity in the organization, such as non-communication, skepticism, and activities that are not team focused (Boehman, 1997). The misunderstanding of political activity, coupled with the importance of leveraging politics in the organization, coincides with research on how an individual’s political skill set evolves through career progression. An SSAO’s political acumen is described by Lovell and Kosten (2000) as the ability to completely integrate divisions within a higher education organizational structure. Subsequently, SSAOs must “see potential points of collaboration and to manage the forces that require success” (p. 567).

A recent study conducted by Herdlein, Kretovics, Rossiter, and Sobczak (2011) revealed common perceptions of politics in student affairs. They found that SSAOs must be able to identify sources of power—both formal and informal—in the institution and use power to influence successful practice. In addition, major sources of political activity centered on “financial and budgetary issues, personnel supervision, interpersonal
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relationships, and interactions with faculty, students, and parents” (Herdlein et al., 2011, p. 55). Most interesting was their finding that as professionals progress into higher-level positions, significant increases in political skill level is required to manage the complexities of the activity. Fullan and Scott (2009) used the term empathizing to describe how educational leaders need to navigate the landscape. They stated that “working productively with students and staff from a wide range of backgrounds; listening to different points of view before coming to a decision; developing and contributing positively to team-based programs; and being transparent and honest in dealings with others” were particularly important (p. 117).

SSAOs rely heavily on their ability to build relationships across the institution, and many can point to their position in the organization as the critical determinant in forging collaborative relationships. Goleman (2006) noted that research within the neuroscience community suggests emotional states are contagious, almost brain-to-brain. Conveyable to the role of SSAOs, “a leader’s habitual style of interacting can either energize or demotivate people” (p. 78). Collaborative leadership requires leaders to know themselves and have the power to influence interactions positively.

Collaboration, however, does not come without some level of stress. Bennis and Thomas (2002) used the term *adaptive capacity* to describe that leadership requires the ability to transcend certain situations. In order to be collaborative, a leader must have “the ability to weigh a welter of factors, ranging from how very different groups of people will interpret a gesture to being able to put a situation in perspective” (p. 45). Ultimately, collaborative leadership requires a mastery of this skill or collaboration will falter.

With a different take on leadership, George (2000) explored the impact of moods and emotions on leadership. Moods are defined as random feelings that are not directly
related to the originating incident that generated the feelings (Morris, 1989). Emotions are characterized as dramatic intensity caused by specific stimuli most often resulting in some form of cognitive stimulation (Forgas, 1992). George (2000) argued that the act of being a leader is filled with emotionally rich situations for both the leader and the stakeholders who follow. Leaders must be able to respond to and modify others’ emotions, ultimately requiring an in-depth understanding of the roots of their emotional systems. Success in creating solutions that meet the needs of all stakeholders requires leaders that intimately understand the power of emotions within themselves and others and the ability to apply that knowledge to the political framework of their institution.

Social judgment skills. Navigating the treacherous issues of the 21st century also requires the succinct ability to articulate a clear and concise vision. Creating a vision requires the ability to employ social judgment skills. Brown (1997) proposed five areas that SSAOs should possess in order to be successful visionary leaders: (a) communicating the mission, (b) involvement in institution planning, (c) clear decision-making skills, (d) exceptional human relations skills, and (e) vocal supporters of quality education for students. Shifting demographics of students and staff require leaders that can conceptualize and process individual differences and emotions in order to create environments that maximize individual strengths.

Research conducted by Schettler (2002) indicated that creating and maintaining a clear vision was ranked of higher importance than ethics by executives. SSAOs are no different than their corporate counterparts; the main role of senior leadership at higher education institutions is to inspire others. Inspiring employees to a greater calling is central to short-term and long-term success. Critical to understanding the skill set required for SSAOs are the Standards for Professional Practice, espoused by the Council for the
Advancement of Standards (CAS). As detailed by the CAS (2006), the interactive competencies that potentially relate to an individual’s emotional intelligence level and ability to inspire action are as follows: (a) supervises others effectively; (b) manages fiscal, physical, and human resources responsibly and effectively; (c) judges the performance of self and others fairly; (d) contributes productively in partnerships and team efforts; (e) demonstrates loyalty and support of the institution where employed; (f) behaves in ways that reflect integrity, responsibility, honesty, and accurate representations of self, others, and program; (g) creates and maintains campus relationships characterized by integrity and responsibility; (h) effectively creates and maintains networks among colleagues locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally; and (i) contributes to campus life and supports activities that promote campus community.

In a business-related article, the term corporate aspiration refers to how employees desire to feel like they are part of a team. Jagersma (2007) concluded spelling out changes required from shareholder groups is important because each manager and employee feels a personal tie to it, understands his role in making the aspiration happen, is motivated to overcome obstacles on the way to realizing the corporate aspiration. (p. 49)

This revelation is no different in the higher education context, where employees yearn for a vision that is inspirational and that engages them in a deeper purpose.

The development of leadership vision also hinges upon the ability to understand the organization’s critical issues. Ross (2008) articulated the visionary requirements for leaders by stating they must “understand the linkage among all the important issues and then provide the connection between the issues” (p. 49). SSAOs have a unique challenge in defining these linkages because of the complex nature of higher education institutions.
Foundation Constructs

Student affairs research has attempted to theoretically describe and understand student development. Psychosocial theories provide a foundation for recognizing the various developmental stages that an individual is likely to experience during different stages of their life (Evans, 1996). Such theories have evolved largely from the early work of Erikson (1950, 1968), and substantial research and theory development have produced important models like Chickering & Reisser’s (1993) student development theory, Marcia’s (1966) model of ego identity status, Cross’s (1991) model of African-American identity, and D’Augelli’s (1994) model of homosexual identity. Human development is considered an evolutionary process by psychosocial theorists because of the changes that occur over the course of one’s lifespan (Rodgers, 1990). SSAOs are typically individuals who have spent a considerable length of time in higher education and are usually well versed in student development theory. By nature of their responsibilities, the specific culture and roles that encompass their position define how they respond to environmental demands, such as critical incidents on campus.

Chickering and Reisser’s human development model. Chickering began his examination of student development while employed at Goodard College from 1959 – 1965. Chickering’s early research sought to improve professors’ ability through the use of a student development framework. In 1969, Chickering introduced his theory of psychosocial development. A revision and update to his early work was completed in 1993 in collaboration with Reisser. The resulting revised theory expanded on previous research, while improving inclusivity to address the growing variety of students.

The framework for Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory of student development is built around seven vectors of development. The seven vectors are (a) developing
competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward
interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing
identity and developing purpose, and (f) developing integrity. For the purposes of this
research study, vector two (managing emotions) is given primary attention as it deals
directly with managing emotions.

A central premise of Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory is that an individual
will travel through the seven vectors in a circular pattern. The speed of travel through the
various vectors is determined by the environmental demands placed on the individual and
the individual’s ability to process the issues in each vector. The revised theory in 1993 also
stressed that learning and development are cyclical in nature; it is possible to ascend to a
higher level and then loop back to lower levels throughout development. To this point, the
critical incidents that SSAOs face create opportunities for continued development,
including improving one’s ability to manage emotions.

The second vector in Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) model is managing emotions.
Competence in this vector is characterized by the ability to manage emotions, including
recognition, responding, expressing, and controlling emotions. Individuals in the early
stage of vector two struggle to control emotions such as anger and fear. Individuals who
successfully navigate through this vector are able to successfully respond to emotions
(anxiety, depression, shame, anger, fear, inspiration, and optimism) that they may face.
That one must develop the ability to manage emotions in vector two parallels the work of
postulates that a primary component of emotional intelligence is managing emotions.

Emotional intelligence. The concept of emotional intelligence was coined in the
1960s by Van Ghent (1961) and Leuner (1966). The term emotions can be defined as
“structured reactions that cross many psychological subsystems, including the physiological, cognitive, motivational and experiential systems” (Pope & Singer, 1990, p.186). As suggested by the research questions of this study, SSAOs’ will experience emotions that surface in response to a stimulus, such as a critical incident. The emotional responses of SSAOs may be positive or negative, but they most certainly influence the direction of their actions and response.

Further development in the scholarship of emotional intelligence was achieved when researchers began to investigate the relationship of emotion and thought in the 1980s (Bower, 1981; Clarke & Fiske, 1982). The evolution of emotional intelligence towards a scientifically viable concept has long been shrouded in debate—and its acceptance as such is still debated today (Becker, 2003; Cherniss, 2000; Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998; Goleman, 1998; Matthew, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002). Primary concerns surrounding the concept have centered on measurement, as different forms of assessment have measured a multitude of variables, such as reality testing, work competencies, and self-reports, in an attempt to measure emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2000).

Emotional intelligence cannot be further inspected without first defining the meaning of intelligence. Intelligence has been defined as “the global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environments” (Wechsler, 1958, p. 7). Others have termed intelligence as the ability to carry out abstract thought and the ability to learn and adapt to different environments (Carroll, 1993; Detterman, 1983; Sternberg & Detterman, 1986).

Gardner (1983) spurred the expansion of how we define intelligence by creating a conceptual model that included non-cognitive aspects of intelligence. The expanded definition created by Gardner (1983) included the term *multiple intelligences*, which
consisted of an individual’s ability to adapt, understand their emotions, and use their emotions as a resource to guide behavior. As emphasized by Brown (1999), the most successful leaders are those that are in touch with the emotions and feelings of their work group.

The ability to create environments built upon trust and understanding (on an individual and team basis) is the foundation for future modern successful teams (Wing, 2005). The corporate environment created by Google, for example, acknowledges that work environments have a tremendous impact on the emotions of employees. Google’s corporate offices have recreation areas and other amenities designed to allow employees to interact and create in an appropriate environment. Clearly, the connection between creativity and emotional well-being is reaping benefits that previously had not even been imagined at Google.

Emotional intelligence as a construct emerged from the desire to broaden the understanding of intelligence and attempt to integrate the social, practical, and personal factors that interact and influence cognition (Gardner, 1983; Mayer & Mitchell, 1998; Lee, Wong, & Day, 2000). Salovey and Mayer (1990) revived the early concept of emotional intelligence from Payne (1986) by proposing a formal definition of the concept.

Emotions are present in every aspect of human life. Early identification of emotions occurs in infants, such as when a baby experiences distress and reacts in a negative manner. Similarly, adults who experience distress often communicate through their facial gestures or body language in addition to verbal communications. Brown (1999) pointed out that the identification of emotions and feelings are essential to solving problems or issues with others. It is becoming increasingly clear that emotionally stability within a work team produces more predictors for success, both within work and family life. Goleman (1998)
proposed that emotional intelligence is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (p. 317).

Multiple models of emotional intelligence have emerged from an abundance of research, and the models vary in their dimensions. An example of a mixed model of emotional intelligence is Bar-On’s (1997) model. An additional primary model of emotional intelligence is the ability model created by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The ability model of Mayer and Salovey (1997) has four distinct areas: perceiving emotions, facilitation of thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. These two emotional intelligence theories will be discussed in more detail later below.

Bar-On’s mixed model of emotional intelligence. Bar-On (1997) developed the mixed model of emotional intelligence based on an experimental instrument called the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). The Emotional Quotient inventory is described as “emotional-social intelligence is a cross-section of interrelates emotional and social competencies, skills, and facilitators that determine how we effectively understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate and cope with daily demands” (Bar-On, 2006, p. 3).

Bar-on stresses that emotional intelligence is a critical skill that influences an individual’s well-being. The EQ-I developed by Bar-On establishes 15 factors that describe abilities, competencies, and skills. The 15 factors, divided into five scales, are as follows:

A.) Intrapersonal composite scale – focus on your inward focus and thoughts
   1. Self regard
   2. Emotional Self-Awareness
   3. Assertiveness
   4. Independence
   5. Self-Actualization

B.) Interpersonal composite scale – social interactions with others
   6. Empathy
7. Social Responsibility
8. Interpersonal Relationships
C.) Adaptability composite scale – focus on your inward focus and interactions
9. Reality Testing
10. Flexibility
11. Problem-solving
D.) Stress Management composite scale – self-management
12. Stress Tolerance
13. Impulse Control
E.) General Mood composite scale – disposition in life
14. Optimism
15. Happiness

Emotional intelligence is continuously evolving in individuals: research has demonstrated that emotional intelligence capabilities may be learned, relearned, and developed over time (Boyatzis & Mckee, 2005; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004). As Bar-On (1997) suggested, emotional intelligence is a critically important factor because it directly impacts success. The EQ-i is one of the primary instruments used to assess emotional intelligence capabilities.

**Mayer and Salovey’s theory of emotional intelligence and the MSCEIT.** Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) definition of emotional intelligence is centered on the view that emotional intelligence is truly a scientific intelligence based on the social, practical, and personal intelligences employed by individuals on a daily basis. Emotional intelligence, as defined by Mayer and Salovey, is

> The capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004, p. 197)

The emotional intelligence theory later defined by Mayer et al. (2004) is divided into a four branch model. The branches of the model are the ability to (a) perceive emotion,
(b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotions. The order of these branches directly relates to the degree at which an individual is able to employ emotional intelligence abilities with other mental abilities. Thus, managing emotions is considered the most complex branch because it must be integrated into an individual’s goals and plans.

The first branch is related to an individual’s ability to perceive emotion. The ability to understand facial expressions or to recognize an individual’s postural expressions is a critical component in branch one (Scherer, Banse, & Wallbott, 2001).

The second branch is the distinct ability to incorporate the use of emotions into an individual’s thinking. During the course of an individual’s lifetime, it is likely that a base of emotional knowledge will be created (Salovey & Grewal, 2005). An emotional knowledge base consists of positive and negative emotions, both of which are useful to an individual when summoning their emotional knowledge.

The distinct ability to understand emotional language, analyze emotions, and the development of mental trending models for the progression of emotions in a specific situation encompass branch three (Frijda, 1998; Roseman, 1984). The ability to understand emotional language coincides with the development of language and propositional thought (Lewis, 2000). A janitor working at a university, for example, might not understand the variety of emotions that are displayed by students, while a Dean of Students would likely have a much better understanding of the student’s emotions, including the ability to label emotions and discriminate among the feelings displayed.

The final and most complex branch of the model addresses individual ability to manage emotions in a way that incorporates goals, self-knowledge, and social awareness (Gross, 1998; Parrott, 2002). Ability at this stage allows an individual to not only control
their own emotions, but also assist and impact the management of others’ emotions. The complexity of this stage is not only able to produce positive benefits, but can also be potentially negative if an individual abuses their ability to manage the emotions of others. The MSCEIT scoring system employs a performance-based response format based on consensus of the correct criterion based on normative data (MHS, 2011).

The ability to manage emotions is the central theme for this research. Research conducted by Spencer and Spencer (1993) suggested that to understand top performers, one must look at a broad set of competencies that combine cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. Critical incidents require that SSAOs not only manage their emotions but also manage the emotions of the others involved in the situation. Accordingly, this study will focus on the management of emotions by SSAOs.

**Controversies Surrounding Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is a highly debated concept, especially since Goleman’s (1995) books on emotional intelligence entered the discourse. Early emotional intelligence work was propagated in newspapers and magazine articles. As a result, some academics questioned the authenticity of the research and whether emotional intelligence was truly a form of intelligence.

The concept of emotional intelligence has evolved over time, and some researchers believe that emotional intelligence is cognitive in nature (Mayer & Salovey, 2000), while others believe that emotional intelligence is a series of traits (Schutte et al., 1998). Other academics consider the concept of emotional intelligence to be an appropriate theory, but because of the difficulty in establishing predictive validity, the concept remains a theoretical one that cannot be substantiated (Davis, Stankiv, & Roberts, 1998, Mayer & Cobb, 2000). Adding to the complexity of the study of emotional intelligence is the wide
array of assessments that have been developed. For example, several of these tests measure reality testing, independence, and work-related competences (Bar-On, 1997; Gowing, 2001), while others assess self-reports of concepts that are much broader than the emotional intelligence concept and more in line with personality assessments (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000).

Emotional intelligence has also been attacked on the basis that it lacks credibility and validity. More research is required to create a construct that is measureable while adhering to the standards of scientific measurement, however, ongoing examination of emotional intelligence has increased our understanding of the concept (Cacioppo, 2002; Damasio, 1994). Technological advances are also changing our understanding of emotional intelligence, particularly as researchers strive to create artificial emotional intelligence (Picard, 1997). The continued study of emotional intelligence will help establish that it is a valid form of intelligence and that it has broad implications for an individual’s ability to succeed (Mayer & Cobb, 2000).

Despite the controversy that surrounds the concept of emotional intelligence, there is a substantial body of literature that has focused on the application of emotional intelligence in a variety of settings. Leadership research in higher education has been examined through a variety of lenses, as detailed below.

**Competencies in Student Affairs**

Student affairs professionals have several guiding documents that give perspective to leaders within the profession, including *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (ACPA/NASPA, 1996) and *Learning Reconsidered* (ACPA/NASPA, 2004). These guiding documents typically provide insight, renewed attention, and personal operation standards for all levels of student affairs staff. Professional competencies are continually being
refined and articulated in the student affairs profession. A joint commission of the Association of College Personnel Administrators and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators created the most recent professional competency areas in 2010. The competencies are divided into 10 major areas: (1) advising and helping, (2) assessment, evaluation, and research, (3) equity, diversity, and inclusion, (4) ethical professional practice, (5) history, philosophy and values, (6) human and organizational resources, (7) law, policy, and governance, (8) leadership, (9) personal foundations, and (10) student learning and development. Four of the competency areas directly relate to leadership and critical incident response/crisis management: (1) advising and helping, (2) human and organizational resources, (3) leadership, and (4) personal foundations. These four competency areas will be examined in further detail.

Advising and helping is defined as “the knowledge, skills, and attitudes relates to providing counseling and advising support, direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance for individuals and groups” (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010). Basic skill sets in this competency area that warrant further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response are (1) understand and use appropriate nonverbal communication, (2) facilitate problem-solving, (3) facilitate reflection to make meaning from experience, (4) identify when and with whom to implement appropriate crisis management and intervention responses, and (5) recognize the strengths and limitations of one’s own worldview during communication with others (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010, p.6).

Intermediate skill sets in this competency area that warrant further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response are (1) perceive and analyze unspoken dynamics in a group setting, (2) manage conflict, (3) mediate differences
between or among individuals and groups, (4) initiate crisis intervention responses and processes (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010, p.6 -7).

Advanced skill sets in this competency area that warrant further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response are (1) exercise institutional crisis intervention skills and coordinate crisis intervention and response processes and (2) provide effective posttraumatic response to campus events and situations, collaborating with other appropriate campus departments (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010, p.7).

The second competency area that is closely related to managing emotions or critical incident response is human and organizational resources, defined as “knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the selection, supervision, motivation, and formal evaluation of staff; conflict resolution; management of the politics of organizational disclosure; and the effective application of strategies and techniques associated with financial resources, facilities management, fundraising, technology use, crisis management, risk management, and sustainable resources” (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010, p.16).

Basic skill sets in this competency area that warrant further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response are (1) communicate with others using effective verbal and nonverbal strategies appropriate to the situation in both one-on-one and small group settings, (2) recognize how networks in organizations play a role in how work gets accomplished, and (3) describe campus protocols for responding to significant incidents and campus crises.

Intermediate skill sets in this competency area that warrant further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response are (1) apply a range of strategies available for motivating others, (2) determine if the message (verbal and written)
communicated is congruent with the desired outcome for the intended recipient or audience, and (3) explain the interaction and integration of campus crisis intervention systems.

The advanced skill set in this competency area that warrants further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response is (1) participate in developing, implementing, and assessing the effectiveness of the campus crisis management program.

The third competency area that has foundations related to managing emotions or critical incident response is the leadership competency area. The leadership competency area is defined as “knowledge, skills and attitudes required of a leader, whether it be a positional leader or a member of the staff, in both an individual capacity and within a process of how individuals work together effectively to envision, plan, effect change in organizations, and respond to internal and external constituencies and issues” (ACPA & NASPA Professional Competencies, 2010, p.22).

The basic skill set in this competency area that warrants further exploration in relation to managing emotions or critical incident response is (1) identify and then effectively consult with key stakeholders and those with diverse perspectives to make informed decisions and articulate the logic of decision-making to all interested parties. Additionally, only one area in the advanced skill set for the leadership competency warrants further exploration: (1) display authenticity and congruence between one’s true self and one’s positional roles.

The final competency area that relates to managing emotions or critical incident response is the personal foundations competency area. The personal foundations competency area is defined, in short, as the “knowledge, skills, attitudes to maintain emotional, physical, social, environmental, relational, spiritual, and intellectual wellness;

Basic skills sets in this competency area that warrant further exploration are the ability to (1) articulate awareness and understanding of one’s attitudes, values, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and identity as it affects one’s work with others; and (2) take responsibility to develop cultural skills by participating in activities that challenge one’s beliefs. The intermediate competency area that stands out for managing emotions and critical incidents is the same as the above with the added skill of identifying attitudes, values, beliefs, etc. in others. No advanced competency areas were identified as relating to managing emotions or critical incident response.

Summary

The literature review revealed three primary themes in leadership studies in higher education: complex-problem solving, solution construction skills (politics), and social judgment skills. The three themes provide insight into competencies and skills that might be related to emotional intelligence. Thus, setting the framework for determining if emotional intelligence (managing emotions) is a competency for SSAOs. The three constructs serve as a foundation for making the case the managing emotions is prevalent but not yet clearly understood in the profession. The overarching competency areas established by the ACPA and NASPA describe competencies that relate to Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory of student development (specifically, vector two) and Mayer & Salovey’s (1997) theory of emotional intelligence (specifically, branch four). Research has not yet sufficiently examined managing emotions within the context of handling critical incidents on campus, and existing SSAO leadership research is limited in its examination of managing emotions within the professional context. Critical incidents provide a suitable
context for examining how emotional intelligence (that is, managing emotions) is reflected in the work of SSAOs.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

An examination of the literature regarding SSAOs and emotional intelligence indicated that further analysis is needed to understand if emotional intelligence is a leadership competency for SSAO's. A mixed methods approach served as the template for this study to gain an understanding of the role emotional intelligence plays in the work of SSAOs. Johnson et al. (2007) defined mixed methods research as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (p. 122). The difficulty in fully comprehending the emotional intelligence ability of SSAO’s is both experiential and analytical: neither research approach alone would allow for a triangular examination of the research problem.

This research used a sequential mixed methods study design to examine SSAOs’ emotional intelligence ability. Specifically, it examined how SSAOs manage their emotions in high stress and complex situations. The research addressed the following questions:

Quantitative

1. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) an important leadership competency for SSAOs?
2. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically managing emotions) impacted by the number of years of experience an SSAO has?

Qualitative
3. In what ways do SSAOs use emotional intelligence (managing emotions) during critical incidents?

**Research Design and Rationale**

The exploratory nature of this sequential mixed method research approach is grounded in discovering how SSAOs manage emotions through their experiences of critical incident management. A sequential mixed methods approach was employed for this study due to the complexity of the research problem and the absence of foundational literature to guide the specific dimensions of this issue. The exploratory design permitted the researcher to interact with the participants through individual interviews that aimed to uncover the relationship between emotional intelligence and critical incidents (Creswell, 2008). The use of a sequential mixed method design for exploratory research is also supported by Greene and Caracelli (1997), who note that the examination of quantitative data (outcomes) and qualitative data (processes) allows for an increased ability to detect the occurrence of the phenomenon. Additionally, the sequential mixed methods approach allows for data results to inform a more complete picture for the researcher. The exploratory nature of the sequential mixed methods design also allows the researcher to “collect quantitative data and then collect qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on quantitative results” (Creswell, 2008, p. 560).

**Research Design.** This was an exploratory sequential mixed methods study of SSAOs in NASPA Region II. The quantitative portion of the study involved 27 SSAOs in NASPA Region II who were given the MSCEIT Branch 4 assessment. The qualitative interview questions were then developed and refined based on the analysis of the
quantitative data. The qualitative portion of the study comprised individual interviews with three of the SSAOs who completed the quantitative assessment.

**Rationale.** The identification of SSAOs’ emotional intelligence capabilities in combination with determining how those capabilities inform and influence their response to critical situations required a method of research that leverages multiple approaches. Employing a sequential mixed methods approach provided sufficient freedom to explore themes that emerged during data collection and to be responsive to opportunities to further explore the findings without the constraint of a highly prescriptive design. The sequential mixed methods approach, therefore allowed for the results to form a complete picture for the researcher.

The quantitative portion of this sequential mixed-methods research design was used to acquire demographic data and specific MSCEIT data related to SSAOs’ ability to manage emotions. The MSCEIT instrument is a standardized instrument used to determine an individual’s emotional intelligence ability in four domains. For purposes of this study, only the fourth domain (the managing emotions branch) was assessed because it directly measures the ability to manage emotions.

The design of the qualitative portion of this study was based on the results from the initial quantitative portion of the study. The qualitative portion of the study explored in-depth how SSAOs manage their emotions while handling critical incidents. This was accomplished through individual one-on-one interviews with three participants selected from respondents who participated in the quantitative portion of the study.
Population and Site

SSAOs were the unit of analysis for this study. SSAOs are individuals whose primary focus is on “divisional and institutional priorities while supervising a limited number of direct reports” (McClennan, Striger, & Barr, 2009, p. 356). SSAOs are generally responsible for the following areas at a college or university: student activities, judicial affairs, Dean of Students, housing, dining services, counseling, health services, career services, and disability services. They occasionally may also be responsible for additional student-focused areas, such as athletic departments.

The sample for the qualitative portion of this study was convenience sample of three SSAOs, chosen from the 12 SSAOs who indicated their willingness to participate in one-on-one interviews. The researcher chose convenience sampling because this ensures participants are “willing and available to be studied” (Creswell, 2008, p. 155). The challenges associated with conducting an exploratory study on a dispersed geographical population with extensive time constraints and the significant amount of financial resources involved in traveling to the participants’ locations also contributed to the researcher’s choice to use the convenient population who self identified as willing participants. According to Creswell (2008), “the most time-consuming and costly approach is to conduct individual interviews” (p. 226).

Site description. For purposes of this study, the researcher requested participation from SSAOs whose institutions are part of NASPA Region II. NASPA Region II consists of the following states and territories: NY, PA, WV, DE, NJ, MD, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The qualitative interviews were conducted at the participants’ work locations in their office, depending on their schedule and their comfort.
level. The qualitative interviews occurred at a small, comprehensive university, a Catholic liberal arts university, and a large public university.

**Site access.** Access to the participants was difficult due to their congested schedules and the nature of SSAOs’ professional workload. NASPA granted access and permission to conduct the study for their specific SSAO members in Region II. Permission was also obtained from the participating SSAOs to conduct the individual interviews at their institution.

**Stages of Data Collection**

The data collection for this study utilized two phases. The sequential mixed methods approach for this study was completed over the course of one year. The data collection protocol was designed to allow the quantitative survey results to provide initial insights into the ability of SSAOs to manage emotions. The insights led to the development of the interview protocol.

The research instrument used for Phase I was the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). For the purposes of this research, the researcher only used the 41-question online proxy form provided by Multi Health Systems (2011) that examines Branch four of the MSCEIT. The MSCEIT is a four branch test. For purposes of this research, branch four was the main focus, Branch four examines an individuals ability to manage their emotions and is considered the most complex level of emotional intelligence capabilities. The complete MSCEIT test was not needed for this study because the research was focused on the management of emotions.
Phase II of the study began with the development of a qualitative question protocol for the individual interviews. The questions were developed based on the data analysis of the results of Phase I of the study. The questions were evaluated and analyzed for relevance and content by the researcher with the goal of a deeper analysis of the complexities of emotional management. The questions expanded on themes from quantitative instrument to explore the phenomena of managing emotions more comprehensively.

Phase I.

*MSCEIT instrument.* Quantitative data was collected utilizing the Mayer Salovey Carusso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Appendix A). The MSCEIT is designed to assess the four central areas of emotional intelligence: (1) accurately perceive emotions, (2) use emotions to facilitate thinking, problem solving, and creativity, (3) understand emotions, and (4) manage emotions for personal growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

The MSCEIT test is different from many emotional intelligence tests because it measures ability. Other emotional intelligence tests use self-reporting methodologies in their design. The MSCEIT assessment reports an individual’s score in multiple ways. MSCEIT results produce an overall emotional intelligence score. Additionally, the test is divided into two main categories: experiential emotional intelligence and strategic emotional intelligence. The two main categories are dissected further into four branch areas: (1) perceiving emotions, (2) facilitating thought, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions. A primary characteristic of the MSCEIT assessment is that participant scores are not impacted by self-concept or emotional state of the participants.

For the purpose of this research, only the managing emotions branch of the instrument was administered. The managing emotions branch (branch four) served as the
dependent variable for the study. Permission was received by Multi-Health Systems to use only branch 4. Reliability did not change for this section of the assessment, however, using only one section prevented the researcher from calculating a total score for participants’ emotional intelligence abilities. The rubric for branch four is examined through two areas: (1) emotion management task and (2) emotional relations task. A participant’s ability to employ emotions in their decision-making framework is evaluated in the emotions management task area. A participant’s ability to utilize emotions that involve others is evaluated in the emotional relations task area.

The MSCEIT Branch 4, managing emotions area, consists of 41 items. The respondents did not have a time limit to complete the questions. The assessment was completed online through Qualtrics Inc. online survey tool. The demographic questions and the assessment were developed into one online survey. Data was scored by MHS, who then returned the composite scores to the researcher. The data for a completed survey is given a theme score based on the values selected during the assessment period. Details of the instrument can be found in Appendix A.

Scoring for the managing emotions section of the MSCEIT was “general consensus” scoring. General consensus scoring is conducted by identifying the answer that is considered correct by the majority of the respondents in the general sample. The scoring for the section was performed by the provider of the MSCEIT instrument (Multi-Health Systems, Inc.). Raw score data for the managing emotions section based on the normative sample is (1) emotional management: mean of .44 and standard deviation of .09 and (2) emotional relationships: mean of .46 and standard deviation of .11 (Multi-Health Systems Inc., 2011).
Normative data for the MSCEIT is based on previous research conducted at 50 unique sites with 5000 respondents. Women typically score higher than men on all measures of the test. Women also score 5.3% higher than men on the branch four assessment evaluating an individual's ability to manage emotions.

**Reliability.** The MSCEIT has a reliability measure of .93 when scored using the general consensus standard (Caruso et al., 2002). Branch 4 (managing emotions) has a score reliability of .83 (Brackett & Mayer, 2001). The test-retest reliability (N=62) for the full-scale MSCEIT was reported (r=.86; Caruso et al., 2002).

**Participant selection.** One hundred and fifty-three SSAOs were identified in NASPA region II using the NASPA membership database. A formal email was sent to the 153 SSAOs describing the purpose of the research and an invitation to participate in the study (Appendix D). Consent to participate in the study was included in the Qualtrics online survey instrument link provided to the SSAO group. The survey yielded 27 completed responses. At the end of the survey, participants also had the opportunity to self-identify as a potential participant for the qualitative aspect of the study.

**Data collection.** Participants were sent an email detailing the study with a link for the survey that included the consent form, demographic questions, and assessment instrument. Due to the nature of email, a reminder email requesting participation was sent to potential participants one week after the first email, and a final reminder was sent two weeks after the initial email. Participants were asked to provide an online signature indicating that the researcher has permission to use the data from the survey. The researcher was available by phone or email to answer any questions that arose regarding the purpose of the study, data collection, and consent.
All information obtained during the study is strictly confidential. Confidentiality as described by Creswell is “protecting the anonymity of individuals by assigning numbers to returned instruments and keeping the identity of individuals confidential offers privacy to participants” (2008, p. 179). Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Nonetheless, participants’ identities were kept confidential through the use of a numbering system for returned responses. Response data is only accessible to the researcher and the dissertation chair. Data is stored on a secure server that is protected by password known only to the researcher. Response data will be stored in a locked safe at the researcher’s office for one year following the completion of the study. After one year, all data will be shredded or erased.

**Data analysis.** The MSCEIT responses for branch four were analyzed using the general consensus scoring for a normative database of 5000 people. Additionally, the researcher also analyzed demographic data, frequency statistics, and conducted a MANOVA and linear regression analyses using SPSS.

**Phase II.**

**Instrumentation.** A qualitative interview protocol consisting of 12 open-ended questions was developed after analysis of the quantitative data. The open-ended questions were developed using the primary themes that are in the MSCEIT branch 4 assessments. The questions were intentionally developed by the researcher to further extrapolate an understanding of SSAOs ability to manage their emotions. As noted by Creswell, open-ended questions allow participants to “voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (2008, p. 225). It was important to
the researcher and for the potential outcomes of this study to conduct the interview process using a method that allows the participants to feel comfortable sharing their ideas.

**Identification and invitation.** The participants in the quantitative study had the opportunity to opt in as a potential participants for the individual interviews. The 12 individuals who indicated their willingness to participate were contacted, and three out of the 12 were selected based on their availability and location.

An email with a proposed date, time, and location for the one-on-one interviews was then sent to the selected interview participants. Interviews occurred on-site at the participants’ institutions. Interviewees were contacted by phone one week before the interview to confirm the appointment. The consent form was provided to each respondent prior to each interview to ensure an understanding of the research study.

**Data collection.** The interviews were conducted at the personal office of each of the three participants. Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. A set time restriction was not established prior to the interviews, but none of the interviews exceeded one hour. Each individual interview session was also digitally recorded.

The researcher kept brief descriptive field notes related to the mood, location, and insights obtained during the interview (Creswell, 2008). The notes were documented on index cards and then transferred to word documents and labeled under the pseudonym for each participant. Electronic data and recordings from the interview sessions are stored on a password-secured server. Data from the qualitative study is only accessible by the researcher and the dissertation chair. All data from the qualitative study will be stored until April 2014, at which time it will be shredded, erased, or destroyed.
**Data analysis.** The digitally recorded data was transcribed by Verbal Ink, and a complete full transcription was completed for each individual interview. Transcription is the “process of converting audiotape recordings of field notes into text data” (Creswell, 2008, p. 246). The researcher then engaged in the process of identifying themes in the transcribed data. Creswell stresses that “the identification of themes provides the complexity of a story and add depth to the insight about understanding individual experiences” (2008, p. 521).

Each interview was viewed as a single incident. That is, each interview was considered individually in the analysis. Common themes were identified across the data with regard to addressing the research questions.

The process of data analysis involves “making sense out of text and data…and preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). The researcher searched for patterns, themes, and dimensions in the data through analysis of the interviews, coding of the data, and further analysis as themes and patterns emerged. The goal was to describe participants’ subjective experiences and views.

The first level of identification occurred during the initial review of each interview transcript. Upon receiving the transcripts, the researcher read each transcript, analyzed the data of each interview, and then performed coding. The resulting themes and subthemes are described in the summary of the research findings.
Coding. The researcher employed an open coding process to analyze the qualitative data. According to Goulding (1999), the open coding process develops meaning by dissecting data into distinct components.

Field Notes.

Instrumentation. Note cards were utilized during each interview to take notes of observations during the interviews.

Identification and invitation. The researcher requested permission to take field notes from each participant prior to the start of each interview.

Data collection. Field notes were handwritten on 5x7 note cards for each of the interviews. Cards were identified by the pseudonym for the interview participant. Notes were then typed into a word document immediately following the interview session in order to capture the most precise data from the interview.

Data analysis. The data from the field notes were included in the transcriptions of the interviews for thematic analysis. Additionally, the observational data provided rich detail for the researcher to describe the interview experience for the research findings.

Ethical Considerations

IRB approval. This research study required IRB approval due to the nature of conducting exploratory research and because this study conducted research on human subjects. SSAOs are high-level executives at their respective institutions that demand attention to detail that only IRB approval provided. Additionally, the expectation for their participation in this study required the utmost level of ethics along with protection of the participant’s identity, rights, and welfare.
The core questions of this study focus on the relationship of emotional intelligence to the approach taken during critical incidents. Individual participation in this study remained confidential in order to protect the participants’ identities. Participants were asked questions that were sensitive in nature due to their role within their institution. The confidentiality process included detailed steps such as direct communication between the study participant and the researcher.

Data analysis was also subjected to ethical considerations. The confidentiality of participants warranted that analysis of the data be limited and controlled by the researcher. Control of the analysis protected the participants by minimizing any potential harm and maximizing possible benefits from the study. The data was analyzed after individual codes had been created to identify each participant and their responses.

The researcher sought affiliation and cooperation from NASPA. Cooperation helped the researcher to identify potential participants, and this cooperative partnership also potentially helped to elicit participation from SSAOs. The researcher provided proof that the highest level of ethics, participant protection, and research guidelines were IRB approved and met the standards set by NASPA. Seeking IRB approval was a critical step in order to seek endorsement by NASPA and to be approved to use the MSCEIT assessment.

Additional ethical measures. Participants in this study received detailed documentation outlining the purpose, intent, methods, and timeline of the study. Important information regarding the study was detailed in the informed consent section of the electronic survey and prior to each individual one-on-one interview. Consent forms included detail on how participant data was protected. Participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. Limiting data access to
only the researcher and dissertation chair protected the integrity of the data as well as the participants’ confidentiality. The researcher agreed to protect any data before, during, and after the study by storing the data on a password-protected server to which only the primary researcher has access. Additionally, detailed information regarding the results of the study does not identify participants in any form other than the general demographic data collected during the quantitative phase.
Chapter 4: Findings, Results, and Interpretations

The examination and study of leadership within higher education continues to evolve due to the rapidly changing environment of higher education. Substantial research has been conducted on leadership research in the field, but existing literature fails to examine the phenomenon of emotional intelligence as it relates to higher education leadership. SSAOs represent an integral sub-group within higher education leaders, yet an understanding of emotional intelligence as a potential leadership area for SSAOs does not currently exist.

This study was a sequential mixed methods exploratory study that incorporated the use of an emotional intelligence assessment (MSCEIT) followed by one-on-one individual interviews. The exploratory design permitted the researcher to interact with the participants through individual interviews that probed for information about emotional intelligence and managing emotions (Creswell, 2008). Employing a sequential mixed methods approach provided sufficient freedom to explore themes that emerged during data collection and to be responsive to opportunities to engage in deeper analysis without the constraint of a highly prescriptive design. In order to support the study’s conclusions, data from the MSCEIT assessment, individual interviews, and field notes were triangulated.

The study examined three research questions:

Quantitative

1. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically managing emotions) an important leadership competency for SSAOs?
2. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) impacted by the SSAOs’ years of experience?
Qualitative

3. In what ways do SSAOs use emotional intelligence (managing emotions) during critical incidents?

The researcher sought to answer these questions by administering a section of the MSCEIT emotional intelligence test that specifically measured the ability to manage emotions. Permission to use only the managing emotions section of the assessment was received from Multi-Health Systems, the distributor of the test. The questions in the managing emotions assessment section are standardized and tested on a normative database of 5000 participants. NASPA provided the researcher with email contact information for SSAOs in NASPA Region II. The assessment tool was distributed to 153 SSAOs in NASPA Region II. Out of the 153 possible SSAO participants, 27 (17.5%) completed the survey. Frequency statistics were used to examine the participants’ education level and gender. Table 1 illustrates the education level and gender breakdown for the sample.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.D.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 27

Based on the results of the MSCEIT assessment, qualitative individual interviews lasting under 60 minutes in length with three SSAO’s who also participated in the quantitative phase of the study were conducted. Brief field notes were taken during each interview. The notes supplemented the transcribed data and described the interview
environment, non-verbal queues, and emotions generated during the discussion. The interviews were conducted at the office location of each participant. All three interviews took place between February 2013 and April 2013. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix B. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of each individual.

This chapter consists of the findings, results, and interpretations of the study. A survey administered to SSAOs and qualitative interviews comprised the data collected for analysis to address the three research questions of this study. Research questions 1 and 2 were answered through the quantitative analysis portion. Research question 3 was addressed using the qualitative analysis. The findings were based on frequency statistics, normative database results from the MSCEIT assessment, multivariate analysis of variance, linear regression analyses, and thematic coding of interview transcriptions. The results are examined in the final section.

Findings

**Research Question 1.** To what extent, if any, is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) an important leadership competency for SSAOs in their management of critical incidents?

Research question 1 was evaluated by the results of the MSCEIT assessment for managing emotions. Scores from the managing emotions section were analyzed against a normative database of 5000 responses using general consensus scoring. Scoring was completed by Multi-Health Systems, who serves as the official provider of the assessment. In addition, question 1 was evaluated through the use of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) to determine if there were significant difference in emotional intelligence (specifically managing emotions) between males and females, or between education levels.
Additionally, two linear regression analyses were conducted to determine if a significant relationship existed between managing emotions and age. The dependent/criterion variables for the MANOVA and regression analyses were participants’ managing emotions scores, which were measured by two sections on the MSCEIT. Specifically, the two sections were management task (section D, 20-items) and relations task (section H, 9-items). For both sections, response parameters were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1=very ineffective, 2=somewhat ineffective, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat effective, and 5=very effective. Scores were calculated from whole values to decimal values by the MSCEIT scoring system that was used for the quantitative analysis.

Composite, average, and scores were then calculated by summing case scores across the two sections (D and H) and dividing by the number of construct items (20 and 9, respectively). Composite scores were used as dependent variables in the MANOVA and criterion variables regression models. The independent variables for the two MANOVA analyses were participants’ gender (male or female) and education level (Master’s Degree, Ph.D., Ed.D., or J.D.). Because there was only one participant with a J.D. degree, that participant’s score as not included in the MANOVA analysis. The predictor variable for the regression analyses was the participants’ age.

**Data cleaning.** Data for research question 1 were examined for anomalies by examining frequency counts to determine if missing cases were present, none were present. In addition, univariate outliers were examined by transforming case scores into z-scores and comparing z-scores to a critical value of +/- 3.29, $p < .001$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Outliers are identified as scores that exceed three standard deviations away from the mean. No cases of univariate outliers existed in the data. Therefore, for research question 1,
27 responses were received and 27 were evaluated by the MANOVA and linear regression models (n = 27).

**Tests of normality.** Data for research question 1 were examined to determine if normal distributions existed. To test the assumption of normality, z-skew coefficients were calculated for each variable by dividing the skew coefficients by the skew standard error. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommended the technique above would possibly indicate non-normality when z-skew coefficients exceeded the critical value of ±3.29 (p < .001). The normality test examining the z-skew coefficients revealed that no variables exceeded the critical value. Scatterplots were employed to test the criterion and predictor variables for linearity and homoscedasticity. Scatterplots analysis indicated that the data met general assumptions. The same method was used to evaluate Kurtosis resulting in none of the variables being identified as significantly kurtotic. As a result, the dependent/criterion variables were assumed to be normally distributed. Table 2 displays skewness and kurtosis statistics.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Skew Std. Error</th>
<th>z-skew</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Kurtosis Std. Error</th>
<th>z-kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>-0.284</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>-0.634</td>
<td>-0.871</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>-0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>-0.509</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>-1.136</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>0.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>-0.709</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td>-1.222</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td>1.121</td>
<td>0.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>-0.884</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td>-1.524</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>1.121</td>
<td>0.589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>1.405</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td>1.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td>0.429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Homogeneity of Variance-Covariance Matrices. Box’s M Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was conducted to determine if the two branches of managing emotions (management task and relations task) were equal across the levels of the independent variables (gender and education). The examination of the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices revealed that the distributions were equal across groups. Results from the analysis are the two branches of managing emotions meet the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices assumption. Table 3 shows the details of Box’s M test for each of the independent variables.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Box’s M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.548</td>
<td>0.774</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>132508.07</td>
<td>.508a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>4.374</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>707.141</td>
<td>.740b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Design: Intercept + Gender  
b. Design: Intercept + Education Level

Homogeneity of variance. Variance was examined using Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance. The test examines if the error variance of the dependent variables (Management Task and Relations Task) were equal across the groups (gender and
education). The dependent variables (Management Task and Relations Task) did meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance resulting in equal distribution. Table 4 shows the details of Levene’s Test on two dependent variables.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig. $^a$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.754$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.460$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>1.936</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.152$^b$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>2.518</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.083$^b$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Design: Intercept + Gender
b. Design: Intercept + Education Level

Results of MANOVA Analyses of Research Question 1. Using IBM SPSS 21, between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if statistically significant differences in managing emotions existed between genders and between participants’ education levels. Results from the MANOVA test revealed that a significant difference did not exist between males and females on a model containing two branches of managing emotions (management task and relations task), $F(2, 24) = 0.773$, Wilks Lambda = 0.940, $p = .473$, partial eta-squared = .060. Additionally, results from the MANOVA test revealed that a significant difference did not exist between participants’ education levels on a model containing two branches of managing emotions (management task and relations task), $F(6, 44) = 0.829$, Wilks Lambda = 0.807, $p = .554$, partial eta-
squared = .102. See Table 8 for a model summary of the MANOVA analysis of research question 1.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Wilks’ Lambda</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Wilks’ Lambda</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Design: Intercept + Gender
b. Design: Intercept + Education Level
c. Computed using alpha = .05

Results of Linear Regression Analyses of Research Question 1. Linear regression analyses were employed to determine if a significant relationship was present between the two branches of managing emotions (management task and relations task) and participants' age. Regression analysis results revealed that a significant relationship did not exist between management task and participants’ age, $R = .288$, $R^2 = .083$, $F(1, 25) = 2.262$, $p = .145$. The second regression analysis results indicated that a significant relationship also did not exist between relations task and participants’ age, $R = .196$, $R^2 = .038$, $F(1, 25) = 0.997$, $p = .328$. See Table 6 for a model summary of the two linear regression analyses of research question 1.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.262</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

| Relations Task | .196 | .038 | 0.058 | 1 | 25 | 0.997 | .328 |

**MSCEIT Results.** The results for the general consensus scoring were generated from a sample of 27 (17.5%) respondents out of 153 invited participants. Participants in the assessment completed the branch 4 (managing emotions) section. Results were collected using Qualtrics software then submitted electronically to Multi-Health Systems Inc. for scoring. The average age of the participants was 51, which was expected by the researcher given that SSAO positions are typically held by senior professionals. The average years of experience as an SSAO was 9.7 years, and the average years of experience in Student Affairs in general was 26.56 years, as detailed in Table 7.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of Participants’ Age, SSAO Tenure, and Student Affairs Tenure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>9.047</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>-0.744</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSAO Experience</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>5.098</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>-0.675</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs Experience</td>
<td>26.56</td>
<td>7.653</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 27*

The general consensus scoring is divided into two sections of scores: emotional management (section D) and emotional relations (section H). Scoring for the two areas and for the overall managing emotions branch score are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

**MSCEIT General Consensus Scoring Descriptors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Standard Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve</td>
<td>0-&lt;70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider Developing</td>
<td>&gt;=70 and &lt;90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>&gt;=90 and &lt;110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ average score for emotional management was 95.68 (competent rating). Participants’ average score for emotional relations was 95.89 (competent rating). Female participants averaged a 4 point difference in their task scores and branch score compared to male participants. Table 9 provides an overview of the scoring by gender for both task sections and the managing emotions branch score. The overall rating for the branch area of managing emotions for all participants was a score of 96.09 (competent).

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task and Branch Scoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2.** To what extent, if any, is emotional intelligence (specifically managing emotions) during the management of critical incidents moderated by the SSAOs’ years of experience?

Research question 2 was evaluated using linear regression analyses to determine if a significant relationship existed between managing emotions and SSAOs’ years of experience. Additionally, linear regression analyses were used to determine if a significant relationship existed between managing emotions and participants’ years of experience in student affairs. The criterion variables for the regression analyses were participants’ managing emotions scores (management task and relations task) as defined in research.
question 1. The predictor variables for the regression analyses were SSAOs’ years of experience and participants’ years of experience in student affairs.

**Data cleaning.** Data for research question 2 were examined for anomalies by examining frequency counts to determine if missing cases were present, none were present. In addition, univariate outliers were examined by transforming case scores into z-scores and comparing z-scores to a critical value of +/- 3.29, \( p < .001 \) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Outliers are identified as scores that exceed three standard deviations away from the mean. No cases of univariate outliers existed in the data. Therefore, for research question 2, 27 responses were received and 27 were evaluated using the linear regression models \( (n = 27) \). Descriptive statistics for the criterion and predictor variables are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Task</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>-0.284</td>
<td>-0.871</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>-0.509</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSAO Tenure</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>5.098</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>-0.675</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs Tenure</td>
<td>26.56</td>
<td>7.653</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 27*

**Tests of normality.** Data for research question 2 were examined to determine if normal distributions existed. To test the assumption of normality, z-skew coefficients were calculated for each variable by dividing the skew coefficients by the skew standard error. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommended the technique above would possibly indicate
non-normality when $z$-skew coefficients exceeded the critical value of $\pm 3.29$ ($p < .001$).

The normality test examining the $z$-skew coefficients revealed that no variables exceeded the critical value. Scatterplots were employed to test the criterion and predictor variables for linearity and homoscedasticity. Scatterplots analysis indicated that the data met general assumptions. The same method was used to evaluate Kurtosis resulting in none of the variables being identified as significantly kurtotic. As a result, the dependent/criterion variables were assumed to be normally distributed. Table 11 displays skewness and kurtosis statistics.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Skew Std. Error</th>
<th>$z$-skew</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Kurtosis Std. Error</th>
<th>$z$-kurtosis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>-0.871</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>-0.999</td>
</tr>
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<td>Relations Task</td>
<td>-0.509</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>-1.136</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>0.261</td>
</tr>
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<td>SSAO Experience</td>
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<td>0.714</td>
<td>-0.675</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>-0.774</td>
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<td>Student Affairs Experience</td>
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<td>0.448</td>
<td>-0.614</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Linear Regression Analyses of Research Question 2. Using SPSS 21, two linear regression analyses were conducted to determine if a significant relationship existed between the two branches of managing emotions (management task and relations task) and SSAOs’ years of experience, as well as between the two branches of managing emotions and participants’ years of experience in general student affairs. Results from the regression analysis revealed that no significant relationships existed. See Table 12 for a model summary of the four linear regression analyses for research question 2.

Table 12
Research Question 3. In what ways do SSAOs use emotional intelligence to manage critical incidents?

Interviews with three selected SSAOs comprised the qualitative data analyzed to answer the third research questions of this study. Three (25% of the sample) individuals were selected out of 12 possible participants for the interview phase. As a population, SSAOs have exceptionally intense work demands so the decision of which participants to select for an interview was made based on the participants’ availability. In addition, financial constraints limited the researcher’s ability to travel to participant locations due to of the size of NASPA Region II. As a result, the sample is too small for generalizing the qualitative results across the total population of SSAOs. However, the nature of this exploratory study was to gain insight into the phenomena of emotional intelligence, which was accomplished via the three interviews. Table 13 provides a demographic introduction to the three participants and details the identification used in this chapter.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>SSAO yrs. of Experience</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Master’s degree-granting College/University (Private)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Master’s degree-granting College/University (Private)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Master’s degree-granting College/University (Public)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SSAO interviews.** Each interview was viewed as a single incident. That is, each interview was considered individually in the analysis. Common themes were identified across the data with regard to addressing the research questions.

The process of data analysis involves “making sense out of text and data…and preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). The researcher searched for patterns, themes, and dimensions in the data through the analyses of the interviews, coding of the data, and further analysis as themes and patterns emerged. The goal was to describe participants’ subjective experiences and views.

The first level of identification occurred during the initial review of each interview transcript. Upon receiving the transcripts, the researcher read each transcript, analyzed the data of each interview, and then conducted coding. The resulting themes and subthemes are described in the summary of the research findings.

**Interview experience.** Interviews were conducted in each participant’s work office. The first interview with Adam took place in his small corner office in an older building. Adam’s office was extremely hot—the heat was up high because of the cold weather outside. Our conversation began slowly as we both learned about our shared backgrounds and acquaintances. The furniture was older and the room had an old-world academic feel. The interview protocol proceeded, and the temperature in the room seemed to increase as Adam shared intimate details about critical incidents that have occurred during his career. Although the conversation stayed on course and followed the protocol, it felt as though I was learning and absorbing information from a wise, seasoned veteran. At the end of our
conversation, Adam indicated that he found the experience of talking through these emotions almost therapeutic.

The second interview occurred with Chris, who worked at a large public university on the East coast. The environment was much different compared to the first interview. Chris’s office was in a busy location with a great deal of activity, and the interview began at 9am. Her office was large and had many photos and institutional memorabilia placed throughout. Chris was pleasant and open from the start.

The interview protocol ran smoothly, until Chris began discussing her emotional state while handling an incident on campus. At that moment, Chris shared personal information regarding one of her family members who had passed away in the past year and how that impacted her ability to handle critical incidents. Chris shed tears as she told me of her loss. Her honesty and vulnerability was palpable as I truly felt the impact of her emotions she described. The interview concluded, and I felt that I had experienced the same power of emotions in an intimately personal way similar to the first interview.

The third interview occurred with Brenda—her office was located on a historic campus in a building that looked like classical university designs. Brenda’s office was large and airy with old leather furniture. She had a sofa in her office where she sat while I sat across from her. Brenda was much more reflective in her comments during the interview. As the interview progressed, I became aware that she was exhibiting signs of deeper engagement. Specifically, when I asked her to describe her emotional state after an incident she was describing, she shared personal information about her emotions.

The interview sessions revealed the magnitude of how often emotional management occurs in the SSAO position. During our interviews, the participants indicated they were
reflecting on and processing events in ways they had not previously done. The level of engagement during the discussion reinforced the researcher’s assumption that emotions are powerful forces in the daily lives of SSAOs.

**Coding.** The coding process identified a total of five primary themes. The primary themes related to this research question are summarized in this section. This section includes tables summarizing the definition of the identified theme and subthemes, the frequency of occurrence for the subthemes, as well as the number of interviewees that mentioned a specific theme or subtheme. Figure 2 illustrates the primary themes and subthemes.

![Thematic network for Research Question 3](image)

*Figure 2. Thematic network for Research Question 3*

**Primary Theme: Political Skill**
The most frequently occurring theme for research question 2 was political skills, that is, mentions of demonstrating political skill during critical incident management. This finding is connected to managing emotions because it relates to an individual’s ability to be open to feelings and manage those feelings in themselves and others. Exemplar quotes were classified into four subthemes: manage team, read situations, manage emotions of community, and understand spiritual need.

**Primary subtheme: Manage team.** The first primary subtheme, manage team, refers to mentions of managing team members effectively according to individual skills and strengths when dealing with a critical incident. This subtheme was mentioned 10 times in the three interviews. Brenda said she had learned, over the course of her nine years of experience, that “you don’t want to do this alone,” as well as “who are your great staff, and who aren’t.”

Chris also mentioned, “I was very glad that the interfaith advisor was with me, and she’s aware that – how much I value what she brings to our partnership when we’re working with people who are in crisis.”

Similarly, Adam shared, “And here, we have an excellent colleague and PR who I work with very, very directly and we're not framing things, but we've got to put out a sense of reassured confidence to parents of other students.”

**Subtheme #2: Read situations.** The next most frequently occurring subtheme was read situations, or the ability to read people and situations to decide what actions to take. The subtheme was mentioned seven times in two interviews. Adam expressed that appropriate responses to critical incidents vary, stating, “it has to be adapted to the situation. If this was an international student, if this was a student of an alum or related to a
trustee or so on, there's all these variables.” He also added, “I think it's trying to read where they are and responds as appropriately as you can. And I think often times, less said is better and the communication non-verbally of as much empathy as is conceivable.”

Chris described communication with a victim’s family, saying, “we just very gently and kind of not–we didn’t over–try to over communicate with them. I think we just did it enough so that they knew we were still there, and that mostly so that they knew that there was an open door if they decided to get in touch with us.”

**Subtheme #3: Manage emotions of community.** The third subtheme was to manage emotions of community. This subtheme refers to approaches to managing the overall emotions, or mood, of the community after a critical incident. This subtheme was mentioned five times in two interviews. Brenda shared,

> I think it’s good and okay to grieve, and be sad, and cry, and express emotions around a truly emotional incident. So, I think that instead of trying to manage any emotions what we try to do is make sure that resources were there for people who were having strong emotional reactions to it.

Brenda also expressed that the best response was “allowing the space and the opportunity for people to really talk about how they’re feeling and how it’s impacting them.”

Adam shared a similar sentiment when speaking on the decision of how to notify others about the death of a student in each of the deceased student’s classes. He stated, “I think that we were all there to make sure they had a chance to grieve together.”

**Subtheme #4: Understand spiritual need.** The next subtheme was understand spiritual need—understanding the need of spiritual comfort. It was mentioned three times
in two interviews. Regarding communicating with a religious family of a victim, Adam said, “The president called later in the day. She’s a religious woman who I think just hearing that she's calling and the identity of this institution reaching out might have been a little more comforting to the family.”

Chris similarly relied on a spiritual leader during a crisis, stating, “I was very glad that the interfaith advisor was with me, and she’s aware that – how much I value what she brings to our partnership when we’re working with people who are in crisis.” Regarding spiritual needs, Chris also added,

I need to pay attention to that even on a surface level of using the right language, I guess, but, also, just how important it is to have people around me who can fill that need that a family – a grieving family will have, ’cause I can’t fully empathize with that need.

Theme #2: Response Style

The second major theme found during analysis was response style. Response style falls into the task of emotional management, and a significant aspect of emotional management is the awareness, acceptance, and use of emotions in problem-solving (MSCEIT, 2002). This theme included any mentions of the characteristics of response style. Exemplar quotes were classified into four subthemes: personal concern, authenticity, comfort, and empathy.

Primary subtheme: Personal concern. The primary subtheme within response style was personal concern. This subtheme referred to mentions of expressing personal concern when handling critical incidents, and was mentioned six times in three interviews.
For example, Adam said, “We— in death of the fellow that I referred to driving off the road last year—I guess it was springtime—and went to each of his classes the next day to inform students.” When later describing the role of managing critical incidents, Adam added,

[Whether it is] memorial to the deceased, working with the family, making sure it's simplistic as they don't get a bill the next morning for some fluke when they haven't taken the students name out of the systems to – you can go through it all. Notifying faculty – I try to do all of that stuff as personally as I can.

Brenda also stated, “one of the things that happens in critical incidents is that anything else that you have to do that day just doesn’t matter. So, I think that knowing that everyone else can be dropped because this is where your time and energy and attention needs to be. It is the best response that you can give is everybody you[r] undivided attention on it.”

Subtheme #2: Authenticity. The next most frequent subtheme uncovered was authenticity. This subtheme is related to being authentic in one’s response and interactions, and was mentioned four times in three interviews. Chris disagreed with school lawyers that warned against saying or doing certain things that could cause the school to be sued when interacting with a victim’s parents, stating, “if you’re gonna get sued, you’re gonna get sued, but be a human being and be there and be present and be authentic.”

When speaking on her view of authenticity, Brenda shared,

I just feel like it is who I am. It is real. It’s authentic. It’s genuine, and I went to the parents sobbing and just gave them a big hug and told them how sorry I was. I
think in the front end of the crisis and during the—managing the crisis, I can keep it together. But there is almost always a point at the end of a crisis where I lose it.

Adam similarly mentioned, “I think we try to be as authentic as we can, yet mindful that you know, all involved are going to have a lot of needs in trying to pick up the pieces.”

**Subtheme #3: Comfort.** The next subtheme was comfort, or mentions of comforting those affected by critical incidents. This subtheme was mentioned a total of four times in two interviews.

Adam described learning to be comforting from others:

[O]ver time, you begin to get a sense of the strengths of different persons in different capacities with this stuff. I can't work the crowd as effective a way as a development officer during one of these things and yet, a couple of our—usually they are development officers, just have a capacity to go around and comfort people and convey in an authentic caring—I try to do that.

During Brenda’s interview, she recalled a situation in which a person of leadership was affected by a critical incident: “[W]e certainly paid a lot of attention to him, including just random calls saying, ‘How are you doing?’, ‘Are you holding up?’ and ‘What kind of support can we offer you?’”

**Subtheme #4: Empathy.** The final subtheme was empathy, referring to mentions of approaching a situation with empathy. It was mentioned three times in two interviews.

Adam described having to expect somewhat accusatory questions from families of victims, stating that families would ask questions, such as, “‘Why did you allow them to live there?’ You know, you can't stop them. Just a whole litany of things. And I think we all
need to anticipate that, respond without being in a denying mindset but rather just, ‘I understand your concern.’ And empathy.”

Chris mentioned a book about the failed handling of a critical incident, and how she strived to do the opposite of what the point person in the book did, which is to “talk to the families, express your sympathy and your empathy. Don’t worry so much about whether or not you’re gonna get sued.”

Theme #3: Emotional Handling

Emotional handling, or mentions of how to handle emotions, was the next most frequently occurring major theme. The judicious handling of emotions is another key component within the managing emotions domain. The SSAOs discussion of this ability sheds light on one the key concepts within managing emotions category. Exemplar quotes were classified into two subthemes: emotional control and emotional.

**Primary subtheme: Emotional control.** The primary subtheme of emotional control includes mentions of controlling emotions when facing critical incidents as a leader. This subtheme was mentioned seven times in two interviews. Chris opined,

That’s I think a necessary quality that you have to be able to fully feel your own emotions, but then when it’s time, put them over here to work through them later, and then do your job. But tiredness and it’s very tiring to have – to feel those emotions and on an ongoing sort of period of time, and then still be a leader.

Adam felt similarly, stating,
I think to a degree, you've got to present a sort of emotional control message and so on. If I was publically sobbing, I don't think it would be helpful to the students and so on. And yet inside, you're feeling those pangs.

**Subtheme #2: Emotional.** Emotional, or mentions of being emotionally open, was the final subtheme and was mentioned four times in one interview. Brenda shared, “I am not sure that I would be a textbook case of a vice president who totally is in control of and managers her emotions…I think it’s part of what makes me more effective in my job.” She further explained,

It’s interesting to me that talking about this has made me this emotional’ cause – well, it just, you can’t catch this on a tape, but I am an emotional person, and I’ve always been an emotional person, and managing particularly this kind of emotional response is not something that I’ve ever been good at. I would say maturity has helped me manage those emotions better, but I don’t have total control over them.

**Theme #4: Needs of Different Groups**

The needs of different groups was the fourth major theme, and referred to recognizing the needs of the different groups who are affected by a critical incident. A key concept for effectively managing emotions is an individual’s ability to not repress emotions. As described below, an SSAO must have the ability to regulate the emotions of others and include others’ emotions in their thought process. This theme was mentioned a total of five times in three interviews. Exemplar quotes were further classified into two subthemes: students and staff.
Chris mentioned addressing the needs of a perpetrator,

Again, I didn’t connect with the students who are the residence of the house who were the perpetrators in the incident, but I can say that we did try to encourage them to get—to also take advantage of counselors. We made it real easy for them to take a leave of absence.

Similarly, Adam shared, “all involved are going to have a lot of needs in trying to pick up the pieces.” Adam also mentioned having to reassure the parents of other students after a critical incidents, stating, “we have an excellent colleague and PR who I work with very, very directly and we're not framing things, but we've got to put out a sense of reassured confidence to parents of other students.”

Brenda described the process of initially identifying those who are affected by a critical incident:

Reaching out to the parents—sort of gathering information on what his relationship was with the university, first and foremost. Corralling staff and figuring out who knew him, what connections did he have, and make sure that we were taking care of the people that were gonna be most impacted by this.

**Primary subtheme: Students.** The primary subtheme under this theme was students, that is, addressing the needs of the students during or following a critical incident. It was mentioned six times in three interviews.

Brenda described the approach of “allowing the space and the opportunity for people to really talk about how they’re feeling and how it’s impacting them.”
In her interview, Chris mentioned a critical incident that required the diffusion of tensions:

Because it was a group of students who were the perpetrators and the allegation was self-defense…there were those [perpetrators’] friends versus the [victim’s] friends, so there was a lot of that type animosity on campus, and talk of retaliation and revenge and that sort of things, so we’ve been trying to deal with that and diffuse those situations.

Adam spoke of sharing the news regarding a death of a student to classes, stating, “we were all there to make sure they had a chance to grieve together, gave them some possibilities.” He added, “This Friday, we're going to be planting a memorial tree to remember this woman and it'll be visible to the students.”

**Subtheme #2: Staff.** The subtheme within this overall theme was staff, or addressing and acknowledging the needs of staff during critical incidents. This subtheme was mentioned five times in three interviews.

Brenda stated,

So, as we’re managing staff who are trying to manage students who are support students as students are working through this, I think being aware that staff are going through their own thing and paying attention to that separate from what we’re asking them to do with students is critically important.

Adam recalled, “I remember at a previous institution, we had three within six weeks one year and it was very, very difficult. And the staffs were really—they were so drained. But again, trying to be reassuring.”
Likewise, in the midst of critical incidents, Chris said, “I do wanna encourage [staff] to take care of themselves and take a break.”

**Theme #5: Affected Family**

The final overall theme, affected family, also directly relates to the ability of SSAOs to regulate emotions and use it in their thought process. This theme included any mentions of dealing with the emotions of affected family members, and was brought up four times during three interviews. Exemplar quotes had only one subtheme: express concern with care.

In his interview, Adam recalled having to control emotions and empathize with distraught parents:

> You know, parents will say things, “How did you let this happen?” Or, “I sent her to so and so thinking it was safe” or whatever—words which can be an almost inflammatory, they don't intend them that way by any means and I think you have to control your own emotions to the best degree possible. They don't mean it to be hurtful. It just—I guess venting to the degree they can.

Additionally, Chris recounted how one particular family of a victim was dealt with:

> And then the family he student who died really was a matter of communication, transparency, face time, visits…[The] interfaith advisor and I went to their home kind of afterwards to see how they were doing. Really left it to them to tell us when they were ready not to have contact with us anymore, which they did.

Brenda divulged how protocol can be based on the emotional well-being of the parents of victims of critical incidents:
We think that it would be hard for parents if the university didn’t act in ensuring that one week followed up to offer condolences, but two, that they kept getting bills from the university or notices from the university. So, we act pretty swiftly on notifying faculty and the various administrative offices.

**Primary subtheme: Express concern with care.** The primary subtheme under this theme was express concern with care. This subtheme refers to mentions of dealing carefully with family of victims, which occurred seven times in three interviews.

Chris described how concern was demonstrated toward a particular family of a victim:

Yeah, with the family, it was working with them on the memorial service what they wanted to see, getting a bus to go for students who wanted to go to the service, maintaining contact with the family afterwards for as long as they could handle it. We also gave a degree to the student, even though he hadn’t…quite gotten to [it].

Adam brought up his ability to communicate concern to family of the victim, as he is a parent himself. He stated, “Usually it's a one to one conversation, particularly with parents, I think if you are a parent or at least if you've had parental type relationships with kids before, you can communicate that caring and that concern.”

Brenda also discussed maintaining relations with the family of victims: “I think it’s just kinda being able to check in on people and tell then you remember, and that you’re thinking of them.”

Table 14 shows the frequency with which each of these themes appeared within the interview data.
Table 14

Frequency of Themes and Subthemes for Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and subthemes</th>
<th>N mentions</th>
<th>Total mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political skill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage team</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read people and situations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage emotions of community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand spiritual need</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Personal concern</td>
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<td>Authenticity</td>
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<td>Comfort</td>
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<td>Needs of different groups</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Staff</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Affected family</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express concern with care</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Results and Interpretations

Exploring the data in order to create an understanding of an SSAO’s ability to manage their emotions proved complex. The literature review revealed that SSAOs, as a unit of study, have not been analyzed through the lens of an emotional intelligence test. This study found several notable results, including that the SSAO sample rated as competent in their ability to manage emotions. The following section discusses the results and subsequent interpretations.

Emotional Intelligence Abilities (Managing Emotions) are Part of SSAOs Leadership Competencies
The participants in the study revealed that they have a functional ability to operate at a competent level in the Managing Emotions branch of the MSCEIT assessment. The participating SSAOs’ competent rating for managing emotions reveals they have an existing framework for handling feelings, both within themselves and others. Further indicators of the ability to manage as a competency were revealed in the individual interviews with participants.

The primary themes that emerged during the interviews strongly aligned with the constructs of the managing emotions branch of the MSCEIT. The connection of the emergent themes to the constructs within managing emotions represents the SSAOs’ ability to manage emotions in their life and the lives of those around them. As defined previously, emotional intelligence is “the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). All three interview participants shared intimate emotions through the lens of critical incidents that have occurred on their campuses. The five themes—political skill, response style, emotional handling, affected family, and needs of different groups—added context and examples for how SSAOs manage their emotions during critical incidents. The field note data corroborated the significance of emotions in the participants’ work, particularly through the intensity of their descriptions of managing emotions. In addition, the raw emotions that the participants exhibited during the interview process further demonstrated their ability to manage their emotions.

**Impact of Gender, Education Level, and Years of Experience**

The demographic data from the MSCEIT was analyzed to determine if gender, educational level, or years of experience had a relationship to the SSAOs ability to manage
emotions during critical incidents. Gender, education level, and years of experience did not have significant relationships with the ability to manage emotions in the participants studied. It should be noted, however, that the interpretations of the data analysis are limited due to the sample size of the study.

As noted by Chickering and Reisser (1993), individuals are continually evolving and developing as new experiences impact their identities. The limited exploration of these variables did not support the assumption that education and years of experience in their positions would have a positive impact on the ability to manage emotions. That is, an experienced SSAO did not exhibit a higher level of emotional management ability compared to an SSAO with fewer years of experience. The lack of an apparent impact of these variables contradicts the view that individuals continually evolve.

Summary

The findings and results of the study were previously discussed in this chapter. The MSCEIT assessment results, combined with the five themes from the qualitative interviews, revealed that the participants in the study are competent in their ability to manage their emotions. The five emergent themes further shed light on how SSAOs achieve this level of competency when dealing with critical incidents that occur on their campuses.

The study also examined the impact that demographic variables have on an SSAO’s ability to manage emotions. The results showed that differences in SSAOs’ gender, education level, and years of experience did not significantly impact the participants’ competency rating for managing emotions.
Nonetheless, the phenomenon of managing emotions during critical incidents was best illuminated during the qualitative interviews. The researcher witnessed the raw emotions of SSAOs who have handled tragic, critical incidents on their campus.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods study was to explore the extent to which emotional intelligence is an important leadership competency for SSAOs. The management of critical incidents served as the vehicle to explore the concept of managing emotions in the SSAOs’ workplace.

Conclusions

The interpretation of the research findings and conclusions for each research question will be presented in the same order as the research questions were introduced. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) an important leadership competency for SSAOs?
2. To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) during the management of critical incidents moderated by the SSAOs’ years of experience?
3. In what ways do SSAOs use emotional intelligence to manage critical incidents?

**Question 1: To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) an important leadership competency for SSAOs?**

Emotional intelligence is a rapidly evolving field of study, however, research examining the emotional intelligence of SSAOs had not yet been conducted prior to this study. Through the MSCEIT branch 4 survey, the researcher collected emotional intelligence data on current SSAOs in region II of NASPA. Although it is impossible to fully qualify the emotional intelligence ability of all SSAOs given the scope of this study,
it is evident that the SSAO participants of this study operate at a competent level within the managing emotions domain. Although the participants did not exhibit skilled or expert levels of managing emotions, it was clearly evident during the interviews that SSAOs operate in an emotionally-rich environment. The interview participants provided rich detail on how they manage their emotions and the emotions of those around them. The SSAO interview participants displayed deep emotional reactions and reflections during the interview, thus further providing evidence for their ability to manage emotions.

**Question 2: To what extent is emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) during the management of critical incidents moderated by the SSAOs years’ of experience?**

One of the primary aims of this sequential mixed methods exploratory study was to determine variables that might impact SSAOs’ ability to manage emotions. The second research question attempted to determine if a significant relationship existed between the two branches of managing emotions and the participants’ number of years of experience. The results of the linear regression analyses revealed that a significant relationship did not exist based on years of experience.

The scored assessments also indicated that being competent in managing emotions was not significantly moderated by other variables. No significant statistical differences were found based on age, gender, or education level.

**Question 3: In what ways do SSAOs use emotional intelligence to manage critical incidents?**
An additional important aspect of this study was to gain insight into how SSAOs use their emotional intelligence abilities, or more specifically, their emotional management abilities, to handle critical incidents. The MSCEIT assessment established a baseline understanding of the SSAOs’ competency in managing their emotions. The individual interviews then allowed for a deeper exploration into the SSAOs’ perception of their use of emotional intelligence skills.

The primary theme that emerged from the qualitative data is political skill. Higher education environments are often highly political environments, with political factors that range from organizational structure, public/private, prestige, to institutional history. Political skill and the sub-themes within it align with the emotional relations task level within branch 4 of the MSCEIT. The primary marker for the emotional relations task is the ability to incorporate emotions into decision-making that involves other people (MSCEIT, 2002). The participants in the qualitative aspect of the study indicated that reading the situation was extremely important. An example of dealing with international students or a veteran student requires different responses from the responding individuals and from the entire community. The connection of managing emotions to political skillset is not surprising, given that critical incidents often require SSAOs to manage a variety of elements that encompass a multitude of stakeholders. This was evident from the sub-themes that emerged under the primary theme of political skill: manage team, read situations, manage emotions of community, and understand spiritual need.

The second theme that appeared within the qualitative data is response style. This theme also aligns with the emotion management task level in branch 4 of the MSCEIT (managing emotions). Emotion management “is an individual’s ability to incorporate his or
her own emotions into decision making” (MSCEIT, 2002, p. 20). Within this secondary theme were the subthemes of personal concern, authenticity, comfort, and empathy.

The third theme that emerged from the individual interviews revealed that emotional handling is an important aspect of managing emotions when dealing with critical incidents. The ability of SSAOs to handle their individual emotions during critical incidents is an essential skill, and was a primary subtheme evident in the responses of two of the respondents. As stated by one respondent, “I think a necessary quality that you have to be able to fully feel your own emotions, gut them when it’s time, put them over here to work through them later, and then do your job.” At the core of this research is the intrinsic idea that managing emotions is an individual’s ability to understand their own feelings while simultaneously being able to use their understanding of their feelings to make decisions. As evident by the responses from the participants, it is clear that managing emotions is utilized during critical incidents.

**Recommended Actionable Solutions**

The quest to understand the competencies of leadership in higher education currently drives many research studies as higher education continues to experience multiple factors that impact the core of their enterprise. Additionally, critical incidents (i.e. student deaths, active shooter, natural disaster) that occur on campus force leaders to have a broad set of skills that ensure they are capable of addressing such incidents. Results from the study indicated that the sample of SSAOs scored a competent rating for managing their emotions. Based on these results, it is recommended that SSAOs take a complete emotional intelligence test to increase their understanding of their emotional intelligence abilities and establish a baseline for their current ability levels. SSAOs with a baseline understanding of
The adoption of a related graduate course in student affairs or higher education could promote a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence and improve future professional emotional intelligence abilities. A solid foundation in emotional intelligence in graduate students could potentially help future professionals in student affairs deal more effectively with the highly emotional, critical incidents that occur in their profession.

A certification course in emotional intelligence through one of the student affairs professional organizations would increase awareness among the student affairs professionals of the impact of emotional intelligence and managing emotions. As evidenced during the interviews with the SSAOs, it seems that managing the emotions that are inherent to the position are not frequently discussed amongst colleagues. Awareness and discussion of emotional intelligence and managing emotions could provide a different avenue for problem-solving that does not currently exist.

It is my hope that this study will inspire a fresh look at the competencies needed to be a SSAO. My 14 years of experience in student affairs has revealed that emotional intelligence is not easily learned nor taught in graduate courses in education. However, it is my belief that student affairs professionals who hope to become SSAOs must be competent in their ability to manage their emotions and employ emotional intelligence in their daily lives. This research has addressed the gap in our understanding of SSAOs’ emotional intelligence by creating a baseline set of data for how emotions are managed by SSAOs during critical incidents. That being said, this study was conducted using a relatively
convenient sample of SSAOs from NASPA region II. A more comprehensive future study might evaluate SSAOs on a national level, providing more in-depth data related to emotional intelligence competencies.

Additionally, future research is necessary to understand the progression of emotional intelligence capabilities through the cycle of a student affairs professional’s career. This research examined emotional intelligence capabilities at the highest position for student affairs professionals. An appropriate question worthy of further investigation would be what the emotional intelligence abilities of junior professionals are. Junior professionals are often the first line employees serving on the front lines during critical incidents. It is also worth querying whether significant differences exist based on age, gender, education level, and years of experience on a national level.

Lastly, it is this researcher’s belief that the complexities of the higher education environment demand that student affairs professionals are competent in their ability to manage emotions and use emotional intelligence in their position. The creation and operation of behavioral intervention teams (BIT) is commonplace in higher education. Understanding the emotional intelligence ability of individual behavioral intervention team members could provide insight into how to improve BIT training programs. Additionally, it potentially could impact how BIT teams respond during situations on campus. Professional associations could also enhance their professional leadership training programs by offering workshops or certificate programs that help student affairs professionals become competent in their ability to use emotional intelligence, specifically, managing emotions.
Summary

The intent of this research was to contribute to the body of knowledge on emotional intelligence, or managing emotions in particular. The literature review revealed a significant lack of understanding of the emotional intelligence abilities of SSAOs. While existing research on SSAOs has addressed various leadership abilities, no current research has addressed the emotional intelligence as a leadership competency for SSAOs. Critical incidents that occur on college campuses served as the primary vehicle for investigating how SSAOs manage their emotions in their professional role.

The theoretical framework that guided this research was Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) student development model coupled with Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) emotional intelligence model. Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory provided this study with the conceptualization of an individual’s identity as constantly evolving. Vector two of their theory deals directly with managing emotions. Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) emotional intelligence model served as the primary theoretical framework for the study. The final guiding piece of the theoretical framework was SSAO practitioners’ guiding set of professional competencies that are outlined by ACPA and NASPA (2010). The current guidelines do not define emotional intelligence as a leadership competency. Thus, the goal of this research was to explore whether emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) is a leadership competency that SSAOs should have.

The findings of this research indicate that SSAOs function at a competent level in their ability to manage their emotions. The baseline data collected using the MSCEIT also indicates that age, education, gender, and years of experience do not have a significant relationship with an SSAOs’ ability to manage emotions. Perhaps the most interesting
revelation of this study, however, was the interactions with the SSAOs during the individual interviews. As the researcher, I took away a great deal information from the time I spent with each participant. The experience also reminded me of how mindful professionals must be when given the opportunity to interact with senior professionals in the field. The information and interactions that I received from conducting this study will undoubtedly make me a better professional.
References


Doyle, J. (2004). Where have we come from and where are we going? A review of past student affairs philosophies and an analysis of the current student learning philosophy. *Journal of College Student Development, 24*(1), 68-86.


Appendix A

Research Survey Instrument

MSCEIT (Branch 4 – Managing Emotions)

Section D

Instructions: Please select an answer for every action.

1. Mara woke up feelings pretty well. She had slept well, felt well rested, and had no particular cares or concerns. How well would each action help preserve her mood?

Action 1: She got up and enjoyed the rest of the day.


Action 2: Mara enjoyed the feelings and decided to think about and appreciate all the things that were going well for her.


Action 3: She decided it was best to ignore the feeling since it wouldn’t last anyway.


Action 4: She used the positive feeling to call her mother, who had been depressed, and tried to cheer her up.


2. Andrew works as hard, if not harder, than one of his colleagues. In fact, his ideas are usually better at getting positive results for the company. His colleague does a mediocre job but engages in office politics so as to get ahead. So, when Andrew’s boss announces that the annual merit award is being given to this colleague, Andrew is very angry. How effective would each action be in helping Andrew feel better?

Action 1: Andrew sat down and thought about all of the good things in his life and in his work.


Action 2: Andrew made a list of the positive and negative traits of his colleague.
EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Action 3: Andrew felt terrible that he felt that way, and he told himself that it wasn’t right to be so upset over an event not under his control.


Action 4: Andrew decided to tell people what a poor job his colleagues had done, and that he did not deserve the merit award. Andrew gathered memos and notes to prove his point, so it wasn’t just his word.


3. Jane did not know when her bills were due, how many more bills would be arriving soon, or if she could pay them. Then her car began making strange noises and her mechanic said it would cost so much to fix it might not be worth it. Jane can’t fall asleep easily, she wakes up several times at night, and she finds herself worrying all the time. How effective would each of the following actions be in reducing her worry?

Action 1: Jane tried to work out what she owed, how much was due, and when it was due.


Action 2: Jane learned deep relaxation techniques to calm herself down.


Action 3: Jane got the name of a financial planner to help her figure out how to manage her finances properly.


Action 4: She decided to look for a job that paid more money.


4. Nothing seems to be going right for Ed. There just isn’t much in Ed’s life that he enjoys or that brings him much pleasure. Over the next year, how effective would each of the following actions be at making Ed feel better?
Action 1: Ed started to call friends he hadn’t spoken to in a while and made plans to see a few people.


Action 2: He started to eat better, to get to bed earlier, and to exercise more.


Action 3: Ed felt that he was bringing people down and decided to stay by himself more until he could work out what was bothering him. He felt he needed time alone.


Action 4: Ed found that relaxing in front of the TV at night, with a beer or two, really helped him to feel better.


5. As Robert drove home from work, a tractor-trailer truck cut him off. He didn’t even have time to honk his horn. Robert quickly swerved to the right to avoid getting his. He was furious. How effective would each of the following actions be in dealing with his anger?

Action 1: Robert taught the truck driver a lesson by cutting him off a few miles down the highway.


Action 2: Robert just accepted that these things happen and drove home.


Action 3: He yelled as loud as he could, and cursed and swore at the trucker.


Action 4: He vowed never to drive on that highway again.
Section H

Instructions: Please select an answer for every response.

1. John developed a close friend at work over the last year. Today, that friend completely surprised him by saying he had taken a job at another company and would be moving out of the area. He had not mentioned he was looking for other jobs. How effective would John be in maintaining a good relationship, if he chose to respond in each of the following ways?

Response 1: John felt good for him and told his friend that he was glad he got the new job. Over the next few weeks, John made arrangements to ensure they stayed in touch.


Response 2: John felt sad that his friend was leaving, but he considered what happened as an indication that the friend did not much care for him. After all, the friend said nothing about his job search. Given that his friend was leaving anyway, John did not mention it, but instead went looking for other friends at work.


Response 3: John was very angry that his friend hadn’t said anything. John showed his disapproval by deciding to ignore his friend until the friend said something about what he had done. John thought that if his friend didn’t say anything, it would confirm John’s opinion that the friend was not worth talking to.


2. Roy’s teacher has just called Roy’s parents to say that Roy is doing poorly in school. The teacher tells Roy’s parents that their son isn’t paying attention, is being disruptive, and can’t sit still. The particular teacher doesn’t do well with active boys, and Roy’s parents wonder what’s really going on. Then the teacher says that their son will be held back unless he improves. The parents feel very angry. How helpful to their son is each of these reactions?

Response 1: The parents told the teacher that this was a big shock to them since this was the first time that had ever heard there was a problem. They asked to meet with the teacher and also requested if the principal could attend the meeting.
EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Response 2: The parents to the teacher that if she continued to threaten to have their son repeat the grade, they would take it up with the principal. They said, “If our son is left back, we will hold you personally responsible. You are the teacher and your job is to teach, not blame the student”.

Response 3: Roy’s parents hung up on the teacher and called the principal. They complained about the teacher’s threats and asked that their son be moved to a different classroom.

3. Everything is going well for Liz. While others have been complaining about work, Liz has just gotten a promotion and a decent raise. Her children all are very happy and doing well in school, her marriage is stable and very happy. Liz is starting to feel very self-important and finds herself tempted to brag about her life to her friends. How effective would each of the following responses be for maintaining her relationships?

Response 1: Since everything is so good, it’s okay to feel proud of it. But Liz also realized that some people see it as bragging, or may be jealous of her and so she only talked to close friends about her feelings.

Response 2: Liz started to think of all the things that could possibly go wrong in the future so she could gain perspective on her life. She saw that good feelings don’t always last.

Response 3: Liz shared her feelings with her husband that night. Then she decided that the family should spend time together on the weekend and get involved in several family events just to be together.
Appendix B

Qualitative Interview Protocol

Appendix B: Qualitative Interview Protocol

Participant ___________________________________________

Institution ____________________________________________

Date _________________________________

Start Time _______________________
End Time _______________

Opening Statement: Thank you for taking the time to discuss a critical incident that occurred on your campus. As stated in the informed consent form, this interview is being recorded using a digital voice recorder. Your identity will be protected in the final report through the use of assigned participant study codes. At no time will your identity be revealed without your full consent.

1. Describe a critical incident that has happened on your campus.

2. What factors and conditions do you feel contributed to the incident?

3. How did the campus leadership address the incident?

4. What was your role as the Chief Student Affairs Officer in addressing the incident?

5. Describe the emotions of those individuals involved in the incident.

6. Describe your emotional state while handling the incident.

7. What were the outcomes of the incident?

8. Describe your emotional state after the incident.

9. How did you influence the emotions of others involved in the incident?
10. How did the incident inform your ability to understand the emotions of others?

11. How did the incident inform your ability to understand your emotions?

12. Describe your personal growth from the critical incident?
Appendix C

NASPA Project Proposal

A SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHODS STUDY: AN EXPLORATION of the use of EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE by SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS in MANAGING CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Brian Johnson

Ed.D. Program

Drexel University

Abstract

This proposed research study will investigate how Senior Student Affairs Officers’ use emotional intelligence to address critical incidents. The study will focus on the emotional intelligence of Senior Student Affairs Officers by examining the essential ability of managing emotions. Additionally, the study will use each participant’s emotional intelligence data to inform and provide meaning to how Senior Student Affairs Officers’ manage critical incidents using Senior Student Affairs Officers’ identified emotional intelligence capabilities. An exploratory design will be used as the framework for the research. The quantitative aspect of this study will use the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to establish a baseline set of data regarding Senior Student Affairs Officers’ emotional intelligence capabilities. The qualitative portion of the study will employ individual interviews with selected participants. The qualitative aspect of the study will explore how Senior Student Affairs Officers’ use emotional intelligence to solve problems and examine if they perceive emotional intelligence as useful for problem solving. Data collection will include surveying 50 current Senior Student Affairs Officer’s in region II of NASPA. Three of the survey participants will be chosen to participate in the individual interviews conducted by the researcher.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to explore SSAOs’ emotional intelligence (managing emotions) through the lens of critical incident management. Substantial research exists on emotional intelligence and leadership, but only limited research has examined the constructs of managing emotions and leadership while engaged in responding to critical incidents; further, these constructs have not been examined within SSAOs. The primary objective of this study is to gain foundational insight into the emotional management capabilities of SSAOs, and to present these findings as a basis for future study.

**Methodology**

The data collection for this study will comprise two phases to be completed over the course of one year. The exploratory data collection protocol is built upon the premise that the quantitative survey results will provide initial insights into how SSAOs manage emotions and these insights will inform the qualitative phase of the study. Individual interviews will be conducted with selected SSAO participants in the qualitative phase of the study.

The research instrument that will be used for Phase I is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). Following the analysis of the MSCEIT results, qualitative one-on-one interviews will be conducted with three SSAOs. For the purpose of this research, the researcher will only use a 41-question online proxy form provided by Multi Health Systems (2011) that examines Branch 4 of the MSCEIT. Branch 4, which focuses on managing emotions, is considered the most complex level of emotional intelligence capabilities. The complete data set provided by the MSCEIT is not needed for this particular study because the focus of emotional intelligence for the research revolves around the ability to manage emotions.
Appendix D

Invitation to Participate in the Study

Invitation Letter

Dear ____________ (Senior Student Affairs Officer),

My name is Brian Johnson. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Drexel University. I am sending this invitation to participate in a survey as part of my doctoral research project entitled “A Sequential Mixed Methods Study: An Exploration of the Use of Emotional Intelligence by Senior Student Affairs Officers’ in Managing Critical Incidents.” My research seeks to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) and managing critical incidents.

I am seeking actively employed Senior Student Affairs Officers for this study. Participants are asked to complete a short emotional intelligence test (20 minutes). All responses are confidential with no identifiers linked to the data. After the survey, participants may volunteer to take part in randomly selected individual interviews with the researcher.

Results from the emotional intelligence test will be used for data analysis purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential. Your name, address, or any other identifiable information will not be linked to the study data. No identifying information will be stored, only your responses for the emotional intelligence test.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Brian Johnson at bmj29@drexel.edu or 570-320-5333 or Dr. Allen Grant at acg48@drexel.edu.

Thank you for your time,
Brian Johnson
Good afternoon Brian,

Attached please find the requested research list. Please note that I added Voting Delegates to your list. I noticed that you requested Senior Student Affairs Officers. If you do not need these names, feel free to delete them. Let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Shahla

Shahla Barksdale  Assistant Director of Member Services

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education 111 K Street, NE | 10th Floor Washington, DC 20002 tel 202.265.7500, ext. 1161 | fax 202.898.5737

sbarksdale@naspa.org | membership@naspa.org | www.naspa.org |
Appendix F

IRB Approval

DREXEL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Office of Regulatory Research Compliance
APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

November 29, 2012

Allen C Grant, Ph.D.
School of Education
Mailstop: Drexel University

Dear Dr. Grant,

On November 29, 2012 the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

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<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Initial</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>A Sequential Mixed Methods Study: An Exploration of the Use of Emotional Intelligence by Senior Student Affairs Officers' in Managing Critical Incidents</td>
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<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>Allen C Grant, Ph.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents Reviewed:</td>
<td>Application Form, Data Collection tools, Proposal, and Permission Letter</td>
</tr>
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</table>

According to 45 CFR 46, 101(b) [2]], the IRB approved the protocol on November 29, 2012. The protocol is approved Exempt Category 2; this study will enroll 60 subjects recruited from a contact list provided by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) to take part in online questionnaires and interviews.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL.

Sincerely,

Danyelle S. Gibson
Hello Brian Johnson,

Congratulations! You have been approved for a Student Research Discount on the MSCEIT for your study entitled "A Sequential Mixed Methods Study: An Exploration of The Use of Emotional Intelligence by Senior Student Officers' in Managing Critical Incidents" under the supervision of Dr. Allen Grant.

This discount grants you 30% off of related product orders over $50 (before shipping) as well as access to scored datasets for a fee of $6 per administration online. Your customer id number is: 186030. Keep this number on file as you will need it to place orders with us.

**Conditions**

1) Your discount expires one year from today. If you require a discount beyond the expiry date please re-apply at that point.

2) Please bear in mind that scored datasets are to be used for the collection of data only and cannot be used to provide feedback to respondents. If you are intending to provide feedback please ensure that you order one of our available reports. Your 30% discount will apply to the report cost.

3) It is recommended that you are in possession of the Users/Technical Manual while making use of this assessment. Please ensure that you order a copy if you do not already have one.

4) Your research is important to us, as agreed upon in your application please remember to send a report of your results to: researchsummaries@mhs.com following the completion of your study.

**Administration Instructions**

I will send you instructions via email on how to access the online administration and scoring service.

Thank you, and good luck with your research,

*Shawna Ortiz, Customer Service Representative*

MULTI-HEALTH SYSTEMS INC. (MHS)

In Canada: **1-800-268-6011** Address: 3770 Victoria Park Ave. Toronto, Ont. M2H 3M6

In U.S.: **1-800-456-3003** Address: P.O. Box 950 North Tonawanda, NY 14120-0950

Website: [www.mhs.com](http://www.mhs.com)
Appendix H

Interview Request Email

Thank you for taking the survey for my research study titled: A Sequential Mixed Methods Study: An Exploration of the Use of Emotional Intelligence by Senior Student Affairs Officers’ in Managing Critical Incidents. My research seeks to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence (specifically, managing emotions) and critical incident management.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in the qualitative aspect of my study which entails an individual interview that will last about an hour. The interview will be conducted in person at your institution. The interview consists of twelve questions. Data from the individual interview will be kept confidential. Your name, address, or any other identifiable information will not be linked to the qualitative data.

My schedule is flexible over the next two weeks, so please let me know if you are still willing to participate and what date and time might work best for your schedule.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Brian

Brian Johnson

Doctoral Candidate

School of Education Drexel University

570-320-5333