



An Autoethnographic Approach to a Supervisor-Supported Climate Survey

Katy B. Mathews, MLIS, PhD & Macie L. Penrod, MLIS
Ohio University Libraries



Instrument Elements

- Willing to consider multiple perspectives
- Fosters open communication
- Advocates for coworkers
- Provides feedback in a way that is meaningful to me
- Involves coworkers in decision making
- Supports my professional development goals
- Clearly communicates expectations
- Recognizes my efforts in a meaningful way
- Acknowledges own limitations
- Recognizes and addresses my concerns
- Informs me of Library and University activities
- Follows consistent application of policies

Instrument Administration

- Optional and anonymous survey
- Administered online via email
- Option for comments after each question
- Comment box at the end of the survey
- Option to schedule a private meeting

Lessons Learned

- Staff were skeptical at first based on past experiences (i.e. Survey resulting in negative outcome for the supervisor)
- The comments section of the survey proved to be more valuable than the ratings
- Staff acknowledged that many issues were beyond control of their direct supervisor

What is a Supervisor-Supported Climate Survey?

- Flips the top-down approach of staff performance evaluations
- Allows staff to have an open dialogue about their needs
- Allows supervisors to self-reflect
- Gauges work climate
- Reverses power dynamics

What is Autoethnography?

- Describe personal experiences
- Connect personal to cultural/social
- Reflection and analysis
- Chang, H. (2008). Autoethnography as method. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.



Katy's Experience

- The hierarchical structure between Macie and I, at times, made our collaborative work uncomfortable for me as the supervisor.
- It was easy to become defensive when hearing about areas in which I could improve. This was something I had to actively be vigilant about so I could hear Macie's perspective with an open mind.
- Overall, this was a positive experience that allowed me to reflect on my role as a supervisor.

Macie's Experience

- The one-on-one meeting was uncomfortable for me as a staff member. I was worried that the things I said might be taken the wrong way, or that I might not be expressing myself appropriately.
- While working on this project, it was difficult to navigate the hierarchical structure of our working relationship.
- I valued the opportunity to communicate openly and honestly with my supervisor about my needs within the workplace. This open communication allowed both of us to reach a better understanding. I was able to communicate some of the frustrations I experience and Katy was able to discuss issues which are out of her control.