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Student Affairs At Rural Higher Education Institutions: The Impact Of Place On Professional Identity

Lisa Anne Samuelson

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STUDENT AFFAIRS AT RURAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE IMPACT
OF PLACE ON PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

by

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Bachelor of Science, North Dakota State University, 1999
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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

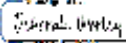
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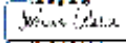
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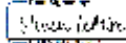
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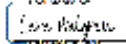
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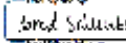
This dissertation, submitted by Lisa Samuelson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.


Dr. Deborah Worley, Chairperson



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This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.


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5/19/2020
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Department Higher Education

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Lisa Anne Samuelson
May 18, 2020

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between professional socialization factors of rural student affairs professionals and their level of professional identity is the central question in this study. The study explores this question using a non-experimental survey design. The study utilizes the instrument the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale developed by Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, and Pasquesi (2015). Participants in the study include student affairs professionals currently employed at rural institutions as designated by U.S. Census data. The study examines the relationship between socialization factors: professional influences, professional development influences, and professional engagement activities; and; professional identity constructs: community connection, values congruence and career contentment. The study found a total of five correlations between sub-constructs: professional development and career contentment; local engagement activities and values congruence; national engagement activities and values congruence; continuing education engagement activities and values congruence; and networking engagement activities and career contentment. The findings of the study can be used to inform the work and activities of professional associations and graduate prep programs in regards to rural student affairs professionals.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the United States has evolved into anything but a one-size-fits all field. What began as small, privately funded colleges for men, which employed a handful of faculty responsible for all aspects of students' lives (Thelin, 2011), has evolved into a complex field that is challenging to define. Faculty and college presidents had total responsibility for all functions of the institution and its students both inside and outside of the classroom. As the doors to higher education began to open to those beyond elite status, a need emerged to offer services to students that went beyond what faculty alone could provide, thus a new profession was born, student affairs.

Student affairs as a profession grew out of the need to focus on the student as a whole in support of their educational attainment. The field has its roots in its original manifestation as the Dean of Men (Schwartz, 2002) and later the Dean of Women who were charged to keep after the out of classroom lives of students. Those roles have evolved throughout the years to cover an expansive array of services. There are two types of student affairs work: functional services (such as residential life or financial aid) and population-based services (such as multicultural or international programs) (Hirt, 2006). To date, no baccalaureate degree exists to prepare individuals for a career in student affairs. Instead, the majority of professionals in the field hold a variety of baccalaureate degrees, with their formal educational training taking place in master's or doctoral programs where, in addition to specialized curriculum, professionals are socialized into the field (Dressel & Mayhew, 1974).

Today's higher education system is expansive with approximately 6,600 institutions in the 2016-2017 academic year participating in the federal financial aid program according to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). These 6,600 institutions consist of a wide array of institutional types, each of which serves a different student population or need (Griffin & Hurtado, 2011). The percentage of the population who attends postsecondary education has also increased, as has the diverse representation of those students (NCES, 2018). As higher education has evolved, so too have the staffing structures needed to support the enterprise particularly through the field of student affairs.

The types or classifications of institutions that exist today include doctoral universities, master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, associate's colleges, special focus institutions, and tribal colleges (Carnegie Classification, 2018). There are different manners in which institutions are classified: according to the level of degree offered (associate or baccalaureate), according to governance control structures (private or public), or the most widely utilized system within higher education: the Carnegie Classification system. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education Basic Classification considers type of degree conferred, who is enrolled, and the size of institution. Through IPEDS, the National Center for Education Statistics categorizes institutions using both level and control classifications as well as Carnegie Classification in its reporting.

As mentioned, student affairs professionals receive their formal educational training and thus much of their socialization to the field from either a doctoral or master's degree granting institution by the nature of the degree itself. According to the Carnegie Classification system,

doctoral and master's degree granting institutions make up approximately 25% of institutions in the United States. This means that 75% of postsecondary institutions are not master's or doctoral degree granting institutions, thus posing the question, will new professionals experience "a disconnect between the expectations they bring to the work setting and the realities they confront in that setting" (Hirt, 2016, p. 10)? Hirt considered this question by examining differences by institutional type using Carnegie Classifications. What Hirt and others have not examined thus far is the concept of rurality and the impact that location size may have on how student affairs professionals experience their work and how they are socialized into the field.

In 2016-2017 there were 6,676 total post-secondary institutions in the United States that were eligible to grant federal student aid (IPEDS, Compare Institutions, 2018) employing close to four million people (NCES, Trend Finder, 2018). Of this number the majority are located within urban settings which is defined by the U.S. Census as having 50,000 or more inhabitants.

Comparably, there were 1,423 total postsecondary institutions located in areas designated within the regions of "rural" or "town" as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Therefore, approximately 21.4% or slightly more than one-fifth of higher education institutions are located within rural settings.

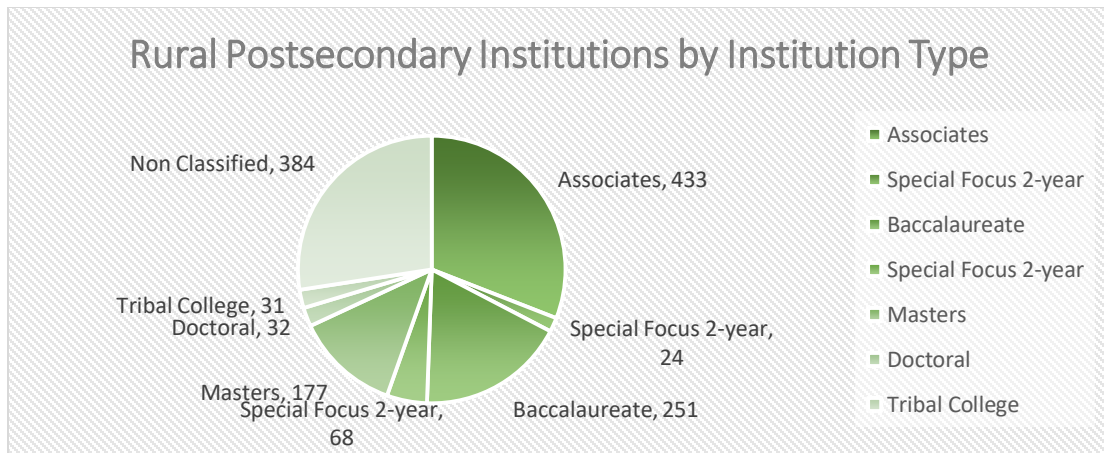


Figure 1 Rural higher education institutions by institutional type (NCES, 2018)

In rural settings, nearly half of the postsecondary institutions either are two-year associate degree granting institutions or are institutions that are not classified by Carnegie or do not list a classification (such as a cosmetology school or a training program affiliated with a specific business). This is an important notation as student affairs roles can be very different at associate degree granting institutions with characteristics including small student affairs units with direct access to president, faculty, and academic leadership engaged in work with largely underrepresented populations (Hirt, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Very little research exists examining higher education within rural settings. Approximately 22% of postsecondary institutions are located in communities designated as being either rural or town (NCES, 2016). Approximately 19.7% of institutions offering masters and doctoral degrees exist in rural or town settings. Much of the research that has been done to date at rural institutions has been conducted with two-year schools and/or looking at faculty

rather than student affairs (Eddy & Hart, 2011; Wolfe & Strange, 2003), further demonstrating the need to examine four-year institutions.

Given student affairs is a profession without an associated undergraduate degree, formal training is obtained through graduate studies. What then are higher education academic programs doing to prepare students for work in settings that may differ from where they receive formal training? Related, a perception exists within higher education that certain institutional types are more prestigious than others; most notably community colleges and two-year institutions are considered on the lower level of prestige (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006), many of which are located in rural areas. Assuming that is the case, what can be done to strengthen the candidate pools for institutions that may lack qualified candidates applying for positions? Lastly, admittance to the field of student affairs is possible without having formal graduate training as individual hiring authorities determine access to a position (Armino, 2011). How then are student affairs professionals socialized into the field to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in the role and in compliance with the professional student affairs practice?

Given that student affairs professionals work in some 35 possible functional areas (Dungy & Gordon, 2011) and that entrance to the field can be gained without first obtaining a graduate degree in the field (Armino, 2011; Taub & McEwen, 2011), it is conceivable that not all student affairs professionals see themselves as student affairs professionals. In fact, some professionals may fail to identify with student affairs at all and have stronger ties to their functional area, an institution, or a community with which they live. What are the ramifications

to the student affairs profession to have in its midst those who may not identify as strongly with being a part of the greater field? This is of particular importance given the emphasis that parties external to higher education (Kuk & Banning, 2009) such as government officials, taxpayers, and donors have placed on access, which is an area where rural institutions fill a void. This study looked to explore what the experience of student affairs socialization was like at rural institutions and the impact on professional identity.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the socialization factors experienced by student affairs professionals located at rural higher education institutions and how those factors associate with professional identity. More specifically, the study examined the professional identities of student affairs professionals at four-year institutions and across experience levels in order to develop a broader understanding of how student affairs professionals are socialized into the field at institutions in rural settings.

Traditionally, institutions are characterized according to Carnegie classification (Hirt, 2006), but what about rurality? Nearly one third of higher education institutions in the United States are located outside of metropolitan areas (Baer, 2006). According to 2010 Census information, 20% of the United States population or 60 million adults live in rural areas and yet rural institutions are infrequently examined. In addition, most rural studies have been qualitative in their design (Eddy & Hart, 2011; Hicks & Jones, 2011; Wolfe & Strange, 2003) or utilized professional associations as their source of data (Charlier & Williams, 2011). It is unknown at what rate rural institutions may be involved with professional associations, which may indicate sampling error with previous research and indication of a gap to be more closely examined.

Research Questions

The overarching question that this study sought to respond to is: *What professional socialization factors are associated with professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?* I answered this question by responding to the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between professional influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?
 - 1a: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and community connection?
 - 1b: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and values congruence?
 - 1c: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and career contentment?
 - 1d: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and community connection?
 - 1e: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and values congruence?
 - 1f: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and career contentment?
 - 1g: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and community connection?
 - 1h: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and values congruence?

- 1i: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and career contentment?
2. Is there a relationship between professional development and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?
- 2a: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and community connection for rural student affairs professionals?
- 2b: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and values congruence for rural student affairs professionals?
- 2c: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and career contentment for rural student affairs professionals?
3. Is there a relationship between professional engagement activities and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3a: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3b: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3c: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3d: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3e: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3f: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3g: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3h: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3i: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3j: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3k: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3l: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3m: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?

3n: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?

- 3o: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
4. Is there a difference between educational level and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?

Student Affairs as a Profession

Postsecondary education in the United States began in the colonial days with the founding of Harvard in 1636. In the beginning, students were young men largely under the age of 18 and college presidents and the faculty had responsibilities for all aspects of the students' lives, both inside and outside of the classroom. The institutions themselves were privately funded through religious organizations and donors with few academic disciplines offered as course of study. As institutions grew in size and scope, a need emerged to develop positions to provide support to the students and faculty and to provide relief to presidents (Schwartz, 2002). The role that developed with responsibilities for student oversight were the Dean of Men and Dean of Women.

The Dean of Men position emerged in earnest at the end of the nineteenth century primarily for monitoring the social activities of the students, which widely consisted of conduct and housing. Disposition and personality were the two most prevalent qualifications for individuals appointed to the role and formal job duties did not exist (Schwartz, 2002). The path to Dean of Men in the earliest adaptations was from within the faculty rank (Hevel, 2016). The Dean of Women position emerged a bit earlier although under different position names and with clearer role definition due in large part to the times and the social constructs surrounding women

(Dungy & Gordon, 2011). A lack of access to faculty roles was one of those constructs. Women were widely afforded access to attend graduate studies but not to faculty positions so found administrative positions working with students outside of the classroom in administrative roles (Hevel, 2016).

During the period of 1880-1910, there was significant expansion in the American higher education system (Thelin, 2011) that coincided with the industrial revolution. Differing institutional types emerged providing greater regional and socioeconomic access to postsecondary education through the creation of Land Grant institutions through the Morrill Act, and comprehensive state universities with growing emphasis placed on research (Thelin, 2011). During this expansive time, the field of student affairs started to take on more formal roles and organization, and the student personnel movement emerged as a means to align talent and need in the pursuit of efficiency (Hevel, 2016).

The student personnel movement is widely considered the foundation of the student affairs practice as it exists today. In 1918, the American Council on Education (ACE) formed as a professional organization for college and university presidents and executives to coordinate efforts within policy, advocacy, and practice for United States higher education (ACE, n.d.). In 1937, ACE released the report *Student Personnel Point of View (SPPV)*, which henceforth has become a guide for professional practice within student affairs work (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Hirt, 2006; Muller, Grabsch, & Moore, 2018). The SPPV called out higher education as having the ethical obligation to develop the student as a whole and not to focus exclusively on intellectual/vocational pursuits, in order for students to realize their full potential within society.

In 1949, a revised Student Personnel Point of View was released by ACE. The later version highlights the importance of the student as an individual within society, which now included a global perspective due to the end of World War II. The 1949 version also expanded upon the original in its definition of student's needs, formally establishing specific functional areas within the field. The document identified 15 needs or conditions an institution should address to develop the student as a whole. Some of those include orientation to their environment, acceptable living conditions, developing a sense of belonging, understanding and using their emotions, and understanding and control of their financial resources. Those desired outcomes became the functional areas of orientation, residence life, student activities, counseling, and financial aid. Today, approximately 40 functional areas exist within student affairs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2015).

The functional areas identified in the two *Student Personnel Point of View* documents are predominantly service areas. A second type of functional area within student affairs emerged as a result of expanding civil rights legislation and calls from society to address the needs of specialized populations who have traditionally experienced marginalization. Some of the areas include women's centers, international programs, disability resources and multicultural inclusion (Dungy & Gordon, 2011).

Each of the institutions within and across type and mission may organize their student affairs units differently in order to be responsive to student and community need in alignment with their mission (Hirt, 2006; Kuk & Banning, 2009). Although not always the case due to financial constraints, as institutions increase in size they also tend to increase in the variety of

student affairs positions available (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). In addition, student affairs professionals exist at nearly all postsecondary institutions (Armino, 2011). Generally, there are two means of identifying the work performed by student affairs professionals: those who possess frontline positions working directly with students and those who hold leadership positions (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). The profession is also frequently broken into the categories of entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level in regards to time in the field and administrative role within the profession (Roberts, 2007). Student affairs professionals hold titles that include that of coordinator, counselor, director, dean, and vice-president (Mills, 2007). According to Mills, titles vary by institution and are dependent upon factors such as size and scope of the institution, system institution is member of and institutional structure.

Despite student affairs' long history and firm entrenchment into the fiber of postsecondary education in the United States, it still struggles in its professional identity (Nygreen, 1968; Porterfield, Roper, & Whitt, 2011; Reason & Broido, 2011). A profession is identified as having theories work is based upon; work relevant to society; dedicated training related to concepts; commonly understanding of professions' subculture; goal of public good; determined qualifications and performance standards determined by profession; commitment to the profession by individuals on a long-term basis; common identity; and code of ethics (Armino, 2011). Student affairs is aware of the critique and continuously works on its development as a profession.

In lieu of an overarching professional certification, the student affairs profession has largely had to rely upon the efforts of professional associations to move the professional toward

formalization. Student affairs has two overarching professional associations, NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and ACPA – College Student Educators International. The two organizations combined efforts in the development of standardized professional competencies for student affairs professionals (Muller, Grabsch, & Moore, 2018) in 2010 and 2015. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was formed in 1979 and is a consortium comprised of ACPA and NASPA members, in addition to approximately forty functional specific associations, who have developed standards for the profession. In addition to standards of practice for specific functional areas, CAS has standards that outline program recommendations for graduate education for student affairs professionals (Armino, 2011). Having standardized professional competencies and standards strengthens the argument that student affairs is a profession, as those competencies and standards can be used not only to measure academic programs but are also used to measure individuals regardless of their academic preparation case of student affairs as a profession.

Several threats to student affairs identity as a profession rather than an occupation do continue to exist (Armino, 2011). Student affairs lacks formal certification to enter the field and individuals enter from varying educational pathways (Hirschy, Wilson, Liddell, Boyle, & Pasquesi, 2015). In addition, although competencies and ethical standards have been developed and widely adopted, they are voluntary to follow, as is association membership. Lastly, although considered best practice, individuals can enter the field without having obtained specialized education. This is due to individual hiring authorities making employment decisions (Armino, 2011).

Socialization Factors

The process of socialization into a profession is an essential element for those entering into a new field. “Professional socialization occurs when students adopt the norms of those who train them” (Hirt, 2006, p. 9). In addition to norms, socialization informs individuals on the values, practices, knowledge, and attitudes widely adopted by the profession (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). The concept of socialization is particularly important for student affairs, which lacks required training or certification prior to entry (Hirschy et al., 2015). Socialization practices include graduate training (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009), involvement with professional associations (Hirschy et al, 2015), and relationships with colleagues (Tull, 2006). Socialization practices create and solidify an individual’s sense of belonging or membership into their profession.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is a psychological self-construct that is formed by one’s professional experiences (Fellenz, 2016; Pittman & Foubert, 2016). It consists of the shared values, beliefs, and facets of a profession that practitioners hold in common with one another. An individual’s professional identity is not static in nature and instead is something that is transformed as knowledge and skills are developed (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012).

Professional Associations

Professional associations have a great deal of responsibility in regards to professional development for those who work within student affairs. There are three student affairs generalist associations which lead the profession in ensuring professionals are prepared in their practice by establishing standards of practice and needed competencies, CAS, NASPA and ACPA (Janosik,

Carpenter, & Creamer, 2006). Professional associations play an even more critical role for those individuals who may lack a formal education in student affairs. While there are three overarching professional associations for the field, there are nearly forty professional associations for the professional as a whole.

Student affairs consists of approximately 40 departments, each having unique functions and responsibilities. As such, each of these functional areas has developed its own professional association (Dungy & Gordon, 2011), many pre-dating the formation of the generalist associations. Professional associations provide professional development opportunities for student affairs professionals across positional level and offer conferences, communities of practice, specified institutes, published journals, and newsletters (Roberts, 2007). In addition, student affairs professionals can further develop professionally by taking on leadership positions within the associations.

Professional Connections

The professional relationships that student affairs professionals have with their colleagues is an important factor in not only their professional development (Henning, Cilente, Kennedy, & Sloane, 2011) but also with their career satisfaction (Tull, 2006; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000). For many professionals these relationships begin when they enter into graduate studies where they form relationships with their faculty members and with their classmates (Taub & McEwen, 2006). Once professionals enter into the workplace relationships develop with supervisors (Jo, 2008; Tull, 2006), colleagues (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Roberts, 2007) both internal and external to the institution and with mentors (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Roberts, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

Socialization is the chosen framework for the current study on the professional identities of rural student affairs professionals. Socialization is the process in which individuals learn what they need to be a member of a group or organization of which they are affiliated through the adoption of common values, attitudes, behavior, knowledge, and norms (Merton, 1957; Tierney, 1997). The concept of socialization as it relates to understanding student affairs professionals in rural settings was examined using the lens of professional socialization. Professional socialization can be defined “as a subconscious process whereby persons internalize behavioral norms and standard and form a sense of identity and commitment to a professional field” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. 6). For the current study, socialization activities were defined as advanced degree obtainment, professional association affiliation, and professional relationships as can be seen in Figure 2.

Given that professional socialization activities contribute to the strengthening of connections to a professional field, it is useful to examine those activities in different contexts within a profession. Hirt (2006) engaged in this work by examining and conceptualizing professional socialization across institutional type to identify shared characteristics across Carnegie Classification. Hirt’s work identified the environment the work is conducted in, the pace in which work is completed, how the work is completed, relationships at the institutions, and the rewards for working in that environment. The present study did not focus on institutional type with regard to variation or characteristics of the nature of the work, but instead examined institutional location and the characteristics of the professionals within the location.

Rural settings are widely under-represented in higher education research so the study included rural labor market research in highly professionalized careers such as healthcare. Utilizing the information from other highly specialized career fields provided context and labor factors for consideration in the design of the current study. The study examined the means in which socialization occurs for student affairs professionals practicing in rural settings and how those experiences may have affected their professional identity.

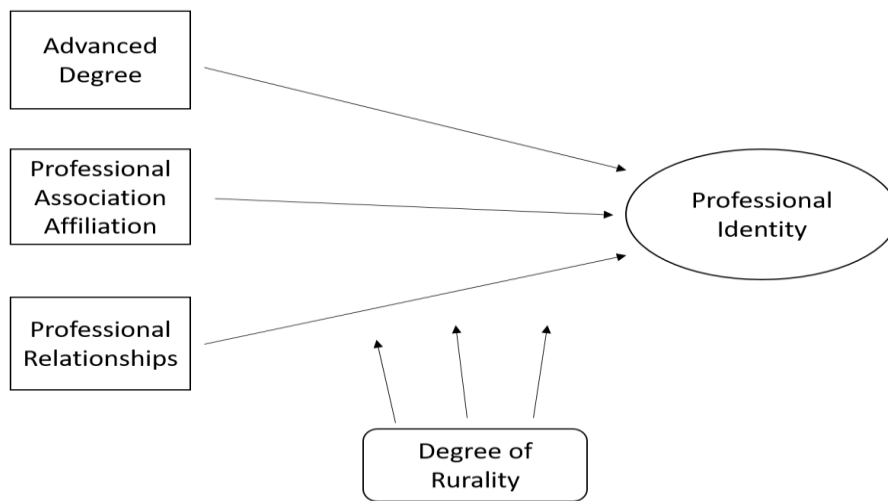


Figure 2 Conceptual Model

Overview of Research Design/Methodology

Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, and Pasquesi (2016) developed the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale (SAPIS), to measure student affairs professionals' professional identity across three factors: career commitment, career entrenchment, and demographic characteristics. The study was conducted using mid-level professionals who belonged to College Student Educators International (ACPA). Prior to Wilson et al.'s study in 2016 with mid-level professionals, a study was conducted with graduate students on the socialization factors leading towards professional

identity development (Liddell, Wilson, Hirschy, Pasquesi, & Boyle, 2014). The current study aimed to take the work of the two previous studies and expand it beyond level of position.

The sample used for the current study were student affairs professionals employed at rural baccalaureate institutions. The instrument utilized for this study was the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale (SAPIS) (see Appendix A), which was developed by Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, and Pasquesi in a 2016 study and is used with their permission (see Appendix B). A quantitative methodology was selected for the current study to answer the research questions posed regarding relationships and differences amongst the defined socialization factors and the professional identities of rural student affairs professionals. The methods to carry out this study are described in full detail in Chapter III.

Significance of Study

The issue of rurality is an important one for several reasons. Higher education institutions exist in rural settings and provide access to post-secondary education for populations that may not otherwise have it. In order to provide educational access in rural settings, institutions have had to take on different missions, serve different populations, and therefore behave differently as research institutions. This is important to consider as student affairs professionals are educated in graduate programs at research institutions a yet may enter into the career field in a variety of different organizational types. Therefore, the present study explored gaps that existed between the current curriculum and job preparation/search processes of the profession and the experiences of rural professionals. By gaining a better understanding of how rural student affairs practitioners are currently socialized into the field we can inform the field, on how to prepare new

professionals and what additional professional development is needed for professionals in those areas.

The topic of rural professional identity and socialization is also of significance for hiring authorities at rural institutions who face unique challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified candidates. In addition, in order for student affairs to strengthen its argument that it is a profession using consistent formal professionalization practices, those practices were examined to determine whether or not disparities exist. The current study also examined the credentials of student affairs professionals as a means of determining the type of employee a hiring authority may have within their pool to see what qualifications exist as those qualifications have an impact on the field as a whole.

The concept of rurality in higher education was also important to explore from an access perspective. Not everyone has the desire to live in an urban setting or has the means to locate to an urban setting. According to United States Census Bureau's *Measuring America* (December 18, 2016) on the changing landscape for rural-urban landscapes, only 19.5% of adults over the age of 18 have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is in comparison to those in urban settings where 29% of adults have completed a bachelor's degree or higher. Take that in cooperation with the fact that those in rural settings have a higher rate of residing in their state of birth at 65.4% compared to only 48.3% in urban settings. Clearly, there is an attainment gap for those in rural settings. Therefore, it is important that higher education examine what it can do to be more accessible for those living in rural America. The current study aimed to address the issue by examining how student affairs professionals are being socialized into the field in rural setting.

This is important as rural areas have the need for economic development, civic leaders, and career preparation needs, all of which postsecondary education provides.

Definitions

Terminology was used throughout the project that is important for the reader to be familiar. Definitions of notable importance are specific to the concept of rurality, student affairs and the concepts of socialization and professional identity.

Degree of Urbanization: “A code representing the urbanicity (city/suburb/rural) by population size of the institution's location. This urban-centric locale code was assigned through a methodology developed by the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Division in 2005. The urban-centric locale codes apply current geographic concepts to the original NCES Locale codes used on IPEDS files through 2004” (IPEDS, Glossary)

Urbanization definitions (see Appendix C):

Rural: Remote – Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from and urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster

Rural: Distant – Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster

Rural: Fringe – Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster

Town: Remote – Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area

Town: Distant – Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized cluster

Student Affairs Professional/Student Affairs Educator/Student Affairs Practitioner: terms used interchangeably throughout the literature to describe those who are employed in the student affairs field.

Senior Student Affairs Officer: “those in lead positions in student affairs in the college or university, usually reporting to the president or executive vice president.” (Roberts, 2007)

Professional identity: “the porous boundaries between one’s personal and professional self, and the adoption of professional behaviors, values, and norms that become second nature.” (Wilson, et al., 2016).

Socialization: “the process of entering a profession and beginning the formation of a professional identity.” (Pittman & Foubert, 2016, p. 14)

Rationale for the Study

Many within the field of student affairs operate under the premise that regardless of the institution type one works, the work of student affairs professionals is largely the same (Hirt, Amelink, & Schneither, 2004). While there have been studies discrediting that view (Hirt, 2006; Eddy & Hart, 2011), the fact remains that the vast majority of quantitative student affairs research is conducted either at large research institutions or through national professional

associations. It would stand to reason that research is being conducted in those two environments given the majority of graduate preparatory programs are administered at larger research institutions so out of convenience and access to samples that is where the research takes place. Therefore, assuming that Hirt (2006) is correct, and that different institutional types have differing job responsibilities and characteristics, there is a gap for institutions that do not house graduate programs or that may be underrepresented at professional organizations. Further, Carnegie classification is the primary means in which institutions are categorized and researched leaving out the construct of location and specifically location population, as those factors are not taken into account within the classification system.

Given that one-third of higher education institutions operate in non-urban environments it is important that the profession adequately prepare new professionals for the realities that they may face in a variety of settings (Eddy & Hart, 2011). If we acknowledge that differences exist amongst institution types, and that 70% of graduate students attend research institutions for their advanced degree (Hirt et al., 2004), then we have the professional responsibility to prepare them for different settings in which they could work. The new professional's career success and longevity could be at stake as well as the health and vitality of the field.

Previous studies examining professional identity within higher education have taken place to a limited degree. Some studies have been qualitative in nature (Hornak et. al., 2016) and examined two-year colleges, while others have used a quantitative design (e.g., Liddell, Wilson, Pasqueri, Hirshcy, & Boyle, 2014; Wilson et al., 2015; Pittman & Foubert, 2016). Professional identity research has focused exclusively on entry level (Liddell et. al., 2014; Pittman & Foubert,

2016) or mid-level professionals (Wilson et al., 2015) leaving a gap for senior level student affairs professionals as well as inclusion of all levels within an institution.

The issue of rurality is an important one for several reasons. Higher education institutions are located in rural settings and as such possess unique sets of opportunities and challenges that may differ from the institutions and institutional types where student affairs professionals may have obtained their graduate training. This is important to consider as student affairs professionals are educated in graduate programs and enter into the career market, so gaps may exist in the current curriculum and job preparation/search processes. The topic is also of significance for hiring authorities at rural institutions who may face unique challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified candidates.

Delimitations

The study looked at rural public and private four-year baccalaureate degree granting institutions within the United States according to the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) final release figures from 2015-2016. Participants of the study included current student affairs practitioners as defined by the institution where they were currently employed. Institutions involved in the study included those with locations listed as being rural: remote, rural: distant, rural: fringe, and town: remote. Institutions not located within one of the above designations were not included due to higher population figures thus being less rural. Excluded from the study were two-year, professional, and for-profit institutions due to differences in mission and scope.

Assumptions

The present study was conducted through an online research instrument so it had inherent assumptions. It was assumed that the SSAO who received the survey would distribute the instrument to only those eligible to participate. It was also assumed that individuals would understand and be knowledgeable about the questions being asked and would be truthful in their responses. Lastly, it was assumed that participants had an interest in completing the survey to further the field of research on the topic of rural student affairs professionals and how their professional identities are formed through socialization into the field.

Summary

It is unknown if rurality plays a role in how a student affairs professional may be socialized into the field. That is one of the questions that this study hopes to answer. With 20% of the United States population living in rural settings it is imperative we gain a better understanding of higher education in rural areas. Higher education is called upon by external identities to examine the issue of access, rural environments are one such area to explore.

The present study is important for reasons beyond access. The profession of student affairs assumes that all practitioners hold the same credentials through determined socialization practices. That may not be true because the population has never specifically been examined for socialization. The present study will also answer questions that aren't specifically being asked in regards to candidate pools, credentials, barriers/factors for mobility, and needs for graduate training to meet the needs for those practicing in rural environments.

The preceding chapter has outlined the purpose and need for this study. It outlined the research questions, theoretical construct proposed, significance, limitations, and delimitations

and assumptions for the study. In Chapter II a literature review is presented examining the profession of student affairs specifically looking at its history, profession and classification system. Also being studied are definitions, characteristics, and workforce issues impacting rural United States. The literature review also looks into higher education in the rural United States specifically looking at community colleges and faculty. The chapter concludes by looking in-depth into professional identity and socialization into student affairs with emphasis placed on the conceptual framework. Chapter III is a description of the plan of study and includes the methods, procedures, and analysis that took place. Chapter IV is a comprehensive data analysis of the survey instrument and responses. Chapter V is devoted to the discussion of results and includes future research, limitations, and implications for professional practice.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education researchers have spent a considerable amount of time researching student affairs professionalization through the lenses of preparation (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Taub & McEwen, 2006), career path (Biddix, 2013), attrition (Tull, 2006; Lorden, 1998), and competencies (Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007). Studies have examined entry-level (Henning, Cilente, Kennedy, & Sloane, 2011; Ward, 1995), mid-level (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Belch & Strange, 1995), and senior level professionals (Tull & Freeman, 2008) across the varying types of higher education institutions. The current study continues the work in student affairs on professional identity by looking at the constructs of career contentment, community connection, and value congruence to the professional socialization activities characteristics of rural student affairs professionals. To provide a better understanding of the topics being addressed the reviewed literature consists of the historical and present day practice of student affairs, definitions and characteristics of rural professionals, and current literature focused on professional identity and socialization.

Student Affairs

History

Since the onset of American higher education, institutions have been charged with outside of classroom guidance to students. Campus presidents, faculty, and tutors performed the responsibility in the early years of American higher education (Thelin, 2011) as outside of the classroom was seen as an extension of the classroom. By the 1860s and the onset of the Morrill Act in 1862, access to higher education greatly expanded and the needs of the student

populations changed. The change in population as well as change in student behavior resulted in the need for staff members to address the student needs that the faculty and presidents could no longer handle, including student conduct and housing. The precursor to student affairs was formally introduced in 1870 when the first student dean was appointed (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Shortly thereafter, the first Dean of Women and later Dean of Men were introduced (Schwartz, 2002).

The two roles remained largely separate until World War II ended and the subsequent G.I. Bill was adopted flooding higher education with droves of new male students in essence pushing the Dean of Women out. The period after World War II also introduced a personnel movement throughout business and industry and eventually found its way into the operations of higher education as well (Schwartz, 2002). Thus beginning the student personnel movement and the formalization and expansion of student affairs as a career field (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). The field of student affairs grew out of the importance to educate students beyond the classroom, placing a growing importance on the creation of an engaged citizenship and educating the person as a whole with particular regard to moral character (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Thelin, 2011). Formalized co-curricular involvement activities and standards expanded and thus the need for more individuals to do the work on campuses grew as well.

In June 1937, the American Council on Education adopted *The Student Personnel Point of View*, with a second version following in 1949. The original document is widely accepted as the founding document of the student affairs profession (NASPA, Who We Are, n.d). Within the ten-page document, the philosophical underpinnings of the profession as educators are defined as

well as the represented functional areas are outlined. Reference is made about the changing role the faculty play in the lives of students focused only on the intellectual aspect of the student. That change in relationship creates a need for professionals to serve and educate students as a whole person. The document defines student personnel services and outlines specific areas of responsibility these providers be charged with. *The Student Personnel Point of View* also identifies six areas of coordination needed to perform the work effectively and to advance the profession. The document establishes the need for collaboration with academics and business services, the importance of research, professional associations and professional competencies needed for the profession (American Council on Education, 1937).

In the 80 years since *The Student Personnel Point of View* was formally adopted there have been significant shifts and changes to the field of student affairs. In general, the overarching mission of student affairs is to provide holistic development outside of the classroom. This is accomplished through programs and services which encompass both intellectual and ethical development (Dalton & Crosby, 2011; Porterfield et al., 2011). One of the most notable changes is the focus of conceptual paradigms from one of service orientation, to development, and more recently to learning and student success (Barber & Bureau, 2012; Dalton Crosby 2011).

Associations

Professional associations have taken a leading role in moving the profession ahead through the development of professional competencies for the field with increased focus on outcomes and assessment (Muller et al., 2018). In addition to the work of NASPA, ACPA and other professional associations, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher

Education (CAS) has developed widely accepted and adopted guidelines for 44 functional areas within higher education (CAS, n.d.). Despite progress in the development of professionalization through associations, the field still lacks an overarching accreditation system.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is a consortium consisting of representatives from 44 higher education professional associations, has been in existence since 1979, and represents 115,000 higher education professionals. Since its inception, CAS has developed nine editions of professional standards with the most recent version completed in 2015 but is currently being revised for release in 2019. The purpose of CAS, and the professional standards, is to help ensure quality programs and services exist for the student affairs profession as a whole, in order to promote student learning (CAS, n.d.). The information provided by CAS is used by institutions to evaluate their programs and services, by higher education programs to inform programs of study, and by professionals to inform practice. Student affairs is comprised of over 40 functional areas so CAS provides the profession an opportunity to come together to consensus build, develop best practice, collaborate across function, and guide practice.

Professionalization

One of the most widely contested concepts within and external to student affairs is the view that student affairs is a stand-alone profession (Carpenter, Miller, & Winston, 1980; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). Although most would now agree that student affairs is a profession, disagreement remains at where the field is in its developmental progression.

A plethora of research abounds with required characteristics needed to define what a profession is or is not. One common characteristic is that a profession must be comprised of individuals who are committed to related work or activities and are striving towards a common purpose (Dalton & Crosby, 2011). Another characteristic of the definition is the presence of a common set of standards, ethics, beliefs, and values (Dalton & Crosby, 2011; Lee & Helm, 2013; Wilson, Akerlind, Walsh, Stevens, Turner, & Shield, 2013) with a common professional identity (Fellenz, 2016; Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). The final hallmark of a profession is that the membership holds particularized knowledge derived from both advanced study (Dalton & Crosby, 2011; Fellenz, 2016) and professional practical experience within the discipline (Dalton & Crosby, 2011). Similarly, according to Young and Janosik (2007), in order for a practitioner to earn full status as a professional two elements are needed: professional preparation and experience.

Student affairs professionals have been mindful of the characteristics of professionalization and have worked for decades to better position themselves to fulfill those standards. So although a certification and standardized curriculum for student affairs still does not exist (Roberts, 2007), voluntary certifications and widely adopted best practices do which moves the field towards the definition of professionalization, namely through the work of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) as well as through NASPA and ACPA.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education exists specifically to strengthen student affairs as a profession. CAS accomplishes this through establishing

professional standards, developing tools to analyze practice, informing preparation of professionals through curriculum, and ensuring professional associations exist to guide practice. CAS has a set of standards developed for Master's Level Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programs (CAS, n.d.) of which are considered best practice for programs to follow (Schupp & Armino, 2012). In addition, NASPA and ACPA have joined together to create *Professional Standards: ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies* (2010, 2015) with both associations also developing divisions within their organization for the continued work in this area.

Throughout the decades there have been numerous documents attempting to determine the needed qualification skill level required for the profession (Muller, Grabsch, & Moore, 2018). Some of the documents include Student Personnel Point of View (1937; 1949); Learning Reconsidered (ACPA & NASPA, 2004); and Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

Field of Study

Student affairs is not a stand-alone undergraduate field of study (Taub & McEwen, 2006). However, individuals who enter the field tend to have been involved in paraprofessional experiences as undergraduates (Hunter, 1992). It is through graduate studies that students are exposed to the theoretical frameworks, values, norms, practices, and competencies adopted by the field (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Young & Janosik, 2007). The study of higher education/student affairs itself is considered an application of social science informed by sociology, psychology, education, business, and management (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Porterfield et al., 2011).

In 1893, the first higher education doctoral program began at Clark College thus starting the field of study (Wright & Freeman, 2014). The field was relatively slow to grow until the Truman Report of 1947 (Wright & Freeman, 2014) with rapid graduate degrees expanding higher education/student personnel in the 1960s (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Depending on the source examined and definitions used, there are anywhere between 180 (Underwood & Austin, 2016) and 295 (NASPA Program Directory, 2018) higher education graduate preparation programs in existence today. According to the Association for the Study of Higher Education, 244 institutions are listed in its membership directory (February 2019) as institutions offering graduate degrees in related fields. In addition, both student enrollment and faculty employed by higher education programs are on the rise (Underwood & Austin, 2016).

To help further professionalize the field, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) developed and adopted a set of standards for graduate programs in 1986 and were part of the original group of 16 standards (CAS, Archives). Although the CAS Standards of Higher Education are widely adopted (Wright & Hyle, 2014), adoption is by a lesser amount than existed in previous years (Underwood & Austin, 2016). The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) developed a Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs (CAHEP) in 1995. CAHEP works with its institutional and individual members to advance the quality of programs and teaching within the field of higher education (ASHE, n.d.). In 2008, CAHEP developed a draft of guidelines for masters programs in higher education administration and leadership programs as a self-assessment tool for programs based

on the CAS standards. Despite ASHEs work on the guidelines, they never moved beyond draft form.

Accreditation within higher education traditionally exists in two forms, institutional and programmatic. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the United States Department of Education both review the approximately 20 institutional and 60 programmatic accrediting agencies for quality to ensure criteria are being met (CHEA, n.d.). Neither CHEA nor the Department of Education currently recognize an accrediting agency for higher education/student affairs programs. Therefore, although no formal accrediting agency exists for the field of study to date, the Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs (CAHEP) and Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education act as guiding agencies for standards for the profession.

CAS has developed standards for masters-level student affairs professional programs for their internal use to determine quality of their program using well established and agreed upon criteria by the field. The standards can be used to aid programs in preparation for accreditation, to inform curriculum design, and ensure programs are meeting expectations. The Standards for masters-level student affairs professional programs include mission, recruitment and admission, curriculum policies, pedagogy, professional ethics and legal responsibilities, curriculum, academic and student support, equal opportunity access and affirmative action, and program evaluation (CAS, 2006). The curriculum that CAS (2006) identifies as essential for student affairs programs includes:

- Foundational studies – Foundational studies must include the study of the historical and philosophical foundations of higher education and student affairs
- Professional studies – Professional studies must include (a) student development theory, (b) student characteristics and the effects of college, (c) individual and group interventions, (d) organization and administration of student affairs, and (e) assessment, evaluation, and research
- Supervised practice – Supervised practice must include practical and/or internships consisting of supervised work involving at least two distinct experiences (p. 350).

The CAS Professional Standards for Master’s Level Student Affairs Programs are widely adopted and accepted as best practice in preparing professionals to enter the field, individuals are not barred from entry if they don’t possess an advanced degree in student affairs in some instances.

Experience

With some student affairs practitioners gaining access to the field without first having obtained advanced degrees specific to the discipline, critics who question the legitimacy of student affairs as a profession may have a case. As those who enter the field without advanced education are inherently missing the theoretical and ethical training required to be a profession (Lee & Helm, 2013). This could be one explanation for the shortage in data pertaining to practitioners without advanced degrees (Muller et al., 2018; Robberts, 2007).

As mentioned, unlike many career fields, undergraduate degrees for a career in student affairs do not exist so individuals enter the field from an array of academic disciplines (Young,

1985; Hunter, 1992; Taub & McEwen, 2006). Therefore, formal professional training takes place after graduation through graduate studies and experience either as an entry-level staff member or as a graduate assistant.

Institutional Classification

Higher education institutions can be categorized using a variety of different definitions, all of which essentially reflect the mission of the organization (Branch, 2012). Institutions can be categorized based upon the students that it serves such as historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, and tribal colleges. Institutions can also be categorized according to the degrees offered whether that be associate, baccalaureate, masters, doctoral, or specialty degrees/programs. The third primary determinant for categorization pertains to the sources of funding whether that be through public, private, or for-profit. The Carnegie Classification system is perhaps the most widely recognized of the means in which higher education institutions are categorized and is utilized by the federal government through the National Center for Educational Statistics.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University has been the predominant classification system within higher education since 1973, particularly in regards to research and analysis (Carnegie Classification, n.d.) as can be demonstrated by a lack of available information on alternate classification systems. For institutions whose mission is less focused on research, such as liberal arts institutions and community colleges, Carnegie Classifications may bare less importance. There are six classifications in the most recent rendition of the system determined by Carnegie in 2015:

Basic Classification, Undergraduate Instructional Program Classification, Graduate Instructional Program Classification, Enrollment Profile Classification, Undergraduate Profile Classification, and Size and Setting Classification. Although the Size and Setting classification does speak to the campus enrollment figures and to the number of residential students in attendance it, as well as the other five classifications, are silent in regards to community population.

The original intent of developing the Carnegie Classification system was to objectively make sense of the growing diversity of institutions and to communicate those differences to constituency groups (Altbach, 2015). The original classification system consisted of five institutional categories (Griffin & Hurtado, 2011), has since been expanded or modified six times as postsecondary education has also changed, and has grown increasingly complicated. One of the primary complaints of the Carnegie Classification system is that it is now widely perceived to be a ranking system, with particular emphasis and attention directed towards research institutions (Kosar & Scott, 2018; Altbach, 2015; Griffin & Hurtado, 2011) all vying for prestige, students, and dollars. Value can be found in comparing institutions on a peer basis to promote continuous improvement through program development and benchmarking (Griffin & Hurtado, 2011) but is now also being used by regulatory bodies to hold institutions accountable for graduation rates and cost of attendance (Altbach, 2018). Some research exists examining the accuracy of the Carnegie Classification system's most recent renditions but almost exclusively within the context of research institutions (Kosar & Scott, 2018; McCormick, Pike, Kuh, & Chen, 2008). While the research mostly supports Carnegie as valid it also supports alternate considerations in the matrices used.

Rural America

On face value, the term “rural” should be simple to define as it falls under the purview of the United States government for definition. The U.S. Census Bureau for example states that 19.3% of the total U.S. population lived in rural areas during the 2010 Census (U.S. Census, n.d.). The current data indicates a nearly 2% decline from the 2000 Census as more people move into urban areas. Given a declining rural population, one could argue there is little value in exploring the topic. The researcher aims to provide rationale as to why that argument is invalid.

Even if rural population figures are declining in number, to the people living in those environments access to education matters. Explained from a population ecologist world-view, diversity of offerings through sizing, scope, and pricing is an appropriate action to meet consumer needs during a time of decreased governmental support (Morphew, 2009).

Definition

The U.S. Census Bureau uses a very broad definition of rural. The Census has two categories in which they classify degree of urbanization. An urbanized area consists of 50,000 or more people. Also within the classification of urban is the category of urban cluster, which has a population between 2,500 and 50,000 (Urban Area Criteria, n.d.). Therefore, to meet the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of rural it is any population center not included in the two previous groups.

Conversely, the above is just one definition for urban-rural, and in the opinion of some, a very narrow definition. In reality, there are nearly two-dozen federal agencies with definitions of urbanization. Some definitions of rurality examine the concept from the perspective of land-use, while others look at geographical boundaries and yet other utilize a labor or economic viewpoint.

It is obvious that the lack of a clear and universal definition of rurality is a challenge faced well outside of the present research, a sentiment echoed by many (Harris et al., 2016) and one that for the purposes of the present study will have careful operational definition.

Characteristics

The lack of a clear definition for rural is not the only challenge in addressing this topic. A significant amount of variance exists within the rural communities themselves and across the segments of the country (Monk, 2007). In some communities, there may be greater employment opportunities, access to education, medical facilities, and services available. Other communities may be in closer proximity to a larger urban area providing access to these resources (Monk, 2007; Carson, Schoo, & Berggren, 2015). Despite the variance, general themes do present themselves in the literature.

One prevalent theme discussed in rural settings concerns population migration. Rural environments experience a greater degree of impact related to an aging population (Monk, 2007). In addition, there seems to be evidence supporting younger populations moving to urban areas even if only temporarily taking with them their intellectual and vocational capital as urban areas “tend to attract individuals with higher education” (Jokela, 2014, p. 47). In addition, many of the factors that individuals base decisions on when looking at communities to reside, are not open to change. Such factors include proximity to family, availability of amenities, and lifestyle preference (Helland, Westfall, Camargo, Rogers, & Ginde, 2010). The nature of the work performed is also something researchers are interested in further examining.

Frequently in a rural setting, professionals indicate that they perform a greater range of professional activities and have a generalist practice (Molanari, 2011). In addition, there are

indications that there are wage disparity issues with rural locations paying lower wages. The lower wages therefore makes positions less attractive to candidate pools affecting both the likelihood of long-term employee retention as well as the qualifications of the candidate pool (Mackie, 2013).

Workforce Issues

The lens of the present research examines rurality from the perspective of labor and economic impact. Professions that require a high degree of specialization and training have long felt the pressures and struggles of finding and keeping a qualified workforce in rural environments (Yu, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2015). Fields that focused a significant amount of research surrounding this topic include nursing (Molanari, Jaiswal, & Hollinger-Forrest, 2011), physicians (Wadman, Muellerman, Hall, Tran & Walker, 2005; Halaas, Zink, Fenstad, Bolin, & Center, 2008), social work (Mackie, 2013), and teaching (Kono, 2010; Opfer, 2011). The research in these professional contexts includes the constructs of recruitment, retention, and employee characteristics.

Professional employees in rural settings possess some unique characteristics. Rural areas tend to draw employee candidate pools from a more local or regional area with applicants who have a desire to remain in the area (Molanari et al., 2011). Individuals, who enter into a rural community without previous rural or community specific connection, tend to be newer in their career and tend to have less intention to remain living in a rural setting for a prolonged period (Halaas et al., 2008; Molanari et al., 2011). Those individuals who do choose to live in rural settings cite reasons such as lifestyle and familial connection (Helland, et al., 2010) and have had some sort of prolonged exposure to a rural setting either as a youth or during their training

(Hancock, Steinbach, Nesbitt, Adler, & Auerswald, 2009). Due to the relative isolation of rural employees, professional development opportunities and mentorship relationships are of heightened importance (Preston, 2016).

One theme that emerged in the literature is the challenge of recruiting a qualified talent pool. Traditionally, in many searches for highly skilled professionals the applicant pool is small (Hicks & Jones, 2011; Molnari et al., 2011; Hardy & Katsinas, 2001). As such, expectations on qualifications to attract adequate candidate pool numbers are frequently lowered (Hicks & Jones, 2011) as stronger credentials are often times unavailable (Mackie, 2013). In addition, research indicates that candidate pools are predominantly comprised of locals wishing to remain in a rural environment (Molanari et al, 2011). It does seem however that this is a lesser issue for communities that are in closer proximity to more urban areas thus requiring less commitment to a rural lifestyle (Carson et al., 2015). Further, if potential candidates are exposed to a rural environment through upbringing, recreational activities or from being educated there they are more likely to seek rural employment in the future (Hancock et al., 2009).

Retention of employees is also an area that has received attention by researchers. Research indicates that the first year of employment in a rural setting is a significant predictor as to whether or not the staff members will persist beyond the first year (Molanari, 2011). A related concept to retention of professionals is the location where they received their education. If a practitioner was educated in a more rural environment they have an increased likelihood to stay in practice in a rural setting (Carson et al., 2015).

Higher Education in Rural Settings

The Bureau of Economic Analysis classifications of rural or town make-up approximately 21% of postsecondary institutions within the United States (NCES, n.d.). Despite containing nearly one-fifth of the educational opportunities, very little research currently exists involving higher education institutions in rural settings. Of the 21% of institutions in rural/town settings, associate degree-granting institutions are the most prevalent with 433 institutions, followed next by non-classified institutions with 384, baccalaureate granting with 251 institutions, and masters granting with 177 institutions (NCES/IPEDS, n.d.). The smallest classification type located in rural settings are doctoral granting institutions where 32 institutions exist in rural settings or towns. The smaller number of doctorate granting institutions housed in rural settings could explain in part the gap in research available on the topic. The research done to date around rural higher education focuses predominantly around two areas: community colleges and faculty with no information found on student affairs professionals and limited information on institutional classifications other than community colleges.

Community colleges exist throughout the country in communities of all population sizes. They also have the standard characteristic of having the responsibility to serve a myriad of constituents within their geographic service area (Hirt, 2006). According to Charlier and Williams (2011) as well as Yu, Campbell, and Mendoza (2015), institutions housed within rural and urban settings had a more significant challenge filling adjunct faculty positions than did institutions in suburban settings. Further, even though urban and rural institutions have similar vacancy levels, rural institutions had a greater challenge in recruiting adjunct faculty. One potential reason cited for the increased level of vacancies is that rural areas have fewer

individuals possessing advanced degrees (Hardy & Katsinas, 2008). The individuals who possess advanced degrees in highly specialized fields therefore are highly sought after and given the scarcity of financial and demographic resources available at many rural institutions due to lower tax revenue (Yu et. al., 2015); they are unable to successfully compete with institutions with greater resources available (Charlier & Williams, 2011). One reason that some community colleges, particularly in rural settings, may have fewer adjunct positions and more full-time (Charlier & Williams, 2011) is assumed to be due to the need to compete in a crowded space for qualified candidates both with the private sector and education (Hicks & Jones, 2011).

Although charged with slightly different responsibilities within a university, faculty and student affairs do have the common goal of educating students. As such, examining the faculty experience in rural settings offers a lens into the student affairs experience as well. Through the research of Eddy and Hart (2011), “faculty members in rural areas often face demands that differ from their metropolitan counterparts” (p. 754).

Although not all rural institutions have small campus populations, many do. The small campus size informs the work performed at each of those campuses. One such feature of a small campus population is reliance on one-person departments to carry out a multitude of responsibilities (Wolfe & Strange, 2003). According to Wolfe and Strange (2003), “the one-person department contributes to: (a) greater job complexity, (b) generalist role expectations, (c) professional isolation and (d) limited collegiality (p. 349-350).” This can be a point of stress for some, while others appreciate the diverse experiences this type of setting can provide.

Professionals engaged in higher education (as faculty members or student affairs professionals) obtain their graduate degrees predominantly from larger research universities. According to the NCES, approximately 17% of masters and doctoral institutions exist in rural settings (2017). Underwood and Austin (2016) performed a comprehensive examination of higher education graduate preparation programs in 2011 and then again in 2014, and noticed the trend of graduate programs shifting away from rural institutions in favor of more urban areas. According to Eddy and Hart (2011), an assumption often exists that upon degree completion individuals will find employment within a similar institution classification to where they received their graduate degree. Therefore, a changing trend in the location of where graduate programs are delivered could have impact on where those professionals seek employment opportunities affecting staffing practices at rural institutions.

Whether by choice or by necessity many professionals are employed at differing types of institutions including those in rural settings. Some do so for personal reasons with the intention of staying long-term while others see it as an opportunity to develop skills before moving on to something different (Eddy & Hart, 2011). Of note, faculty in higher education administration programs not classified as doctoral research extensive located in rural settings frequently report that they are aware that the perception exists that they are seen as a lower tiered professional because of their institution type (Eddy & Hart, 2011). This sentiment is often offset by the nature of the work and the fulfillment in teaching and student connection (Wolfe & Strange, 2003).

Professional Identity

Definition

Professional identity is not an innate personal characteristic. Rather, it is a self-concept that evolves over time through professional experiences. In addition, “professional formation can also be seen as a process of identity formation” (Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz, & Dahlgren, 2008, p. 733). Professional identity includes one’s professional values and beliefs and is shared by others within the profession (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). Professional identity development is not a passive process nor is it static in nature (Trede et al., 2012). In order for one to develop a sense of professional identity, it is important to acknowledge that it develops by performing the work, while accepting feedback and information from others in the field in a cyclical fashion (Fellenz, 2016; Trede et al., 2012).

Professional identity can be identified in three interconnected and cyclical phases. The first of these takes place as an individual performs the work and as a result develops skills and knowledge similar to others within the profession. The second phase is a distinction between self and others and the awareness that differences exist between those engaged with similar work and those not. The last phase takes place when an individual sees themselves as a member of the profession and that profession is engrained in the person’s identity (Trede et al., 2012).

Pittman and Foubert (2016) explored the topic of professional identity amongst student affairs professionals by surveying a large group student affairs masters students and recent graduates (n=542) using a higher education faculty listserv. Pittman and Foubert’s study examined how the role of mentors, supervisory style received, and professional involvement activities, predicted the professional identity of the study participants. The study found that of the

three variables examined, supervisory style received was the most influential factor predicting professional identity followed by mentoring and lastly professional involvement. All three variables had statistical significance as predictors for professional development of the current graduate students surveyed, whereas the only variable with significance for new professionals was supervision style received.

Liddell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy, and Boyle (2014) conducted a study involving entry-level professionals involved in the professional association ACPA with 178 total respondents. The purpose of the study “was to understand how socialization in graduate programs contributes to the development of a professional identity for new professionals in student affairs” (p. 72). The study specifically looked at individual’s perceptions of their masters’ programs experiences, and the influence of others, as well as demographic information and defined professional identity with three constructs; commitment, values congruence, and intellectual investment. The Liddell et al. study (2014) found that students perceived that their in-class experiences were less influential than their out-of-class experiential opportunities while in graduate school.

Socialization

The way in which an individual enters into a profession can take many different pathways. It is through those pathways that individuals develop a professional identity through socialization activities (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). The predominant means of socialization for student affair professionals is through graduate programs (Hirschy, Wilson, Liddell, Boyle, & Pasquesi, 2015). It is through graduate training where individuals gain familiarity with theory, learn about professional standards (Meretzky & Woods, 2013), and gain familiarity with professional roles (Trede et al., 2012). Some scholars go so far as to state that graduate programs

should focus specifically on constructing the professional identities of its students (Trede et. al., 2012) while navigating the culture of student affairs as a professional (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Although graduate training is a key means of socialization into the profession, it is not the only means.

Sitting in a classroom does not alone prepare someone to be a student affairs professional. Instead, it is widely understood that experiential learning is a key component in professional development. Experiential learning can take the form of internships, graduate assistantships, project-oriented assignments, and reflective assignments (Meretsky & Woods, 2013). The professional identities of new practitioners is further reinforced through experiential interpersonal practices even more than the practice of learned concepts (Young, 1985; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Supervision and Mentors

When it comes to the socialization process for student affairs professionals, the issue of relationships is an important one. Given the prevalence of student affairs professionals entering the field based on the experience they had as an undergraduate student (Taub & McEwen, 2006), and the frequency in which a specific mentor is cited in leading to their career choice (Pittman & Foubert, 2016), relationships cannot be underestimated within the field.

Relationships can be either formal or informal and still hold impact. For graduate students, informally the cohort of fellow students in their program can play a role in their professional development, as can the relationships formed with their faculty members (Murakami-Ramalho, Militello, & Piert, 2013). In other instances, students and professionals

alike intentionally enter into mentorship relationships with supervisors or those senior in the field to aid in their professional identity development (Pittman & Foubert, 2016).

It is widely understood that student affairs holds student development as a core value. Students are not the only population, however, in which development is an intended outcome. In fact, development is a key practice utilized by supervisors when working with their staff members within the field (Pittman & Foubert, 2016).

Professional Associations

Student affairs has two primary associations for the profession, NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and ACPA-College Student Educators International. NASPA was founded in 1918 and its membership includes over 15,000 members with representation from across the United States and 25 countries (NASPA, n.d.). ACPA began shortly after NASPA in 1924 and as of October 2018 has 5,300 members and 15 state/regional chapters (ACPA, 2018). Both ACPA and NASPA each have their own publication journals and other scholarly work, inform higher education policy on a national level, provide professional development opportunities for members, offer placement opportunities, and guide the field as a whole (Blimling, 2003). NASPA and ACPA have at times collaborated for common purposes such as for the creation of Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (2015, 2010) but collaborations between the two organizations is not common.

Professional associations meet an important professional development need for the field of student affairs for both new professionals as well as mid and senior level student affairs professionals, albeit in slightly different ways (Roberts, 2007). For entry-level professionals, professional organizations provide additional learning opportunities in areas that either may have

been excluded from their graduate program or needs further examination (Tull, 2006). For mid-level student affairs professionals, professional organizations provide valuable networking opportunities with colleagues throughout the country as well as to stay current on best practices and new developmental activities (Mills, 2007). Associations provide meaningful opportunities for professionals to engage, develop, and play a significant role in professional identity formation (Hirschy et al., 2015). Professional associations also have a benefit for members looking for career advancement opportunities or job changes.

Professional associations are a cornerstone for many professions, including student affairs. How those professional organizations are structured however, is unique to the field. Aside from the two overarching professional associations, American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) there are dozens of other professional associations. Student affairs is a diverse division within higher education and encompasses dozens of functional areas. Each of those functional areas within student affairs has a professional association, so therefore nearly 40 associations exist specific to the field. (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). So while the overarching associations NASPA and ACPA have large membership bodies, it is also common for those who work within the field to have a stronger connection to the professional association affiliated with their functional area specialty. (Dalton & Crosby, 2011). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has 44 association members. Some of the associations include:

- AACRAO – American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
- ACUHO-I - Association of College & University Housing Officers - International

- ACUI – Association of College Unions International
- AFA – Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors
- AHEAD – Association on Higher Education and Disability
- ASCA - Association for Student Conduct Administration
- NACA - National Association of Campus Activities
- NACADA – National Academic Advising Association
- NACAS – National Association of College Auxiliary Services
- NACDA – National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics
- NACE – National Association of Colleges and Employers
- NAFASA – Association of International Educators
- NASFAA – National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
- NIRSA – Leaders in Collegiate Recreation
- NODA – Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education

In addition to professional associations, special interest communities of practice and commissions exist within both NASPA and ACPA. NASPA has 27 Knowledge Communities that include areas such as Administrators in Graduate and Professional Student Services and Women in Student Affairs. In addition, NASPA has five groups for individuals by professional level and three groups by institution type, two of which are Small Colleges and Universities Division and the Community Colleges Division. Lastly, NASPA has 13 groups surrounding specific topics such as a Public Policy Division and Professional Standards Division. Similarly, ACPA has 13 active Commissions, which includes Graduate and Professional Student Affairs

and Administrative Leadership. ACPA also has ten Coalitions focused on social identities of ACPA members and has two Communities of Practice.

Conceptual Framework: Socialization Influences on Professional Identity

Professional identity, with its roots firmly planted within psychology and human resource research, is not a concept unique to higher education. Professional identity is a latent concept that cannot be seen or measured directly so is examined through the lens of related constructs. The research within student affairs has focused primarily on factors contributing to professional identity across differing career levels and socialization factors contribution to professional identity. For the purposes of this study, the same constructs used by Wilson et. al. (2016) were used to measure professional identity: values congruence, community connection, and intellectual investment. The measures of professional identity was examined through the lens of professional socialization. The professional socialization constructs of the proposed study are advanced degree, professional association affiliation, and professional relationships.

Constructs Measuring Professional Identity

Values Congruence

The values that a profession holds come to being from the principles that it holds dear. Those principles and thus the profession's foundations took root in the 1920s when student affairs took on a guidance practice with students and professional documents starting to outline the professions practice (Reason & Broido, 2011). Those guiding documents still guide the profession today. The goal then, although phrased differently today remains the same, holistic student development (NASPA, 2007).

The two largest and most encompassing professional organizations within Student Affairs, NASPA and ACPA, have partnered in the creation of Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators first, in 2010 under a different name, and then revised in 2015 in order to establish common competencies across the field of student affairs. The documents aim to guide student affairs educators in their practice, policy development, and study within the field. The competencies identified by the joint task force are personal and ethical foundations; values, philosophy, and history; assessment, evaluation, and research; law, policy, and governance; organizational and human resource; leadership; social justice and inclusion; student learning and development; technology; and advising and supporting (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Of the ten competencies developed in 2015, one specifically addresses the values of student affairs educators. The competency documents fall short however of defining the specific values of student affairs.

The list of specific values upheld by the professional vary to a degree dependent upon which researcher is noted. In Young and Elfrink's (1991) works there are eight values, which include altruism, equality, aesthetics, freedom, human dignity, justice, truth, and community. In the works of Evan and Reason (2001), there were four main value categories: student as the primary purpose of work, environmental impact on student experience, practice rooted in empirical study, and responsibility to society. In Tull and Medrano's work (2008), character values were studied and found similar results to Young & Elfrink from 1991.

NASPA outlined a set of core values in their 1997 document, *Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs*. That document is now a guiding document within the field of student affairs.

The values “include an acceptance and appreciation of individual differences; lifelong learning; education for effective citizenship; student responsibility; ongoing assessment of learning and performance (students’ and our own); pluralism and multiculturalism; ethical and reflective student affairs practice; supporting and meeting the needs of students as individuals and in groups; and freedom of expression with civility”. (NASPA, 1997, p. 2)

The values listed here, as well as those outlined in other research, inform the work of student affairs professionals. The degree to which an individual ascribes to the values therefore has a connection to their relationship with the profession as a whole. Although different labels exist for each of the values listed by the researchers above, the overall knowledge of and appreciation for the values of the profession is needed to inform both present and future practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Community Connection

The field of student affairs is a profession built on relationships. Student affairs is considered a “close-knit field” (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009, p. 203). Individuals frequently enter the field due to the relationship that they had with a professional during their undergraduate experience and want to work in the field to be that person for others (Taub & McEwen, 2006). Once professionals themselves, student affairs practitioners, particularly within the entry-level

phase of their career look to their supervisors to provide personal and professional development opportunities (Tull, 2006). Embedded in the core of student affairs practice are professional associations, mentorship opportunities, and the widely accepted practice of collegiality. Outside of student affairs as a whole, individuals also connect or identify with their institution and the communities in which they live.

Professionalization in higher education has long meant mobility (Mills, 2007), and student affairs is no exception. In higher education, it is the norm that in order to move to the next level of one's career a physical move is required (Mills, 2007; Rhoades et al., 2008). This is in part because there is a finite number of positions within the field and the number of positions at each institution decreases the higher up the leadership chain one goes (Jo, 2008; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Lorden, 1998; Belch & Strange, 1995). In addition, there is a perceived if not a real belief that some institutions and institutional types are better and thus more desirable than others (Eddy & Hart, 2011; Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). For example, those institutions that have been in existence for longer, are larger in size, and have greater wealth are more successful in attracting both faculty and students and have more financial wealth according to Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006). They go on to report that research institutions with higher graduation rates and money spent on each student are seen as more favorable, while liberal arts institutions that have higher selectivity for admission and whose faculty have more publications are more desirable.

The practice of mobility as a designation for success or professional attainment creates barriers or limits to those who may have conflicting priorities. For professionals with familial or cultural connections keeping them more place bound, advancement opportunities may not exist

(Rhoades et al., 2008). Factors taken into consideration when choosing a location for one's career include desired lifestyle, familial/partner relationships, and recreational amenities (Helland et al., 2010).

Intellectual Investment

The time, money, and energy that one puts into their professional development is categorically the definition of intellectual investment. Another way to consider intellectual investment is the more commonly known term professional development. It is incumbent upon the individual practitioner to determine where their developmental needs lie and to seek out means to build within those areas with support of their supervisor and institution (Hirschy et al., 2015; Darby, 2007; Lovell & Kosten, 2000).

Student affairs is not a profession with an undergraduate major, so investment comes at a later developmental point for the majority of individuals within the field (Taub & McEwen, 2006). Professional development can take on many forms whether that be advanced education by way of masters or doctoral degrees or an individual course; participation in local, regional, or national professional associations; participating in informational seminars; and reading current literature (Roberts, 2007).

The preferred delivery method for professional development is somewhat dependent upon the issue needing to be addressed. For new residential life professionals, the overall preferred method of professional development is through mentoring, but also includes learning on one's own and job shadowing (Henning, Cilente, Kennedy, & Sloane, 2011). In looking at student affairs more comprehensively and using a NASPA membership sample, collegial

conversations, mentorship and professional conferences as the preferred means to acquire professional development (Roberts, 2007). Professional associations generally offer developmental activities beyond professional conferences and include things such as communities of practice, institutes, and publications (Henning et al., 2011).

Socialization and Professional Identity

Individuals enter into the student affairs profession through a variety of routes. The traditional pathway to entry is as an involved undergraduate student with a desire to serve students (Lorden, 1998; Ward, 1995). Individuals may immediately enter a graduate program and hold an assistantship position or they may enter the field in an entry-level position and within a few years work towards their graduate degree. In either event, both master's level and doctoral level students in a student affairs or higher education programs tend to be enrolled on a part-time basis (Hyle & Goodchild, 2012). Trend research also indicates that in the case of both master's and doctoral programs, there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled in graduate studies within the field due in some part to the increased use of technology in delivering programs (Underwood & Austin, 2016).

Socialization to the profession takes place in both contexts, during graduate study and through professional experience. During coursework, students gain familiarity with the values associated with the profession as well the knowledge and skills needed to be effective (Liddell et al., 2014). In addition, the relationships that students have with both their peers and faculty members allows for sense-making to take place with professionals already within the field (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2013). Out-of-classroom learning experiences such as internships,

assistantships and practicum allow students to test their knowledge and practice what they have learned in the classroom, whereas, classroom content “provides an opportunity for reflection on experience and refinement of personal knowledge,” (Liddell et al., 2014, p. 83). Socialization opportunities continue to exist for professionals in entry-level positions and beyond through supervisory relationships (Schupp & Armino, 2012). It is through those relationships with supervisors (Schupp & Armino, 2012) and also mentors (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Roberts, 2007) that sense-making activities continue to occur for individuals within the profession.

Several elements are needed in order for professional identity to form. In general, knowledge of the field is acquired while professional values are being formed in congruence with one’s personal values (Trede et al., 2012). Authentic learning experiences inside the classroom involve evidence-based curriculum, theory and research and outside of the classroom involve internships, practicum, and assistantships (Liddell et al., 2014). Both in-class and out-of-class learning experiences work to form the cultural norms associated with a profession and thus the individuals association to it. This sense of professional identity continues to strengthen through active participation in the profession and its activities (Reid et al., 2008), as the intersection of personal and professional values intersect through work (Trede et al., 2012).

Socialization takes place for professionals through the relationships they have with their faculty members and classmates during coursework, and through their experiences with supervisors (Tull, 2006), colleagues and mentors when working in the field. Other practices shown to have a connection to socialization into the field is involvement with professional

associations and a fit with the organization where the individual is employed (Hirschy et al., 2015).

Summary

The literature on student affairs professional identity and socialization helps to outline what the profession of student affairs ideally looks like across institutional classifications. Student affairs has spent considerable time and resources in work that strengthens its argument as a profession through the creation of professional associations, defined competencies, and criteria for inclusion in graduate work.

Literature also exists with regard to rural professions, albeit to a lesser degree. Some literature exists around higher education in the areas of two-year schools and faculty. Little to no information exists within the construct of four-year schools and student affairs in rural settings. In order to fill in some of the gap of available rural literature within student affairs, tangential research in other highly specialized vocations was examined, specifically the medical field and social work.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional identities of student affairs professionals located at rural institutions through the lens of socialization. The present study aimed to look specifically at four-year institutions across experience levels to develop a broader understanding of how student affairs professionals employed at institutions in rural settings are socialized into their field and how they develop a sense of professional identity.

The overarching question that this study sought to respond to was: *What professional socialization factors are associated with professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?* I answered this question by responding to the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between professional influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?
 - 1a: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and community connection?
 - 1b: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and values congruence?
 - 1c: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and career contentment?
 - 1d: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and community connection?

- 1e: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and values congruence?
- 1f: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and career contentment?
- 1g: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and community connection?
- 1h: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and values congruence?
- 1i: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and career contentment?
2. Is there a relationship between professional development and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?
- 2a: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and community connection for rural student affairs professionals?
- 2b: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and values congruence for rural student affairs professionals?
- 2c: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and career contentment for rural student affairs professionals?
3. Is there a relationship between professional engagement activities and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?

- 3a: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3b: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3c: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3d: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3e: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3f: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3g: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3h: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3i: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3j: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?

- 3k: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3l: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3m: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3n: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?
- 3o: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?
4. Is there a difference between educational level and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?

The study utilized a quantitative methods approach using an electronic survey instrument. The instrument used for this study was the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale (SAPIS) developed by Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, and Pasquesi (2016) with addendum demographic questions added for the socialization construct for rural populations (see Appendix A). A purposive or judgmental sampling method was used for the current study where the SAPIS survey instrument was distributed to Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) at colleges and universities in all 50 states. SSAOs were asked to distribute the instrument to their reporting staff members (see Appendix D). The remainder of this chapter will outline and detail the research plan and design that was utilized for the study.

Survey Methodology

Survey methodology as a process of inquiry has existed in the social sciences for centuries and addresses inquiries with descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes (Babbie, 2001). Survey research can be delivered in several types of modalities including mailed, telephone, in-person and electronic (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Survey research is particularly useful as a tool with studies that involve a large enough population that would make observation a challenge (Babbie, 2001). The advantages to using electronic surveys are that they are low cost and time efficient (Fowler, 2009) and .can include a large geographic areas and data is captured electronically for ease of evaluation (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Conversely, disadvantages to electronic surveys include survey fatigue (Sue & Ritter, 2012), either technology or good addresses may not be available (Fowler, 2009) and enlisting buy-in for completion is a challenge.

Survey research that has been done involving student affairs professional identities has focused on levels of position within the organization. Two studies were conducted with entry-level professionals (Liddell, Wilson, Hirschy, Pasquesi, & Boyle, 2014; Pitman & Foubert, 2016) and another with mid-level professionals (Wilson et al., 2015). All three of the studies were quantitative in nature. Liddell et al. (2014) and Wilson et al. (2015) surveyed members of a large professional association Liddell's study was looking at how professional identity may be developed by graduate students through socialization. Wilson's study was examining mid-level professionals and factors contributing to their professional identity. Pitman and Foubert (2016) distributed surveys via a listserv of faculty teaching student affairs courses in graduate

preparation programs to see if professional involvement, mentoring, and supervision style predicted professional identity of new student affairs staff members and graduate students.

Due to the lack of research available on rural institutions, the research questions of this study were examined using a survey design in order to involve a larger sample. A survey method was chosen to provide a quantifiable value that measures the trends, practices, and beliefs present within a sample in order to generalize to the greater population (Creswell, 2014). By using a survey, data can be collected relatively efficiently in regard to time and can draw a larger sample size from a greater geographical area (Sue & Ritter, 2012) to increase the generalizability of information found. In order to examine trends across institutional types, participants were sought from multiple institutions. In order to fully measure the independent variables associated with the study, a large sample size was needed to have a robust population in each variable for statistical reliability. The electronic format was selected due to convenience, cost, and ease of access to participants. It is noted, however, that electronic surveys do yield low response rates (Fan & Yan, 2010), so measures were taken to address that weakness. Because low response rates could indicate greater levels of response bias (Babbie, 2001), in order to increase participation survey respondents were eligible to receive summary findings of the data collected if they opted to do so, as nonmaterial incentives have demonstrated higher participation rates than instruments not offering any incentives (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

The researcher for the study is a graduate student at the University of North Dakota. Therefore, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Dakota reviewed and granted permission to conduct the research. No additional IRB approval was required by other

institutions as the researcher directed invitations to complete the survey to Senior Student Affairs Officers at eligible institutions and asked that the survey be forwarded by that individual to their respective employees (see Appendix D).

Setting and Participants

The institutions represented in this study were four-year public and private institutions within the United States as identified in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). The method for selecting institutions where individuals were invited to participate was purposive as there are strict parameters defined for inclusion (Harkiolakis, 2017). This method was selected in order to address a gap in the literature, as previous studies examining socialization (Wilson et al., 2016; Liddell et al., 2014; 2016; Hirschy, Wilson, Liddell, Boyle, & Pasquesi, 2014) have done so predominantly using samples from large professional associations and/or were situated at research-intensive universities. The exception is the work of Eddy and Hart (2002) which examined rural socialization of faculty members in higher education administration programs.

The primary determinant of the institutions from which participants were drawn for this study is the degree of urbanization (see Appendix C) of where the campus was physically located. Participating campuses included the designation of Town Distant, Town Remote, Rural Fringe, Rural Distant, and Rural Remote. Invited institutions carried the Carnegie Classification designation of Baccalaureate Colleges and Master's Colleges. It was decided not to include other designations such as doctoral campuses or community colleges due to the differing missions those institution types uphold as baccalaureate and masters have a primary focus on teaching

(Hirt, 2006). Employees at for-profit institutions were not included in the present study due to differences in student affairs functions and principles (Kinser, 2006). Within the four U.S. Census categories utilized for this research, 209 institutions were identified as possible places where participants may be found.

I hired a research assistant (see Appendix E) to populate a database of institutions following the procedure I identified (see Appendix F) using institutions that were identified by me as qualified to participate in the study using the defined parameters of degree of urbanization and institutional type (see Appendix C). The research assistant collected information from each institution's website such as the name of the SSAO, the SSAO's title, e-mail address, and number of reporting staff members. All information was entered into an excel spreadsheet (see Appendix G). For the institutions that did not have complete information available on the website, a phone call was made to the institution to obtain contact information.

Of those 209 institutions that resulted from the query, two were eliminated as they are for profit, one was eliminated as it was online only, one institution had closed, and one email address was never found. Ultimately the population consisted of 205 institutions. Each institution ranged between two to twenty-seven student affairs professionals with the most frequent structures consisting of approximately seven professionals, which could have yielded a sample of 1400 potential participants (see Appendix G).

Participants

The participants for this study were full-time student affairs practitioners who held professional titles from entry-level (Coordinator) to upper-level (Senior Student Affairs Officer)

responsibilities, as determined by the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) at each institution. Student affairs lacks universal titles (Tull & Freeman, 2008), functional area composition and range of responsibilities across the profession (Dalton & Crosby, 2011; Mills, 2007). To combat the issue of student affairs definition scope, and for the purposes of this study, student affairs is defined as the functional units designated by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) (2015):

- Academic Advising Programs
- Alcohol and Other Drug Programs
- Assessment Services
- Auxiliary Services Functional Areas
- Campus Activities Programs
- Campus Information and Visitor Services
- Campus Police and Security Programs
- Campus Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Programs
- Career Services
- Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Programs
- Clinical Health Services
- College Honor Society Programs
- College Unions
- Collegiate Recreation Programs
- Conference and Event Programs
- Counseling Services
- Dining Services Programs
- Disability Resources and Services
- Education Abroad Programs and Services
- Financial Aid Programs
- Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs
- Graduate and Professional Student Programs and Services
- Health Promotion Services
- Housing and Residential Life Programs
- International Student Programs and Services
- Internship Programs
- Learning Assistance Programs
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Programs and Services
- Master's Level Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programs
- Multicultural Student Programs and Services
- Orientation Programs
- Parent and Family Programs

- Post-Traditional and Commuter Student Programs and Services
- Registrar Programs and Services
- Sexual Violence-Related Programs and Services
- Student Conduct Programs
- Student Leadership Programs
- Student Media Programs
- Testing Programs and Services
- Transfer Student Programs and Services
- TRIO and other Educational Programs
- Opportunity Programs
- Undergraduate Admissions Programs and Services

Sampling Techniques

The present study was open to the entire defined population outlined using a nonprobability snowball sampling technique for disbursement of the instrument. Given little is known about student affairs in rural settings, the proposed study is exploratory in nature. Thus, the entire population was included in order to increase the probability of having a robust number of responses, thereby decreasing the margin of error and increasing the confidence level that the instrument is representative of the population (Sue & Ritter, 2012). The nonprobability sampling approach does not have specific response rates outlined; however, larger samples are preferred for statistical analysis in general (Fowler, 2009; Babbie, 2001).

Using a nonprobability snowball technique does not come without risks as a potential does exist to oversample some segments of the population creating sampling errors (Fowler, 2009). Some of the potential sampling errors that could exist include the number of respondents per zip code, education level achieved, gender, race, and years of experience. Descriptive

statistics were conducted on these demographic factors to highlight who was included in the sample. Please see the SAPIS instrument with modifications noted in Appendix A.

Instrumentation

The Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale (SAPIS) is a 74-item instrument used to collect data for the study with the permission of Maureen E. Wilson, lead researcher of the study from which the instrument originated (see Appendix B). Dr. Wilson provided both the scale and the guide to the researcher of the current study for use. In the 2016 study, mid-level student affairs professionals served as the population for their research. Wilson et al. distributed the survey to professionals affiliated with College Student Educators International (ACPA) and had acceptable values ranging from 0.69 to 0.89 for reliability using Chronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency across items. A value of between 0.70-0.90 is considered to indicate strong internal consistency thus reliability of the instrument (Tabakol & Dennick, 2011).

Instrument Modifications

Slight modifications to the instrument were made in order to study the specified population. The modifications to the instrument did not impact the reliability coefficients for the instrument. To address gaps in the literature, several questions were added to the SAPIS. The current study included some slight question modifications and the removal of a couple of questions to align with the study's purpose. In addition to the modifications, the University of North Dakota's Consent to Participate was included with the instrument as well as a link to a separate survey if the participant wished to receive preliminary research findings.

Additions

The instrument for the study consisted of several additions to the original SAPIS. Four questions were added to inquire on the role of doctoral experiences as applicable. Added questions inquired about doctoral program curriculum, program faculty, program peers, and program experiential opportunities. The questions revolved around organization membership, conference attendance, presenting at a conference, and holding a leadership position with an association. Second, a question was added in the demographic section to indicate if the participant had obtained a graduate degree in a field other than higher education. Third, a question regarding community size where the institution is located has been added. Fourth, added was a question regarding current position level since the participants for this study were across experience levels. Lastly, to monitor for location skewedness, the zip code of the institution location was added so that any zip code which received more than ten responses could be randomly reduced so to not overly influence the results due to high survey participation rates.

Modifications and Eliminations

The present study also had a few modifications in the institutional characteristics section of the instrument. The study only invited student affairs professionals from four-year institutional types (specifically bachelor's and master degree colleges and universities) to complete the SAPIS. Therefore, response options under Question 14 were altered to reflect this change. Second, in the original research instrument the professional organization involvement variable combined regional and national affiliation. For the current study, the four questions pertaining to regional and national professional organization participation were separated. The

present study also removed two questions that pertained to reporting structure and faculty status as these questions were not relevant to the study.

Measures

The same three constructs that Wilson et al. (2016) used to define professional identity: values congruence, community connection, and career contentment were used for the present study. In addition, there was a series of questions regarding professional influences and professional development influences on socialization, professional involvement, as well as two lines of questioning around institutional characteristics and participant demographics.

Professional Identity

The survey instrument included 18 questions pertaining to the three professional identity constructs measured: community connection (seven questions), values congruence (6 questions after 1 was accidentally forgotten off survey administered), and career contentment (4 questions). All variables in this section were coded ordinally (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). A composite variable for each construct was determined by taking the average score of the corresponding variable items and calculated in SPSS using the compute variable function. It was important to utilize composite variables so that the same scale was being used across variables and so that each was weighted equally. See Tables 1-3 for a summary of variable names that correspond to the survey items and the composite variable for each construct.

Table 1. *Community Connection (CC) Construct*

Variable Name	Survey Item
CC2.4	It is important to me to hold a doctorate in higher education.

CC2.5	I get more of my intellectual stimulation from professional colleagues at other institutions than I get from professional colleagues at my institution.
CC2.12	If I were to be offered a position similar to the job I currently hold (with similar salary) and that job was at a more prestigious institution, I would likely take it.
CC2.14	My desire to live close to family affects my career decisions.
CC2.15	I feel stronger connection to my institution than I feel to my profession.
CC2.17	For the foreseeable future, I intend to remain working within a 2-hour radius of where I work now.
CC2.18	I will likely work at my current institution until I retire.
CC_COMPOSITE	Community Connection composite variable

Table 2. *Values Congruence (VC) Construct*

Variable Name	Survey Item
VC2.3	I have mentored someone in my field.
VC2.6	As a member of the profession, it is important to me to engage in ethical work.
VC2.7	My values are consistent with the student affairs profession.
VC2.9	I take pride in improving my specialized skills.
VC2.11	I am committed to reading current literature in the field.
VC2.13	I am interested in the problems of this profession.
VC_COMPOSITE	Values Congruence composite variable

Table 3. *Career Contentment (CT) Construct*

Variable Name	Survey Item
CT2.1	I am satisfied with the way my career is going.
CT2.2	I see myself working in higher education until retirement.
CT2.8	I think about leaving student affairs work to pursue something different.
CT2.10	I take pride in being a member of this profession.
CT_COMPOSITE	Career Contentment composite variable

Influences on Socialization

The survey instrument contained 24 questions related to influences on socialization to the student affairs profession. The questions were divided into two categories: professional influences, and professional development influences.

Professional Influences. There were 12 questions about professional influences that asked participants to consider what has helped them grow as professionals, specifically noting the setting where the experiences that, professionally, had a “very positive influence” on them took place. The settings that participants were asked to consider are master’s coursework, employment in the field, and professional association involvement. More than one response could be entered for each item, so unique variables were created for each setting for each item. All variables in this section were coded dichotomously (0=no, 1=yes). See Tables 4-6 for a summary of the variable names and survey items in this category.

Table 4. *Master’s Program Professional Influences (PI) Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PI3.1M	Master’s Program: Helped me understand the political landscape of a workplace
PI3.2M	Master’s Program: Helped me understand the institutional culture of a workplace
PI3.3M	Master’s Program: Provided me guidance in developing future career goals
PI3.4M	Master’s Program: Encouraged my involvement in professional associations
PI3.5M	Master’s Program: Helped me understand professional expectations
PI3.6M	Master’s Program: Helped me understand the campus climate related to diversity
PI3.7M	Master’s Program: Helped me understand the value of regular self-evaluation
PI3.8M	Master’s Program: Provided constructive feedback on my performance
PI3.9M	Master’s Program: Helped me expand my professional network

PI3.10M	Master's Program: Encouraged my participation in division or campus committees
PI3.11M	Master's Program: Modeled ethical practice
PI3.12M	Master's Program: Helped me internalize a clear professional identity
MI_COMPOSITE	Master's Program Professional Influences composite variable

Table 5. *Employment Professional Influences (PI) Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PI3.1E	Employment: Helped me understand the political landscape of a workplace
PI3.2E	Employment: Helped me understand the institutional culture of a workplace
PI3.3E	Employment: Provided me guidance in developing future career goals
PI3.4E	Employment: Encouraged my involvement in professional associations
PI3.5E	Employment: Helped me understand professional expectations
PI3.6E	Employment: Helped me understand the campus climate related to diversity
PI3.7E	Employment: Helped me understand the value of regular self-evaluation
PI3.8E	Employment: Provided constructive feedback on my performance
PI3.9E	Employment: Helped me expand my professional network
PI3.10E	Employment: Encouraged my participation in division or campus committees
PI3.11E	Employment: Modeled ethical practice
PI3.12E	Employment: Helped me internalize a clear professional identity
EI_COMPOSITE	Employment Professional Influences composite variable

Table 6. *Professional Association Professional Influences (PI) Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PI3.1PA	Professional Association: Helped me understand the political landscape of a workplace
PI3.2PA	Professional Association: Helped me understand the institutional culture of a workplace
PI3.3PA	Professional Association: Provided me guidance in developing future career goals
PI3.4PA	Professional Association: Encouraged my involvement in professional associations
PI3.5PA	Professional Association: Helped me understand professional expectations

PI3.6PA	Professional Association: Helped me understand the campus climate related to diversity
PI3.7PA	Professional Association: Helped me understand the value of regular self-evaluation
PI3.8PA	Professional Association: Provided constructive feedback on my performance
PI3.9PA	Professional Association: Helped me expand my professional network
PI3.10PA	Professional Association: Encouraged my participation in division or campus committees
PI3.11PA	Professional Association: Modeled ethical practice
PI3.12PA	Professional Association: Helped me internalize a clear professional identity
<u>AI_COMPOSITE</u>	<u>Professional Association Professional Influences composite variable</u>

Professional Development Influences. There were 12 questions on professional development that refer to relationships with colleagues, professional organizations and graduate degrees, with ordinal responses coded for each item (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). A composite variable for professional development was determined by taking the average score of the corresponding variable items and calculated in SPSS using the compute variable function. See Table 7 for a summary of variable names that correspond to the survey items and the composite variable for this category of socialization variables.

Table 7. *Professional Development Influences (PD) Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PD4.1	My work supervisors
PD4.2	My other professional colleagues
PD4.3	My involvement in professional organizations
PD4.4	My master's program curriculum (e.g., course content)
PD4.5	My master's program faculty
PD4.6	My master's program peers
PD4.7	My master's program experiential opportunities (e.g., assistantship, practicum, internship)
PD4.8	My doctoral program curriculum (e.g., course content)
PD4.9	My doctoral program faculty
PD4.10	My doctoral program peers

PD4.11	My doctoral program experiential opportunities (e.g., assistantship, practicum, internship)
PD_COMPOSITE	Professional Development Influences Composite Variable

Professional Engagement

The survey instrument included 20 questions that related to professional engagement activities that include involvement with professional organizations, publication activity, personal financial investment, professional literature reviewed and communication with colleagues. Responses for this item are check all that apply. All variables in this section were coded dichotomously (0=no, 1=yes). See Tables 7-12 for professional engagement influence variable names and corresponding survey item.

Table 8. *Local Organization Professional Engagement Activities Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PE5.3MSL	Membership in a state or local professional organization
PE5.6ASL	Attended a state or local professional conference
PE5.9SL	Presented at a state or local professional conference
PE5.12LSL	Held a leadership position in a state or local professional association
LE_COMPOSITE	Local organization professional engagement activities composite variable

Table 9. *Regional Organization Professional Engagement Activities Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PE5.1MR	Membership in a regional professional organization
PE5.4AR	Attended a regional professional conference
PE5.7PR	Presented at a regional professional conference
PE5.10LR	Held a leadership position in a regional professional association
RE_COMPOSITE	Regional organization professional engagement activities composite variable

Table 10. *National Organization Professional Engagement Activities Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PE5.2MN	Membership in a national professional organization
PE5.5AN	Attended a national professional conference
PE5.8PN	Presented at a national professional conference
PE5.11LN	Held a leadership position in a national professional association
NE_COMPOSITE	National organization professional engagement activities composite variable

Table 11. *Continuing Education Professional Engagement Activities Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PE5.13RPP	Regularly read professional publications to stay current in the field
PE5.14PL	Purchased resources for my professional library that were not required for a class or job
PE5.15PF	Used personal funds to pay for my professional development activities
PE5.16PA	Published an article in a professional newsletter or journal
PE5.20SD	Used student development theory to inform my work
EE_COMPOSITE	Continuing education professional engagement activities composite variable

Table 12. *Networking Professional Engagement Activities Socialization Factors*

Variable Name	Survey Item
PE5.17LT	Talked about my long-term career goals with colleagues at different institutions
PE5.18CW	Consulted with colleagues on my campus about my current work issues
PE5.19CO	Consulted with colleagues outside my institution about my work issues
NWE_COMPOSITE	Networking professional engagement activities composite variable

Participant Demographics

The survey instrument contained six questions that pertained to individual demographics. The questions included gender identity, ethnic identity, educational level completed, years of experience and two questions on graduate degree obtainment. See Table 13 for a summary of the

demographic variable names, corresponding survey items, data types, and response options (values).

Table 13. *Demographic Characteristics (DC)*

Variable Name	Survey Item	Data Type	Values
DC6	What is your gender	Nominal	Agender Genderqueer or Non-Binary Man Other Prefer not to Answer Transgender Transman or Transmasculine Transwoman or Transfeminine Woman
DC7	What is your racial/ethnic identity	Nominal	African American or Black; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian or Pacific Islander Bi-racial or Multiracial; Hispanic/Latino/Latina; White, Non-Hispanic; Other
DC8	The highest educational level I have completed is	Ordinal	Some college or less; A bachelor's degree; Some master's classes; A master's degree; Some doctoral classes; Doctorate
DC9	How many years have you worked in the field	Ordinal	Fill in the blank
DC10	Do you have a graduate degree from a higher education/student affairs program	Nominal	Yes; No

DC11	Do you have a graduate degree from a field other than higher education/student affairs	Nominal	Yes (if yes, then what); No
DC12	Please indicate the size of your current institution	Ordinal	Fewer than 5,000; 5,000-9,999; 10,000-14,999; 15,000 or greater; Not Applicable
DC13	Please indicate the population size of the community where your current institution is located	Ordinal	Fewer than 10,000; 10,000-19,999; 20,000-29,999; 30,000-39,999; 40,000-49,999; 50,000 or greater; unknown
DC14	What best describes your current employer	Nominal	4-year public university/college; 4-year private university/college; Not currently employed; Other (specify)
DC15	Aside from your current position, check all institution types at which you have worked or held assistantships	Nominal	4-year public university/college; 4-year private not-for-profit university/college; 4-year for-profit institution; 2-year public college; 2-year private not-for-profit college; 2-year for-profit college; Other (specify)
DC16	Please list the zip code where your institution is located	Nominal	Fill in the blank
DC17	What title best describes your current position	Nominal	Clerical/Support; Entry-Level; Mid-Level; One Person Department; Senior Level; Other

Institutional Characteristics

The instrument contained four questions that pertained to institutional characteristics. These questions included a question on institution size, community population, institution scope, and zip code where the institution was located. See Table 14 for a summary of the institutional characteristic variable names, survey items, data type, and response options (values).

Table 14. *Institutional Characteristics (IC)*

Variable Name	Survey Item	Data Type	Values
IC12	Please indicate the size of your current institution	Ordinal	Fewer than 5,000 5,000-9,999 10,000-14,999 15,000 or greater Not applicable
IC13	Please indicate the population size of the community where your current institution is located.	Ordinal	Fewer than 10,000 10,000-19,999 20,000-29,999 30,000-39,999 40,000-49,999 50,000 or greater Unknown
IC14	Which best describes your current employer?	Nominal	4-year public university/college 4-year private not-for-profit college/university Not currently employed Other
IC16	Please list the zip code where your institution is located.	Nominal	Fill in the blank

Procedures

The following section includes a discussion on how participants for the study were recruited including the communication plan and guidelines for participation. In addition, data collection methods are discussed and includes a brief synopsis of the instrument, the timeline used for data collection, and incentives for participation.

Recruitment

Each Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) from the institutions eligible for inclusion in the study received an email message (see Appendix E) outlining the study and the SAPIS as the survey instrument. Each SSAO was asked to determine who within their institution should participate in the survey in accordance with survey instructional guidelines (see Appendix E). The SSAO was asked to forward the instrument to their non-clerical reports utilizing a snowball or chain sampling approach (Harkiolakis, 2017; Babbie, 2001). An original target of 25-30% response rate was sought or an overall sample size of 350-420 participants out of 1400 potential respondents. Instead the study resulted in 61 participants or a 4.4% response rate.

Data Collection

The survey instrument was electronically administered to participants using Qualtrics software. Qualtrics is a web-based survey administration program that is accessible via either a standard computer or from a mobile device. According to the Qualtrics survey instrument, the survey would take participants approximately 9 minutes to complete the survey. In both the instructions to participants and the survey instructions it was communicated that the survey would take approximately 10-20 minutes. Qualtrics estimate proved to be very accurate as after

adjustments were made removing those participants from being calculated for average time who were presumably distracted while completing the survey as they were in the survey for a period of more than 30 minutes the average response rate was exactly 9 minutes. Each participant had limited responsibility by only needing to complete the survey once rather than having prolonged involvement. The opt-in process with names was collected through a separate survey link to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

The first page of the survey included the consent form and explanation of the research study. Participants could self-select to receive research findings at the conclusion of the study by following a link that is separate from the survey instrument itself. The survey was distributed on August 1, 2019 and yielded 28 responses, August 16, 2019 and yielded 13 responses, and on September 10, 2019 which resulted in 20 responses. Each email message indicated that participants wishing to receive preliminary findings may do so by providing contact information that will be collected separately from the instrument as an incentive for participation.

Data Analysis

Survey responses were collected via Qualtrics and downloaded into SPSS. Prior to analysis, the data was screened both visually within the spreadsheet and also using SPSS tools. The data set was screened for outliers using two methods. After a frequency test had been run to determine if a normal distribution exists, z-scores were calculated had there been responses $+3.5$ or -3.5 standard deviations from the mean (Warner, 2013) they would have been removed, but in this case there were no responses requiring removal. In addition, a box plot was run to demonstrate visually any outliers. Screening of the data set for sampling error also happened prior to analysis to ensure that ten or more respondents from the same zip code did not

participate. Once the data set was thoroughly screened, it was entered into SPSS version 25 by the researcher.

The first series of data points that were determined were descriptive statistics for the demographic questions defining the survey respondents. Specifically, both a frequency table and the mean responses for gender, ethnic background, educational level, and years of professional experience was reported. In addition, frequency tables indicating information provided by respondents were reported; they include institution type, size of institution, level within organization, and community size. Mean is the preferred measure of central tendency (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013) and was the measure utilized to determine central tendency in the current study. Normal distribution was found to be present in all constructs and is reported in the results. The presence of normal distributions made the use of non-parametric testing unnecessary with the sample.

Characteristics of the Sample

There were a total of 80 participants who initially attempted the survey. Of those participants, one declined to provide informed consent so the survey moved directly to the end. In addition, there were 18 participants who failed to move past the informed consent question to complete any questions regarding professional identity or socialization factors so were eliminated from the study prior to analysis. This left 61/1400 participants for analysis.

Participant Characteristics

The research design used for this study had the survey distributed to one individual, the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO), at each eligible four-year institution. The SSAO was

requested to forward the survey on to engage more participants. Based on the responses received this forwarding in large part did not occur. Of the 61 participants in the survey, 45 (73.8%) currently held a senior level position at their institution. Additionally, while 50 participants (82%) provided the zip code for the location of their current institution 18% did not, making the response rate calculation an estimate based on available information. Of the 50 participants reporting a zip code, there were 33 unique zip codes with a total of six zip codes having multiple responses. This accounts for an estimated response rate of 16.1% (33/205) of SSAO's or 4.4% overall (61/1400).

Responses to individual demographic questions are located in Table 15. Participants reported being equally split in regards to gender identity yet 83.6% (51) reported being White, Non-Hispanic, followed next by African American or Black at 5 (8.2%). It was interesting to note how equally split years of professional experience was reported with only those with 31 years of experience or more at a value under 20% at 16.4% (10). As one might expect with nearly 75% of participants holding senior level positions the majority of respondents report holding a doctorate 22 (36.1%) or a master's 27 (44.3)%.

Table 15. *Individual Respondent Demographics*

Demographic	Response Category	Frequency of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Degree Level	Some College or Less	1	1.6
	Bachelor's Degree	3	4.9
	Some Master's Classes	1	1.6
	Master's Degree	27	44.3
	Some Doctoral Classes	7	11.5
	Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D)	22	36.1

Current Position Level	Entry-Level	2	3.3
	Mid-Level	9	14.8
	One Person Department	4	6.6
	Senior Level	45	73.8
	No Response	1	1.6
Years in Profession	1-10 years	15	24.6
	11-20 years	17	27.9
	21-30 years	19	31.1
	31+ years	10	16.4
Gender Identity	Genderqueer or Non-Binary	1	1.6
	Man	30	49.2
	Woman	30	49.2
Racial Identity	African American or Black	5	8.2
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1.6
	Asian or Pacific Islander	2	3.3
	Bi-racial or Multiracial	1	1.6
	White, Non-Hispanic	51	83.6
	Other, Please Specify	1	1.6

The question of degree held is of significant importance to the study as it is examined as a means of socialization into the field. Therefore, specific questions were asked addressing the discipline or degree name if it differed from higher education/student affairs. The survey had two questions worded nearly identically but yielded slightly different responses indicating potential confusion by participants in how to answer the questions. Despite the confusion on wording both questions yielded the same result. Respondents in both questions indicated that more of them have an advanced degree named something different than Student Affairs or Higher Education 52.5% (32) and 55.7% (34). Participants were allowed to fill-in the name of their advanced degree and there were 24 differently named degree programs around the general areas of

counseling, education, human resources, psychology, public administration, and other fields in the humanities.

Participant Institutional Characteristics

The defined parameters for the study were very specific in regards to population being examined. Eligible institutions were selected for participation based on degree of rurality of where the institution is located according to the United States Census Bureau and the institutions classification as a four-year baccalaureate public or private institution as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics. The two factors were cross referenced using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Center to create the sample making the institutional variability relatively limited.

The 61 student affairs professionals who participated in the survey were from throughout rural United States with 25 states having representation according to the 50 (82%) respondents who indicated the zip code where their institution is housed. Table 16 indicates institutional demographic responses pertaining to community size, institution size, and institution type. Of note, 82% (50) of participants indicated that their current institution has an enrollment of fewer than 5,000 students and that 54.1% (33) of participants reported community populations where the institution is located have fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. These relative higher participation rates could indicate greater interest in the topic being examined.

Table 16. *Respondent Institutional Demographics*

Demographic	Response Category	Frequency of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Institution Size	Fewer than 5,000	50	82.0
	5,000-9,999	7	11.5
	10,000-14,999	3	4.9

	No Response	1	1.6
Community Size	Fewer than 10,000	33	54.1
	10,000-19,999	7	11.5
	20,000-29,999	9	14.8
	30,000-39,999	5	8.2
	40,000-49,999	2	3.3
	50,000 or Greater	2	3.3
	No Response	3	4.9
Institution Type	4-year Public University/College	45	73.8
	4-year Private not-for-profit University/College	12	19.7
	Other	2	3.3
	No Response	2	3.3

Not surprisingly the screening process for eligible participants yielded little variety in institution-type with 93.5% (57) of participants indicating they are currently employed at a 4-year Public or Private University or College. The two responses with other were a surprise due to the screening prior to survey distribution and were determined to be one issue of missed screen of for-profit status and one where the respondent indicated the institution was a 2- and 4-year public college.

Individual Items

To respond to research questions 1-3, linear regression analyses between professional socialization variables (professional influences, professional development influences, and professional engagement activities) and professional identity constructs (values congruence, community connection, and career contentment) were performed. Linear regression is a statistical measure that allows researchers to predict relationships based on correlations between variables (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). Regression analysis was selected for this study due to clearly defined predictor and outcome variables (Warner, 2014) with the professional

socialization variables serving as the predictor variables and the professional identity constructs serving as the outcome variables. Assumptions presumed for linear regression are that bivariate normality exists, that the relationship between the two variables is linear and that the dependent variable, professional identity, is quantitative in nature (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013).

In order to assure that the assumptions for linear regression were satisfied a scatter plot was run to test for normality of outliers. To test for significance, *F*-ratios were calculated using a 95% confidence level. The linear regression models that were used for each research question are described below.

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between professional influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?* A series of linear regression models was constructed using professional influence variables (PI3.1M-PI3) as the independent variables and professional identity composite variables (VC_Composite; CC_Composite; CT_Composite) as the dependent variable (one for each model). Professional influence factors are nominal and dichotomous (0=no, 1=yes) variables. The professional identity composite variables are ordinal (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between professional development influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?* A series of linear regression models were constructed using professional development influence variables (PD4.1-PD4.11) as the independent variables and professional identity composite variables (VC_Composite; CC_Composite; CT_Composite) as the dependent variable (one for each

model). Professional development influence variables are ordinal, as are the professional identity composite variables (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

Research Question 3: *What is the relationship between professional engagement activities and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?* A series of linear regression models using professional engagement (PE5.1MR- PE5.20SD) as the independent variables and professional identity composite variables (VC_Composite; CC_Composite; CT_Composite) as the dependent variable (one for each series) were constructed. The professional engagement variables are nominal and dichotomous (0=no, 1=yes). The professional identity composite variables are ordinal ((1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

To respond to research question 4 (*“What is the relationship between educational level and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?”*), an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed in order to examine the relationships between educational level (DC8) as the independent variable and the professional identity constructs composites (VC_Composite; CC_Composite; CT_Composite) of community connection, values congruence, and career contentment as the dependent variables. The ANOVAs measure group means in order to determine patterns with this study using within group analysis of variance. In order to use ANOVA as a measure three assumptions are needed: independent samples, normal sample distribution, and equal variance (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). As part of the ANOVA testing procedure post hoc procedures were utilized to make all possible comparisons between groups (Warner, 2013). In this analysis, the groups were determined by educational level (Some college

or less; Bachelor's degree; Some master's classes; Master's degree; Some doctoral classes; Doctorate).

To measure the correlational relationship between variables, Tukey HSD was used for this study as within group ANOVAs were conducted. Tukey HSD was also chosen due to its common use within social research, and its relative low threshold for determining significance between means (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). Bonferroni was also used for the study due its ability to test for multiple significance tests at the same time and its conservative nature in determining significance (Warner, 2013). By using both post hoc procedures a comparison can be established to ensure a Type I error is less likely to occur.

Ethical Issues

The research project received approval from the institutional review board where the researcher is enrolled as a doctoral student prior to the instrument being sent to study participants. Within the IRB application, the informed consent document was included for review from the committee and contained all necessary elements for protecting human rights (Creswell, 2014).

The survey instrument was sent to the Senior Student Affairs officer within each institution where each was asked to allow their staff to participate in the study. Included in that correspondence was an outline of the expected time needed to complete the instrument, any potential risks, and purpose of the research (Creswell, 2014). At the completion of the study preliminary results were shared with participating individuals who indicated interest in receiving the data in aggregate non-identifiable form.

Summary

The study aimed to research rural student affairs professionals by communicating directly to the senior student affairs officer at each of the institutions identified and then to utilize a snowball sampling technique. The proceeding chapter outlined the sampling strategies and defined the variables that were examined, who was represented within the population and how they were identified. The manner in which the survey was administered was also discussed as well as what statistical analysis was conducted and what software was utilized.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine the socialization factors experienced by student affairs professionals located at rural higher education institutions and how those factors associate with professional identity as described in Chapter 1. The purpose was operationalized through the utilization of a web-based survey which was distributed to Senior Student Affairs Officers employed at rural institutions that was asked to be forwarded to their direct reports. The data was interpreted using regression analysis to measure socialization factors and professional identity constructs as well as comparative analysis to determine how results varied based on participant demographics.

Instrumentation

To answer the four research questions outlined below, the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale (SAPIS) develop by Wilson et al. (2016) was used. The SAPIS consisted of three constructs used to measure the dependent variable professional identity: values congruence, community connection and career contentment. The SAPIS included three constructs used to measure the independent variable socialization factors; professional influences, professional development influences, and professional engagement activities. Questions on the SAPIS utilized 5-point likert scale ratings from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for the dependent variable constructs and utilized a nominal yes or no measure for the questions related to the independent variable constructs.

The internal consistency and relationship between the constructs is reported in Table 17. As indicated, the correlation values between the constructs are relatively low with the exception of the relationship between values congruence and career contentment as values congruence had three significant relationships and career contentment had two significant relationships. Community connection had the smallest connection to the other professional identity constructs which mirrors the findings of the Wilson et al. (2016) study. The internal consistency of the professional identity constructs is also listed below for the current study. To calculate internal consistency, Chronbach Alpha was calculated. It is desired to have Chronbach Alpha Levels at or above the 0.7 level (Tabakol & Dennick, 2011) the figures below are all above 0.6 level so are acceptable. Further, the internal consistency is similar to the Chronbach Alpha scores found in Wilson et al.'s study (2016) which reported scores of $\alpha = .63$ for values congruence, $\alpha = .67$ for community connection, and $\alpha = .74$ for career contentment. The reliability analysis for this study was slightly lower for all constructs than found in Wilson et al.'s study. These lower scores indicate that some of the variables do not as accurately represent the attitudes found in the previous study where the instrument developed. These differences could be the result of relative low response rate for this study, the mixed experiential levels of this study's respondents, or the fact that the respondents are all practitioners within the rural context.

Table 17. *Correlation of Competency Subscale Constructs and Internal Consistency*

Construct Number	Subscale Construct	C1.	C2.	α	Wilson's α
C.1	Values Congruence			.61	.63
C.2	Community Connection	.08		.63	.67
C.3	Career Contentment	.44	.15	.68	.74

The constructs that make-up the dependent variable professional identity underwent measures to test for internal consistency which is denoted in Table 18 below by calculating the Chronbach Alpha for each question. Statistically it is desired to have values above the 0.7 level (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013), which some but not all questions measured. For the community connection construct there were three questions with scores under a 0.55 value, using SPSS scores for the construct were run with items removed to see if there would be a significant impact on consistency. It was decided that no questions would be removed within the constructs as the removal did not significantly improve the overall construct internal consistency. Further, when examined against the Wilson et al. study (2015) the figures were actually similar if not higher than the values they had observed. Similarly, the career contentment construct had two questions each with a value of 0.45. It was decided that the two would remain as part of the construct due to little change in the overall internal consistency and so not to impact content validity. If one question were to be removed and with only four questions in the construct, removing two measures left the remaining construct a weaker measure given the overall internal consistency measure was the highest of all three sub-constructs even with the two lower scores. Overall, all of the internal consistency measure results were at or above those found in the Wilson et al. study.

Table 18. *Dimensions of Professional Identity*

Survey Item	<i>M</i>	Values Congruence $\alpha = .61$	Community Connection $\alpha = .63$	Career Contentment $\alpha = .68$
I am committed to reading current literature in the field.	4.0	.74		
My values are consistent with the student affairs profession.	4.5	.55		
I am interested in the problems of the profession.	4.3	.70		

As a member of the profession, it is important to me to engage in ethical work.	4.8	.54	
I take pride in improving my specialized skills.	4.4	.50	
I have mentored someone into the field.	4.1	.59	
I will likely work at my current institution until I retire.	3.2		.76
For the foreseeable future, I intend to remain working within a two-hour radius of where I work now.	3.6		.79
I feel a stronger connection to my institution than I feel to my profession.	3.0		.59
If I were to be offered a position similar to the job I currently hold and that job was at a more prestigious institution, I would likely take it.*	3.3		.56
It is important to me to hold a doctorate in higher education.*	2.7		.31
I get more of my intellectual stimulation from professional colleagues at other institutions than I get from professional colleagues at my own institution.*	2.9		.39
My desire to live close to family affects my career decisions.	3.6		.47
I think about leaving student affairs work to pursue something different.*	3.6		.88
I see myself working in higher education until retirement.	4.4		.45
I am satisfied with the way my career is going.	4.2		.64
I take pride in being a member of this profession.	4.6		.45

Individual Items

Individuals who participated in the study completed the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale (SAPIS). The SAPIS included questions on individual and institutional demographics which were reported in the previous chapter. In addition, the instrument asked a series of questions pertaining to their professional development which will be reported in the following section. Participants were first asked about their perceptions of their work in student affairs. Table 19 includes the mean, standard deviation, percentage of agreement, and minimum

and maximum responses for each item. Items appear in the table in the same order as they did in the survey instrument.

Table 19. *Perception of Work* (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 5)

Survey Questions	% Some Form of Agreement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum Response	Maximum Response
2.1. I am satisfied with the way my career is going.	88.5	4.2	0.8	2	5
2.2. I see myself working in higher education until retirement.	88.4	4.4	0.8	2	5
2.3. I have mentored someone into the field.	82.0	4.1	1.0	1	5
2.4. It is important to me to hold a doctorate in higher education.	36.0	2.7	1.4	1	5
2.5. I get more of my intellectual stimulation from professional colleagues at other institutions than I get from professional colleagues at my institution.	36.1	2.9	1.1	1	5
2.6. As a member of the profession, it is important to me to engage in ethical work.	98.3	4.8	0.4	3	5
2.7. My values are consistent with the student affairs profession.	95.1	4.5	0.6	2	5
2.8. I think about leaving student affairs work to pursue something different.	64.0	3.6	1.3	1	5
2.9. I take pride in improving my specialized skills (e.g., advising specific student populations).	95.1	4.4	0.6	3	5
2.10. I take pride in being a member of this profession.	98.4	4.6	0.5	3	5
2.11. I am committed to reading current literature in the field.	72.1	4.0	1.0	2	5
2.12. If I were to be offered a position similar to the job I	44.3	3.3	1.0	1	5

currently hold (with similar salary) and that job was at a more prestigious institution, I would likely take it.					
2.13. I am interested in the problems of this profession.	96.7	4.3	0.6	2	5
2.14. My desire to live close to family affects my career decisions.	62.3	3.6	1.3	1	5
2.15. I feel stronger connection to my institution than I feel to my profession.	36.1	3.0	1.1	1	5
2.17. For the foreseeable future, I intend to remain working within a 2-hour radius of where I work now.	59.1	3.6	1.4	1	5
2.18. I will likely work at my current institution until I retire.	42.6	3.2	1.5	1	5

Participants were then asked to evaluate what environments influenced their careers in student affairs. Environmental influences included master’s degree coursework, employment within the field of student affairs and involvement with professional organizations. Responses were indicated by participants indicating which of the three environmental influences had a perceived impact on them professionally by indicating in agreement. Participants could select more than one environment having had influence on them professionally and are indicated in Table 20.

Table 20. *Positive Influence*

Survey Questions	% Agreement Master’s Coursework	% Agreement Employment in the Field	% Agreement Involvement in Professional Organizations
3.1. Helped me understand the political landscape of a workplace	16.4	96.7	41.0

3.2. Helped me understand the institutional culture of a workplace	13.1	98.4	23.0
3.3. Provided me guidance in developing future career goals	31.1	65.6	54.1
3.4. Encouraged my involvement in professional associations	41.0	55.7	60.7
3.5. Helped me understand professional expectations	39.3	85.2	44.3
3.6. Helped me understand the campus climate related to diversity	26.2	77.0	50.8
3.7. Helped me understand the value of regular self-evaluation	42.6	57.4	44.3
3.8. Provided constructive feedback on my performance	27.9	86.9	13.1
3.9. Helped me expand my professional network	23.0	52.5	80.3
3.10. Encouraged my participation in division or campus committees	14.8	88.5	26.2
3.11. Modeled ethical practice	47.5	65.6	60.7
3.12. Helped me internalize a clear professional identity	32.8	72.1	54.1

Participants were asked to evaluate to what degree professional relationships and graduate work factors influenced their careers in student affairs. Professional relationship influences included supervisors, and connections made in graduate work with faculty and peers. Graduate work factors included experiential coursework and curriculum. Table 21 includes the mean, standard deviation, percentage of agreement, and minimum and maximum responses for each item. Items appear in the table in the same order as they did in the survey instrument.

Table 21. *Relational Influence* (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 5)

Survey Questions	% Some Form of Agreement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum Response	Maximum Response
4.1. My work supervisors	80.4	4.1	0.9	1	5
4.2. My other professional colleagues	96.8	4.3	0.6	2	5

4.3. My involvement in professional organizations	82.0	4.1	0.7	2	5
4.4. My master's program curriculum (e.g., course content)	47.6	3.5	1.1	1	5
4.5. My master's program faculty	54.1	3.6	0.9	1	5
4.6. My master's program peers	47.6	3.5	1.1	1	5
4.7. My master's program experiential opportunities (e.g., assistantship, practicum, internship)	45.9	3.4	1.1	1	5
4.8. My doctoral program curriculum (e.g., course content)	32.8	3.6	1.1	1	5
4.9. My doctoral program faculty	32.8	3.7	1.1	1	5
4.10. My doctoral program peers	29.6	3.6	1.2	1	5
4.11. My doctoral program experiential opportunities (e.g., assistantship, practicum, internship)	21.3	3.5	1.2	1	5

Participants were asked to indicate what professional involvement activities they had been involved within the past five years. Categories for involvement included activity with professional organizations, continued learning activities, contribution to the field, and consultation with colleagues. Participants could select more than one activity that they have been engaged with in the last five years. Responses were dichotomous and the result are listed in Table 22.

Table 22. *Professional Involvement Activities*

Survey Questions	% of Agreement
Membership in a regional professional organization	75.4
Membership in a national professional organization	88.5
Membership in a state or local professional organization	82.0
Attended a regional professional conference	81.7
Attended a national professional conference	85.0

Attended a state or local professional conference	83.3
Presented at a regional professional conference	41.7
Presented at a national professional conference	33.9
Presented at a state or local professional conference	53.3
Held a leadership position in a regional professional association	31.7
Held a leadership position in a national professional association	23.3
Held a leadership position in a state or local regional professional association	41.0
Regularly read professional publications to stay current in the field	86.7
Purchased resources for my professional library that were not required for class or job	80.0
Used person funds to pay for my professional development activities	75.0
Published an article in a professional newsletter or journal	16.7
Talked about my long-term career goals with colleagues at different institutions	67.2
Consulted with colleagues on my campus about my current work issues	88.5
Consulted with colleagues outside my institution about my current work issues	80.3
Used student development theory to inform my work	73.8

Linear Regression Analysis

The purpose of the study was to determine how socialization factors may impact the professional identities of student affairs professionals practicing in rural settings. To answer the overarching question, four research questions were developed, three of which speak directly to the relationship between socialization factors and professional identity. Socialization was defined under the constructs of professional influences, professional development, and professional engagement. Professional identity was defined under the constructs of community connection, values congruence, and career contentment. Linear regression was used to determine the strength of relationship between those constructs for each of the three research questions.

A summary of the series of linear regressions performed is found in Table 23 As shown the measurements of professional identity; values congruence, community connection, and career

contentment are listed. Several significant results emerged within the values congruence construct and professional engagement activities and one significant result emerged within career contentment and professional development.

Table 23. Regression Summary of Professional Identity Subscales ($N = 60$)

	Values Congruence			Community Connection			Career Contentment		
	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE
<i>Professional Influences:</i>									
Master's Program	-.21	-.03	.02	-.24	-.06	.04	-.12	-.03	.04
Employment	-.14	-.02	.02	-.03	-.01	.04	-.09	-.02	.03
Prof. Assoc.	.22	.03	.02	-.09	-.02	.03	.06	.01	.03
<i>Professional Development:</i>	.15	.11	.10	-.17	-.21	.16	.26*	.30	.15
<i>Professional Engagement Activities:</i>									
Local	-.32*	-.40	.15	-.09	-.18	.27	-.14	-.27	.25
Regional	-.21	-.17	.16	.15	.07	.27	-.12	-.22	.25
National	-.29*	-.45	.20	.20	.51	.33	-.18	-.44	.31
Continuing Ed.	-.33*	-.57	.22	.15	.45	.38	-.03	-.09	.36
Networking	-.21	-.33	.20	.05	.02	.34	-.36**	-.88	.30

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

There were 27 relationships explored in this study. Of those 27 relationships 5 emerged as significant. Three subscales were used to measure professional identity and three subscales were used to measure socialization factors. The professional identity construct of values congruence had relationships with three of the socialization factors: local engagement activities; national engagement activities; and continuing education activities. The professional identity construct career contentment had two significant relationships with socialization constructs. Career contentment was related to the construct of professional development and also to the sub-construct of networking engagement activities. The strongest of these relationships was between

career contentment and networking professional engagement activities. The remainder of this section outlines the specific results of the linear regressions performed.

Question 1. Is there a relationship between professional influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?

To answer research question number one, a series of linear regressions were performed to measure the relationship between the independent variable professional influence and the dependent variable professional identity. The F -test was used to determine significance as to whether professional influence predicts professional identity, with R -squared used to report the degree of variance in professional identity is accounted for by professional influence. Beta coefficients were analyzed to determine strength of the relationship and direction between the two variables.

Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and community connection? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from master's program professional influences. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on master's program professional influences were positively skewed. The scatter plot (Appendix H) indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between community connection and professional development influences was not statistically significant, $r(41) = .24, p = .13$. The r^2 for this equation was .06, which equals 6% of the variance in community connection was predictable from master's program professional influences. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community

connection from professional development activities ranged from -.13 to .02. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that master's program professional influences tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and values congruence? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from master's program professional influences. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on master's program socialization professional influences were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and reasonably linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and master's program professional influences was not statistically significant, $r(41) = .21, p = .18$. The r^2 for this equation was .04, which indicates that 4% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from master's program professional influences. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from master's program professional influences ranged from -.08 to .02. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that master's program professional influences tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct values congruence with this sample.

Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and career contentment? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from master's program professional influences. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on master's program professional influences were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated

that the relation between X and Y was positive and reasonably linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and master's program professional influences was not statistically significant, $r(41) = .12, p = .45$. The r^2 for this equation was .01, indicating that 1% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from master's program professional influences. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from master's program socialization factors professional influences ranged from $-.10$ to $.02$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that master's program professional influences tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment with this sample.

Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and community connection? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from employment socialization factors. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on employment socialization factors were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between community connection and employment socialization factors was not statistically significant, $r(69) = .03, p = .45$. The r^2 for this equation was .00, indicating that 0% of the variance in community connection was predictable from employment socialization factors. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from employment socialization factors ranged from $-.08$ to $.06$. Therefore, this is a non-existent relationship; employment socialization factors had no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and values

congruence? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from employment socialization factors. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on employment socialization factors were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and employment socialization factors was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .14, p = .29$. The r^2 for this equation was .02, indicating that 2% of the variance in community connection was predictable from employment socialization factors. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from employment socialization factors ranged from $-.06$ to $.02$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that employment socialization factors tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct values congruence with this sample.

Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and career

contentment? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from employment socialization factors. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on employment socialization factors were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and employment socialization factors was not statistically significant, $r(60) = .09, p = .51$. The r^2 for this equation was .01, indicating that 1% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from employment socialization factors. The 95% CI for the slope to predict

career contentment from employment socialization factors ranged from $-.09$ to $.04$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that employment socialization factors tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment with this sample.

Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and community connection? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from professional association socialization factors. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on professional association socialization factors were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between community connection and professional association socialization factors was not statistically significant, $r(53) = .09, p = .50$. The r^2 for this equation was $.01$, indicating a 1% of the variance in community connection was predictable from professional association socialization factors. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from professional association socialization factors ranged from $-.09$ to $.04$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that professional association socialization factors tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and values congruence? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from professional association socialization factors. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores

on professional association socialization factors were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and professional association socialization factors was not statistically significant, $r(53) = .22, p = .11$. The r^2 for this equation was .05, indicating that 5% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from professional association socialization factors. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from professional association socialization factors ranged from $-.01$ to $.07$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that professional association socialization factors tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct values congruence with this sample.

Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and career contentment? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from professional association socialization factors. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on professional association socialization factors were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and professional association socialization factors was not statistically significant, $r(53) = .06, p = .67$. The r^2 for this equation was .00, indicating a 0% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from professional association socialization factors or that using the mean is a better predictor than the model. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from professional association socialization factors ranged from $-.05$ to $.07$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that professional

association socialization factors tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment with this sample.

The results of the nine linear regressions used to measure the relationship between professional identity and professional influences yielded no statistically significant results. None of the three constructs used to define professional identity, community connection, values congruence, and career contentment had any statistical significance when paired with professional influences in master's programs, employment, and professional associations. Therefore, the answer to the overarching question is no, there is no statistically significant relationship between professional influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals.

Question 2. Is there a relationship between professional development and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals?

To examine research question number two, three linear regressions were performed to measure the relationship between the independent variable professional development and the dependent variable professional identity. Professional identity was measured using the three previously outlined constructs of community connection, values congruence, and career contentment. The *F*-test was used to determine significance as to whether professional development predicts professional identity, with *R*-squared used to report the degree of variance in professional identity is accounted for by professional development. Beta coefficients were analyzed to determine strength of the relationship and direction between the two variables.

Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and community connection for rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from professional development influences. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on professional development were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and reasonably linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between community connection and professional development influences was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .17, p = .19$. The r^2 for this equation was .03, which is 3% of the variance in community connection was predictable from professional development influences. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from professional development activities ranged from $-.53$ to $.11$. This is a weak relationship; professional development tended to have very little relation to community connection.

Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and values congruence for rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from professional development influences. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on professional development were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and reasonably linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and professional development influences was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .15, p = .25$. The r^2 for this

equation was .02, which is 2% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from professional development influences. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from professional development activities ranged from -.08 to .30. This is a weak relationship; professional development tended to have very little relation to values congruence.

Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and career contentment for rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from professional development influences. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on professional development were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was negative and reasonably linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and professional development influences was statistically significant at the 95% confidence rate with, $r(59) = .26$, $p = .04$. The r^2 for this equation was .07, which means that 7% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from professional development influences. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from professional development activities ranged from .01 to .59. Although significantly significant this is a relatively weak relationship; increases in professional development tended to result in lower career contentment.

The results of the three linear regressions used to measure the relationship between professional identity and professional development yielded weak relationships with only one of the constructs having any statistically significant results. The construct with significance, career contentment although significant would not have passed a stricter confidence interval. Given the

relatively weak relationship when coupled with the other two constructs measuring professional identity, community connection and values congruence, and career contentment having no statistical significance the answer to the overarching question is no, there is a limited statistically significant relationship between professional development influences and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals.

Question 3. Is there a relationship between professional engagement activities and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?

To examine research question number three, is there a relationship between professional engagement activities and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals, a series of linear regressions were performed to measure the relationship between the independent variable professional engagement activities and the dependent variable professional identity. The *F*-test was used to determine significance as to whether professional influence predicts professional identity, with *R*-squared used to report the degree of variance in professional identity is accounted for by professional influence. Beta coefficients were analyzed to determine strength of the relationship and direction between the two variables.

Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from local professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on local professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation

between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between community connection and local professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .09, p = .49$. The r^2 for this equation was .01, indicating that 1% of the variance in community connection was predictable from local engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from local professional engagement activities ranged from $-.71$ to $.35$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that local professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from local professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on local professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and local professional engagement activities was statistically significant, $r(59) = .32, p = .01$. The r^2 for this equation was .09, indicating 9% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from local engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from local professional engagement activities ranged from $-.70$ to $-.1$. Although this is a weak relationship; increases in local professional engagement tended to result in higher values congruence.

Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from local professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on local professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and local professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .14, p = .28$. The r^2 for this equation was .00, indicating that 0% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from local engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from local professional engagement activities ranged from $-.76$ to $.23$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that local professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment.

Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from regional professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on regional professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between community connection and regional professional engagement activities was not statistically

significant, $r(59) = .07, p = .58$. The r^2 for this equation was .01, indicating that 1% of the variance in community connection was predictable from regional engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from regional professional engagement activities ranged from -.39 to .68. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that regional professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from regional professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on regional professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and regional professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .17, p = .18$. The r^2 for this equation was .03, indicating that 3% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from regional engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from regional professional engagement activities ranged from -.53 to .10. This is a very weak relationship, indicating that regional professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct values congruence with this sample.

Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from regional professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on regional professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and regional professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .12, p = .37$. The r^2 for this equation was .01, indicating 1% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from regional engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from regional professional engagement activities ranged from $-.72$ to $.27$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that regional professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment with this sample.

Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from national professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on national professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between

community connection and national professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .20, p = .13$. The r^2 for this equation was .04, indicating 4% of the variance in community connection was predictable from national engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from national professional engagement activities ranged from -.16 to 1.18. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that national professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from national professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on national professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and national professional engagement activities was statistically significant, $r(59) = .29, p = .03$. The r^2 for this equation was .08, indicating 8% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from national engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from national professional engagement activities ranged from -.85 to -.06. Although this is a weak relationship; increases in national professional engagement tended to result in higher values congruence.

Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from national professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on national professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and national professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .18, p = .17$. The r^2 for this equation was .03, indicating that 3% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from national engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from national professional engagement activities ranged from -1.06 to .19. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that national professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment with this sample.

Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from educational professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on educational professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation

between community connection and educational professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .15$, $p = .24$. The r^2 for this equation was .02, indicating that 2% of the variance in community connection was predictable from educational professional engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from educational professional engagement activities ranged from -.31 to 1.20. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that educational engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from educational professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on educational professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and educational professional engagement activities was statistically significant, $r(59) = .33$, $p = .01$. The r^2 for this equation was .11, indicating that 11% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from educational engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from educational professional engagement activities ranged from -1.01 to -.14. Although this is a weak relationship; increases in educational engagement tended to result in higher values congruence.

Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and career contentment community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from educational professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on educational professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and educational professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .03, p = .81$. The r^2 for this equation was .00, indicating 0% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from educational engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from educational professional engagement activities ranged from $-.80$ to $.63$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that educational professional engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct career contentment with this sample.

Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well community connection could be predicted from networking professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on community connection were reasonably normally distributed and scores on networking professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation

between community connection and networking professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .02, p = .88$. The r^2 for this equation was .00, indicating 0% of the variance in community connection was predictable from networking engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict community connection from networking professional engagement activities ranged from $-.63$ to $.73$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that networking engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct community connection with this sample.

Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well values congruence could be predicted from networking professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on values congruence were reasonably normally distributed and scores on networking professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between values congruence and networking professional engagement activities was not statistically significant, $r(59) = .21, p = .11$. The r^2 for this equation was .04, which indicates that 4% of the variance in values congruence was predictable from networking engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict values congruence from networking professional engagement activities ranged from $-.73$ to $.07$. This is a very weak relationship; indicating that networking engagement activities tended to have little to no relation to the professional identity sub-construct values congruence with this sample.

Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals? A linear regression was performed to evaluate how well career contentment could be predicted from networking professional engagement activities. Preliminary data screening indicated that the scores on career contentment were reasonably normally distributed and scores on networking professional engagement activities were positively skewed. The scatter plot indicated that the relation between X and Y was positive and linear and there were no outliers. The correlation between career contentment and networking professional engagement activities was statistically significant, $r(59) = .36, p = .004$. The r^2 for this equation was .13, indicating that 13% of the variance in career contentment was predictable from networking professional engagement activities. The 95% CI for the slope to predict career contentment from networking professional engagement activities ranged from -1.46 to -.29. Although this is a weak relationship, increases in networking engagement tended to result in higher career contentment.

The results of the fifteen linear regressions used to measure the relationship between professional identity and professional engagement influences yielded four statistically significant results. Statistical significance was present when measuring the professional identity construct of values congruence with local professional development activities, national professional development activities, and continuing education professional activities. In addition statistical significance was present in the professional identity construct career contentment when measured with networking engagement activities. The remaining eleven linear regressions did

not yield significant relationships. Therefore, the answer to the overarching question is yes, there is some relationship between professional engagement activities and professional identity.

Analysis of Variance

Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of more than two groups. In this particular instance, a one-way variance was selected because there is one continuous dependent variable and there is one independent variable which has multiple categories that each represent a different sub-population.

Question 4. Is there a difference between educational level and professional identity amongst rural student affairs professionals?

Research question 4 sought to answer whether there were differences of professional identity based on the education level of the rural student affairs professional who completed the survey. A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of highest degree earned on professional identity. Participants indicated their highest level of degree earned (some college or less; a bachelor's degree; some master's classes; a master's degree; some doctoral classes; doctorate). There was not a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level: $F(3, 55) = 1.7, p = .16$. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .13. Post-hoc tests could not be performed with this sample because two groups (some college or less and some master's classes) had sample sizes of fewer than two.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the results of the survey administered in this study. The study received a low response rate from possible participants, but information was captured and some

significance was found. The instrument used to measure professional identity with socialization factors, the SAPIS, demonstrated similar internal consistency measures first found with its developer (Wilson et al., 2016) as it did with the present sample. The sub-constructs used to measure professional identity and professional socialization factors yielded five significant relationships out of a possible 27 tests. The study failed to demonstrate a difference between professional identity and highest degree level obtained. The final chapter will expand on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study as they pertain to the research questions of the study. This chapter addresses the connections between the results and literature, limitations of the study, informing professional practice, and suggestions for future research.

Socialization factors and professional identity

In this study I sought to answer the overarching question of what professional socialization factors are associated with professional identity for rural student affairs professionals. For the purposes of this study, socialization was defined using three constructs: professional influences, professional development, and professional engagement. The study utilized 27 separate linear regressions to determine whether a relationship existed between each socialization construct and the three constructs used to measure professional identity (community connection, values congruence, and career contentment). In four of the linear regressions a significant relationship was found at the 95% confidence interval and one was found at the 99% confidence interval.

Professional engagement. Professional engagement socialization factors were defined as activities associated with local organizations, regional organizations, national organizations, continuing education, and networking. The dichotomous question (yes or no) was posed so as to ask individuals to identify which activities they had been involved in the last five years. The

professional engagement sub-construct yielded four significant relationships when paired with professional identity sub-constructs.

The professional identity sub-construct values congruence had three significant relationships. The professional engagement sub-constructs of significance were local professional engagement activities ($p = .01$), national professional engagement activities ($p = .03$), and continuing education professional engagement activities ($p = .01$). Alignment with values congruence indicates that these professional engagement activities is related to respondents who have similar personal values to that of the profession with an awareness of the professions standards and principles.

Professional engagement activities as a socialization factor plays such an important part in the value congruence measure of professional identity for rural student affairs professionals in large part due to scarcity. Rural professionals are often times generalists at their institutions due to small workforces and thus have few colleagues at their own institution to draw expertise, guidance, and advice from (Wolfe & Strange, 2003). Therefore, for new and mid-level student affairs professionals it is essential that they form connections outside of their institution to continue the professional development they began in their graduation preparation program. These relationships are literally required to perform the sense-making needed as one develops an understanding of the values espoused by their profession and thus their professional identity (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2013). As this study demonstrated local and national involvements provided this as did more passive continuing education activities. For more experienced

professionals, those outside networks are equally important as they tend to have even more isolating positions requiring outside guidance and support.

In addition, the professional identity sub-construct career contentment was significantly related to networking professional engagement activities ($p = .004$), indicating that those with higher levels of networking engagement similarly have higher levels of satisfaction in their career with desire to remain in the field. This also makes sense. Career contentment measures the intent to remain in the professional as well as overall satisfaction with how an individual's career has evolved. It therefore stands to reason that the degree to which one is content in their career is related to the relationships formed with others both internal to and outside of their home institutions

The individual question with the highest response pertained to respondents having membership in a national professional organization (88.5%), tied with a question about consulting with colleagues on their own campus about current work issues (88.5%), followed by a question regarding reading professional publications to stay current in the field (86.7%), and then attending a national professional conference (85%). The connection with colleagues supports the findings of Henning et al. (2011) who found that new residential life professionals valued support from colleagues, mentors, and supervisors as a primary means of professional development.

The professional involvement activity that received the fewest responses pertained to publishing an article in a professional newsletter or journal, with only 16.7% of respondents indicating they had engaged in that activity in the last five years. This figure is incredibly telling

and also explains why virtually no research exists on rural student affairs. Not that it is essential for researchers to have experience in a rural setting in order to conduct research on the topic; if someone doesn't have a connection to rural settings they may not even consider it as a topic for consideration. Alternative explanations for a dearth of research is that perhaps rural student affairs professionals do not consider themselves to be researchers, full members of the profession or feel as if they have anything to contribute to the field. Another explanation is that perhaps rural student affairs professionals do not feel as if they have time to research and/or contribute to the field of study. A final consideration is that perhaps rural student affairs professionals have submitted articles for submission that have not been successful. No matter the reason, 16.7% of respondents having been published within the last five years does warrant further exploration.

Professional development. The professional development construct specifically focused on aspects of formal education (master's and doctoral studies) and relationships with professional colleagues. This series of eleven questions was administered via a Likert-type scale and asked respondents to rate how influential each of the factors had been on their development as a student affairs professional. One significant relationship was found between the composite variable professional development and career contentment ($p = .04$). The Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale Guide used for this study defined career contentment as "satisfaction with career progression and intent to stay in the profession" (p.3). Therefore, a significant relationship between career contentment and professional development indicates that the respondents are generally content with their careers and desire to remain in the field and that

desire is related to influences they have had with their professional colleagues, master's programs, and/or doctoral experiences.

Student affairs as a field of practice began as an off-shoot from a faculty role where individuals with the temperament for the role were assigned to work with the outside of classroom aspects of student life (Schwartz, 2002). Relationships have always been in the forefront of the work that student affairs does. In fact, most student affairs professionals enter the field due to relationships that undergraduate students had with a student affairs professional (Taub & McEwen, 2006). Therefore, it stands to reason and is supported by previous research that there is a relationship between the degree that a professional is content in their career and the relationships they have had with their faculty (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2013), colleagues (Roberts, 2007; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000), supervisors (Jo, 2008; Pittman & Foubert, 2016; Tull, 2006), and experiential opportunities (Renn & Jessop-Anger, 2008).

The professional development factors (as a form of professional socialization) that received the highest overall scores as having impact on professional identity was other professional colleagues ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.6$), involvement in professional organization ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 0.7$), and work supervisors ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.9$). These findings are in alignment with Roberts' (2007) findings that discussions with colleagues and professional conference programs were the most beneficial means of professional development, and Tull's (2006) finding that supervisory relationships effectively socialize new professionals to organizational goals, values, and norms.

Factors having the lowest developmental influence were master's program peers ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.1$), followed by master's program experiential opportunities ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.1$), doctoral program experiential opportunities ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.2$) and master's program curriculum ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.1$). The findings pertaining to master's program curriculum are in alignment with the work of Kuk et al. (2007) and Trede et al. (2012) who both found work experiences to be greater indicators of professional skill development. Additionally, the finding on master's program experiential opportunities contradicts the findings of Renn and Jessup-Anger (2008) who found that new professionals found experiential learning practices considerably more valuable than master's program curricula once out in the field.

Professional influences. Professional influences were defined as master's program socialization, employment socialization, and professional socialization. This construct asked participants to indicate whether or not each type of socialization (through master's coursework, employment, or professional associations) had a positive influence on their identity as a professional in student affairs. Participants responded to a series of 12 dichotomous questions, such as:

Helped me understand the political landscape of a workplace

Helped me understand professional expectations.

None of the nine linear regressions performed with this construct yielded any significant relationships. The questions themselves however yielded a snapshot of what participants are reporting from the workplace.

In 10 out of the 12 questions, employment in the field most heavily influenced professional identity when compared to influences from master's coursework and professional associations. This means that respondents believed that their professional work experiences had more impact or was more valuable to their professional career than their graduate preparatory program or involvement in professional associations. This finding supports the work of Kuk et al. (2007) which found that administrators believed most skills and competencies are developed during employment versus graduate programs, a sentiment echoed by Trede et al. (2012). The settings with the greatest separation between socialization settings include understanding culture of the workplace (98.4%), understanding the political landscape of the workplace (96.7%), encouraged my participation in division or campus committees (88.5%), and provide constructive feedback on my performance (86.9%).

Involvement in professional organizations had two questions that received the highest percentages of responses when compared to influence from master's coursework and employment settings: Helping expand professional network (80.3%), and encouraged involvement in professional associations (60.7%). This figure is interesting in that although respondents indicated professional organization involvement had a very positive influence on their employment in the field, when later asked to indicate what their involvement has been in the last five years, participation levels were mixed. The varied participation levels could be the result of time demands on rural professionals due to the generalist nature of their work, a scarcity of financial resources available at rural institutions, or perceived disconnect of professional organizations and the reality of work performed at rural institutions. Additional research is

needed to determine what role if any these factors have on organizational involvement and could be obtained by further survey of rural student affairs professionals.

A large number of participants indicated membership in a professional organization with 75.4% having membership in a regional organization and 88.5% having membership in a national professional organization. Similarly, a very high percent of respondents indicated attending conferences with 81.7% attending regional conferences and 85% attending national conferences. The positive trend changes, however, when it comes to more active involvement with professional organizations. Respondents indicated that they presented at a regional conference (41.7%) only slightly more than they have a national conference (33.9%). Further, involvement was particularly low in regards to holding leadership roles in a national association (23.3%) or regional association (31.7%).

The figures paint an interesting story. Rural student affairs professionals find value in, have membership in, and attend conferences affiliated with professional organizations; yet, when it comes to active engagement with those organizations they are not represented in large part with those organizations. Is it that the organizations themselves have some sort of barrier in place impacting rural professionals from participation in leadership roles and presentation opportunities? Is it something in the nature of the work performed by rural student affairs professionals that does not allow for them to have more substantial involvement with professional organizations? To gain better insight into what is going on with rural professionals and their involvement with professional organizations, additional research is needed. Information to look at would include location of professional development offered by professional

organizations, cost of membership and/or activities provided by organizations, time commitment required for leadership roles within organizations, and topics offered by associations and perceived relevance to rural institutions

Master's coursework as a socialization setting had the overall lowest evaluation of having a positive influence on respondents professionally when compared to employment and professional organization settings. The category's highest score was 47.5% with a question on modeling ethical practice which is in alignment with what has been in previous research that identified the primary source of professional ethical reasoning has been derived from individuals' workplace experiences (Reybold, Halx, & Jimenez, 2008). This is a key concept to be aware of given that 98.3% of survey respondents indicated that it is important to them to be engaged in ethical work as a member of the profession.

The lowest category for master's coursework as an influential professional socialization setting pertained to a question on understanding the institutional culture of a workplace (13.1%), followed by a question and participation on committees (14.8%). Also of note was a question on degree that a master's program helped them understand the campus climate related to diversity which scored at 26.2%; this is significant as it supports previous recommendations for graduate programs to include more work around social justice and inclusion competence (e.g., Muller et al., 2018). For all 12 questions, master's coursework received less than 50% indication of having had a very positive influence for rural student affairs professionals with most have well below the 50% rating. These findings are important in regards to rural student affairs practice as much of the work is done at smaller institutions where collaboration, political navigation, and

relationship cultivation is paramount to do the work. In order for graduate preparation programs to better prepare students for future work in rural settings, emphasis should be placed on concepts such as committee work, collaboration, relationship development, and working with diverse populations.

Education level and professional identity

Literature reviewed for this research strongly indicated the importance of academic preparation as essential to being successful within the field of student affairs (Armino, 2011; Taub & McEwen, 2011; Dalton & Crosby, 2011; Fellenz, 2016). Graduate preparation programs educate professionals on student development theory, ethics and standards of the profession, working with diverse populations, and history of the field (Cuyjet et al., 2009). Given the concepts learned in graduate programs it therefore can be assumed that differences may exist in individuals rating of professional identity dependent on the level of degree held. In the case of this particular sample, that was not found to be the case.

The lack of statistical significance could be the result of a very small sample size. In addition, even though it was the intent of the research to consist of a sample across experience levels, 75% of the respondents for this study were self-reported as holding senior student affairs roles on their campuses and 76.7% indicated having more than 11 years of professional experience in the field. This is important as it may indicate that more experienced professionals give less credit to their formal educational training than they do to other developmental influences. The explanation for this could be time removed from being in a graduate preparation program. An alternate explanation could be an incompatibility of what was taught in their

graduate studies to what has been experienced in their career. A third explanation could be that their own professional experience may not have followed the traditional path and they may have gained access to the field without having first had a graduate degree but that it was obtained at some later point in their career impacting their perceptions of importance.

Implications for Professional Practice

A pervasive theme from the literature review was a dearth of information available on rural higher education. One potential outcome from this study is a call to attention for the field that more information on rural higher education is needed. This can take the form of additional research, development of communities of practice within professional organizations, and curricular change to educational programs.

This study demonstrated that rural student affairs professionals received the vast majority of both their professional development and their professional engagement in spaces outside of the formal classroom. In fact, this study indicated that participants' master's programs were the least impactful of professional influences on professional identity. One could therefore assume that master's programs are perhaps missing some components that are needed for the professional experiences of rural practitioners. Items highlighted in the current study to consider emphasizing or re-imagining in master's programs that could be of benefit to rural student affairs professionals include understanding institutional cultures and political landscapes as well as campus climate related to diversity (Muller et al., 2018). Also worth considering would be curriculum or experiences surrounding the development of a professional network and the concept of committees.

Professional organizations are a vital part of the student affairs field. This study indicated that the vast majority of practitioners are affiliated with a national and/or regional association (75% - 88%). The study also indicated that these rural professionals although involved did not assume leadership roles in either setting (national, 23%; regional 41%) to large degree. If student affairs professionals from rural settings step into leadership roles within these professional organizations their voices could better shape the direction of the field and represent a to-date understudied subpopulation. Even fewer rural student affairs professionals studied indicated that they have published professionally leading perhaps again to that gap of information available.

Limitations

In order to make any research project possible parameters must be set to determine what is in scope and what is out of scope for the project. These parameters or limitations are necessary as resources are limited (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). Therefore, decisions need to be made in order to make the project feasible. Krathwohl & Smith (2005) define limitations as being categories of; resource, institutional, ethical, and time. This study experienced resource and time limitations to the greatest degree.

One significant limitation of this study is the population itself. A comprehensive database of rural student affairs practitioners does not exist. Similarly, there is not a listserv or a universal professional association to which rural practitioners belong. To address these issues a manual search was performed to populate a database for inclusion in the study. Limitations may exist for true comprehensiveness if institutions do not maintain their organizational websites or include student affairs and/or personnel contact information. To address any missing information, phone

calls were attempted. In addition, private institutions frequently lacked transparency with public contact information.

The scope of student affairs and lack of common classification also makes it challenging to define who the Senior Student Officer may be as each institution categorizes the division differently. Student affairs as a department or division is comprised of differing functional areas dependent upon institutional preference. There is also a lack of common language in regard to the senior leader charged with student affairs oversight with 14 different titles commonly used and as many as 90 listed across 2,600 institutions (Tull & Freeman, 2008). This posed a challenge to the study as the instrument was distributed to the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) at each institution for further distribution amongst their units. In order to create an easy to administer survey distribution system for the SSAO at each institution, they were instructed to distribute according to their individual organizational structure in lieu of a prescribed list of functional areas or job titles that may not fit their organization.

A potential limitation of the research design was that it was incumbent upon the SSAO to distribute the survey to desired participants, which based on the respondents of the survey did not seem to happen in large degree. Three emails were sent to the SSAOs to encourage participation emphasizing the importance of rural exploration. The timing that the survey was distributed was not what was originally intended and fell very close to the start of the academic year in August so several recipients emailed indicating the timing did not work for them to participate. In addition, monetary participation incentives should have been included as the incentive of preliminary findings did not seem to be impactful to participation.

In addition, the selected population was defined from census data which may not truly reflect the lived experiences of a community due to regional differences. The study also has a limitation in that it is reliant upon individual respondent perceptions and is not an actual measurement which can add an element of subjectivity and thus bias. Perhaps the greatest limitation and thereby the most significant was the very low response rate, with a final $n = 61$ (4.4% response rate). Statistically speaking the larger the sample size the greater the likelihood that the sample mean is similar to the population mean (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). Therefore the low number of participants makes it challenging to consider the results with any real sense of representation of what is going on within the population as the findings may be hard to replicate.

Future Research

This study was primarily concerned with the relationship between professional socialization activities of rural student affairs professionals and their perceived professional identity. The findings of the study suggest there is at least some relationship between socialization activities and professional identity for these rural student affairs professionals. What we don't know is if these results differ from a population of non-rural professionals, and also what differences may exist across experience levels given 75% of the respondents held senior student affairs professionals.

In addition, this study looked at the education level of participants to see if there would be a difference in perceived professional identity, which there did not seem to be in this case but further exploration on masters and doctoral would be of interest. Looking at education as a deeper dive would be important to help inform the work of graduate preparation programs at

both the masters and doctoral levels. Of particular interest would be the timing in one's career when degrees are obtained and how that may intersect with professional experience. This could help inform ways to shape the experiential learning component of programs.

Future research could look at factors such as degree level, position level, and years of experience in the field to see if there would be a difference on professional identity in the rural setting. Other factors to consider would be connections to rurality for the respondents such as size of community they grew-up in or size of community where they received their undergraduate and/or graduate degrees.

Other potential avenues for consideration would be to conduct a comparison study. Very little research exists on rural higher education. A comparative study between rural and non-rural institutions may yield interesting results. Similarly, for this study the researcher created a participant database as they were under the belief that rural practitioners may be underrepresented in national organizations. This did not prove to be the case per respondents answer when posed that question so future research utilizing professional association databases is a consideration for the future.

Additional research is also needed to look at the relationship between rural student affairs professionals and professional organization involvement. Membership in professional associations and conference attendance to those associations is relatively high, yet rural student affairs professionals are not presenting at these conferences nor are they holding leadership roles to a large degree. Why is that disparity taking place? Are associations not hospitable to rural

perspectives? Are rural professionals unable to participate due to the nature of their work or lack of interest? Are there issues of prestige or generalizability at play?

The final area of future research is general, anything rural involving higher education. There is such a dearth of higher education research available that cousin data was needed from other skilled disciplines such as medicine, nursing, and social work. This fact was further demonstrated when it was found that only 16.7% of respondents indicated that they had ever published an article in a professional newsletter or journal. If rural student affairs professionals aren't producing literature for the field, then who is?

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the socialization factors experienced by student affairs professionals located at rural higher education institutions and how those factors associate with professional identity. More specifically, the study examined the professional identities of student affairs professionals at four-year institutions and across experience levels in order to develop a broader understanding of how student affairs professionals are socialized into the field at institutions in rural settings. The concept of this study was rooted in the philosophy of Hirt's work, *Where You Work Matters* (2006) and examined yet another setting where student affairs professionals work, rural institutions.

This was completed through measuring the perceived socialization factors experienced by the student affairs professionals completing the modified version of the SAPIS instrument used in this study. The socialization factors specifically examined were professional influences, professional development, and professional engagement activities. The level of professional

identity was measured by perceived community connection, values congruence, and career contentment. The results of the study indicate that there is a relationship between professional socialization and professional identity for rural student affairs professionals but that there is no evidence of a difference across education level.

APPENDIX A:

Survey

This questionnaire concerns the professional identity development of professionals practicing within student affairs at institutions located in rural settings. The purpose of this study is to understand the perspective of student affairs professionals currently employed at rural institutions on their socialization process within the profession and how that socialization impacts their professional development. There are no correct or incorrect responses. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information from this study will be used solely for research purposes and will not be available for any other reasons.

The questionnaire consists of a brief online survey, which should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Please choose the answer that best reflects your view. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your candor and participation is vital to the overall success of the research. Thank you for your time and attention, your support is greatly appreciated.

Lisa A. Samuelson
PhD Student
Department of Education, Health, and Behavior
Higher Education Program
University of North Dakota

Instrument: Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale

1. Informed Consent (UND's statement to be added)

Do you consent to taking this survey? If you answer NO, the survey will end.

- Yes
- No

2. The following items are about your perception of your work in higher education and student affairs. Please check one response for each item below:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
2.1	I am satisfied with the way my career is going.					
2.2	I see myself working in higher education until retirement.					

2.3	I have mentored someone into the field.					
2.4	It is important to me to hold a doctorate in higher education.					
2.5	I get more of my intellectual stimulation from professional colleagues at other institutions than I get from professional colleagues at my institution.					
2.6	As a member of the profession, it is important to me to engage in ethical work.					
2.7	My values are consistent with the student affairs profession.					
2.8	I think about leaving student affairs work to pursue something different.					
2.9	I take pride in improving my specialized skills (e.g., advising specific student populations).					
2.10	I take pride in being a member of this profession.					
2.11	I am committed to reading current literature in the field.					
2.12	If I were to be offered a position similar to the job I currently hold (with similar salary) and that job was at a more prestigious institution, I would likely take it.					
2.13	I am interested in the problems of this profession.					
2.14	My desire to live close to family affects my career decisions.					
2.15	I feel stronger connection to my institution than I feel to my profession.					
2.16	I understand the ethical principles and standards of the profession.					
2.17	For the foreseeable future, I intend to remain working within					

	a 2-hour radius of where I work now.					
2.18	I will likely work at my current institution until I retire.					

3. Consider what has helped you grow as a professional. Which of the following experiences had a VERY POSITIVE INFLUENCE on you professionally? Consider these three settings: your masters coursework, your employment in the field, and your involvement in professional associations.

		Master's Coursework	Employment in the Field	Involvement in Professional Organizations
3.1	Helped me understand the political landscape of a workplace			
3.2	Helped me understand the institutional culture of a workplace			
3.3	Provided me guidance in developing future career goals			
3.4	Encouraged my involvement in professional associations			
3.5	Helped me understand professional expectations			
3.6	Helped me understand the campus climate related to diversity			
3.7	Helped me understand the value of regular self-evaluation			
3.8	Provided constructive feedback on my performance			
3.9	Helped me expand my professional network			
3.10	Encouraged my participation in division or campus committees			
3.11	Modeled ethical practice			
3.12	Helped me internalize a clear professional identity			

4. In general, how influential to your development as an effective student affairs professional have the following been? Skip any items that do not apply to you.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4.1	My work supervisors					
4.2	My other professional colleagues					
4.3	My involvement in professional organizations					
4.4	My master's program curriculum (e.g., course content)					
4.5	My master's program faculty					
4.6	My master's program peers					
4.7	My master's program experiential opportunities (e.g., assistantship, practicum, internship)					
4.8	My doctoral program curriculum (e.g., course content)					
4.9	My doctoral program faculty					
4.10	My doctoral program peers					
4.11	My doctoral program experiential opportunities (e.g., assistantship, practicum, internship)					

5. Please check all that have applied to your professional involvements within the past five years.

- Membership in a regional professional organization
- Membership in a national professional organization
- Membership in a state or local professional organization
- Attended a regional professional conference
- Attended a national professional conference
- Attended a state or local regional professional conference
- Presented at a regional professional conference
- Presented at a national professional conference
- Presented at a state or local professional conference
- Held a leadership position in a regional professional association
- Held a leadership position in a national professional association
- Held a leadership position in a state or local regional professional association
- Regularly read professional publications to stay current in the field
- Purchased resources for my professional library that were not required for class or job
- Used personal funds to pay for my professional development activities
- Published an article in a professional newsletter or journal

- Talked about my long-term career goals with colleagues at different institutions
- Consulted with colleagues on my campus about my current work issues
- Consulted with colleagues outside my institution about my current work issues
- Used student development theory to inform my work

Please tell us about yourself

6. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Prefer not to answer

7. What is your racial/ethnic identity?

- African American or Black
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Bi-racial or Multiracial
- Hispanic/Latino/Latina
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Other (please specify) _____

8. The highest educational level I have completed is:

- Some college or less
- A bachelor's degree
- Some master's classes
- A master's degree
- Some doctoral classes
- Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D.)

9. How many years have you worked in the profession, including any graduate work? _____

10. Do you have a graduate degree from a higher education/student affairs program?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you have a graduate degree from a field other than higher education/student affairs?

- Yes (if yes, then what: _____)
- No

Institutional Characteristics

12. Please indicate the size of your current institution.

- Fewer than 5,000
- 5,000-9,999
- 10,000-14,999
- 15,000 or greater
- Not applicable

13. Please indicate the population size of the community where your current institution is located.

- Fewer than 10,000
- 10,000-19,999
- 20,000-29,999
- 30,000 – 39,999
- 40,000 – 49,999
- 50,000 or greater
- Unknown

14. Which best describes your current employer?

- 4-year public university/college
- 4-year private not-for-profit college/university
- Not currently employed
- Other (please specify) _____

15. Aside from your current position, check all the institution types at which you have worked or held assistantships.

- 4-year public university/college
- 4-year private not-for-profit college/university
- 4-year for-profit institution
- 2-year public college
- 2-year private not-for-profit college
- 2-year for-profit institution
- Other (please specify) _____

16. Please list the zip code where your institution is located. _ _ _ _ _

17. What title best describes your current position?

- Clerical/Support
- Entry Level
- Mid-Level
- One Person Department

- Senior Level
- Other

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey. We know your time is valuable.

APPENDIX B

Request use of Professional Identity Instrument

Lisa Samuelson <lasamuelson7@gmail.com>

Jun 15, 2018,
1:15 PM

Good Afternoon Dr. Wilson~

My name is Lisa Samuelson and I am a Ph.D. student in Higher Education at the University of North Dakota. I am working on my dissertation under the advisement of Dr. Deborah Worley who has reached out to you regarding your recent research on professional identity within student affairs. I am interested in exploring the concept of professional identity within student affairs in rural settings and the survey instrument constructed by you and your team is an outstanding fit for my study.

I am interested in rural institutions for a variety of reasons. I have noted there simply is not much research looking at rural higher education at four-year institutions in general. A great deal of quantitative research takes place at large research institutions and through utilizing ACPA and NASPA lists. Those two factors may or may not be representative of rural settings, so to look outside of traditional Carnegie classifications could provide new information to the profession. Rurality is of particular interest to me as someone who has spent the majority of their professional career at a rural institution. I have been at the University of Minnesota Crookston for 16 years and currently serve as the Interim Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Title IX Coordinator.

It is my observation at my home institution that there is not pervasive student affairs identity amongst my colleagues and the majority of professionals end up in roles as if by accident. This phenomenon deserves exploration and the concept of professional identity I feel is the best fit for understanding what might be taking place in rural America.

I am therefore writing to request permission to use the Student Affairs Professional Identity Scale referenced in the below study* to collect data for my dissertation research, and to inquire if there is fee to utilize the instrument. The authors of the instrument will receive credit as appropriate in my research study.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. If there is additional information that I can provide, or if you have questions I can be reached at the lasamuelson7@gmail.com or 218-280-0682.

Regards,
Lisa A. Samuelson

*Wilson, M.E., Liddell, D. L., Hirschy, A. S., & Pasquesi, K. (2016). Professional identity, career commitment, and career entrenchment of midlevel student affairs professionals. *Journal of College Student Development, 57, 557-572.*

Maureen E. Wilson mewilso@bgsu.edu via falconbgsu.onmicrosoft.com Jun 15, 2018, 2:14 PM

to Debora, Amy, kira-pasquesi@uiowa.edu, me

Hi Lisa,

Absolutely you can use the instrument. There is no fee to do so. Deborah should have a copy of it.

Later, please check with me for some information on the subscales and scoring. I'm at a training session next week so sometime after that (and it won't really make sense until you have collected data).

The direction of your study is intriguing and I'll be interested in seeing your results. And hopefully you publish an article beyond your dissertation!

Best wishes on your dissertation,

Maureen

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Maureen E. Wilson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
310 Education Building
Bowling Green, OH 43403-0244
Phone: 419.372.7321

mewilso@bgsu.edu <http://bgsu.edu/hesa>
<http://facebook.com/bgsuhesa>
Twitter: @BGSUHESA

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APPENDIX C Definition of Rural

Exhibit A: NCES's urban-centric locale categories, released in 2006

Locale	Definition
City	
Large	Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more
Midsize	Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000
Small	Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 100,000
Suburb	
Large	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population of 250,000 or more
Midsize	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000
Small	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population less than 100,000
Town	
Fringe	Territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area
Distant	Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area
Remote	Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area
Rural	
Fringe	Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster
Distant	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster
Remote	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster

SOURCE: Office of Management and Budget (2000). Standards for Defining Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas; Notice. Federal Register (65) No. 249.

APPENDIX D

E-mail Requesting Participation

Subject Line: Survey of Rural Student Affairs Professionals

Dear Senior Student Affairs Officer,

I am writing to you to request your participation in a brief survey and to enlist your assistance in further disseminating the instrument. I am a doctoral student at the University of North Dakota, and the senior student affairs officer at a four year public comprehensive institution located in a rural community. My research topic examines the socialization experiences of rural student affairs professionals in relation to their professional identities. As I am sure you are aware, very little research currently exists specific to institutions in rural settings. I would like to explore what rural professionals lived experiences are through this research.

Your responses to this survey and assistance in forwarding on to professionals within your respective division will help in identifying how rural professionals experience socialization within the field to inform graduate preparation programs and professional practice. In addition to completing the survey yourself, I ask that you please forward the survey on to the professionals (entry-level to senior level, excluding administrative support) that your institution identifies as student affairs/student life. For each institution, this may look different but in general, professionals would have primary responsibility in one of the 45 functional areas identified by Council for the Advancement of Higher Education (CAS). Please exclude those who have primary responsibilities assigned to admissions or athletics. A link to the complete CAS list of functional areas is provided: <https://www.cas.edu/standards>

The survey is brief and will only take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Please click the link below to go to the survey Web site (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser) and then enter the personal code to begin the survey.

Survey link: <http://>

Your participation in the survey is voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses to any reports of these data. The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board has approved this survey. Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at lisa.a.samuelson@ndus.edu of 218-280-0682

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,
Lisa Samuelson
Ph.D. Candidate, University of North Dakota

APPENDIX E

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANT

This is an **AGREEMENT** for independent contracting services made between **Lisa A. Samuelson** and **Janel Samuelson**.

Lisa A. Samuelson is THE CONTRACTING PARTY and Janel Samuelson is the INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR.

1. Engagement of Services: Lisa A. Samuelson hereby engages Janel Samuelson as an independent contractor to provide research assistance on an as needed basis. The work performed by Janel Samuelson includes populating the dissertation data set for Lisa A. Samuelson's doctoral research through the University of North Dakota entitled: Student Affairs at Rural Institutions: the impact of place on professional identity. Lisa A. Samuelson retains sole ownership of the information.

2. Lisa A. Samuelson's Obligation: Lisa A. Samuelson shall provide Janel Samuelson with all required information to accomplish requested tasks, which includes but is not limited to the dissertation data set instrument and dissertation data set procedural instructions for data collection. The work will be produced at Janel Samuelson's location of preference. Lisa A. Samuelson will be available for questions at any time.

3. Term: Lisa A. Samuelson's obligations under this Agreement shall commence on 11/12/18 and end on 12/19/18 or at the completion of the data collection assignment, whichever comes first.

4. Compensation: As compensation for data collection services, Lisa A. Samuelson shall pay the following amount on a bi-weekly basis:

Pre-approval of 50 hours with \$13/hr. Hours to be submitted by midnight on Sunday evenings.

If project exceeds 50 hours, rates will be subject for review for completion of project.

\$200 bonus if data set is completed and submitted by December 2, 2018 at midnight.

5. Confidentiality: All institutional and research information connected to the research project is considered confidential and shall not be shared with others.

6. Termination: Lisa A. Samuelson may terminate this contract on five days notice to Janel Samuelson for any reason or for no reason. Janel Samuelson may terminate this contract on five days notice for any reason or for no reason.

8. Independent Contractor: The relationship created shall be that of an independent contractor and nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to create a partnership, joint venture, or employer/employee relationship. Janel Samuelson will be solely responsible for all tax returns and payments required to be filed with or made to any federal, state or local tax authority with respect to Janel Samuelson's performance of services and receipt of fees under this Agreement. The Parties affirm that they have read, and agree to be bound by, the provisions of this Agreement.

CONTRACTING PARTY: Lisa A. Samuelson

By : _____

Lisa A. Samuelson Date:

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR: Janel Samuelson

By : _____

Janel Samuelson Date:

APPENDIX F

Data Set Population Procedure

The following are instructions for populating the “Dissertation Data Set” Xcel spreadsheet. The Universities and Colleges listed on the spreadsheet fall within the designated classifications of Degree of Urbanization, Bureau of Economic Analysis Region, and Carnegie Classification.

Step 1: Go to College Navigator and locate the official website of the university as well as the status of profit or non-profit and record on the spreadsheet

<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

* If there is indication that the institution is “for profit”, designate that in the appropriate cell and write “exclude” on the spreadsheet and your search of that institution is complete.

Step 2: Search for information on Student Affairs. Institutions are unique in the information contained on websites, but in general, search for the following:

- Key words for Student Affairs
 - Student Affairs
 - Student Services
 - Student Life
 - Student Development/Student Engagement
- Office of the President (or Chancellor)
 - Organizational Charts – provide link if available
 - Direct Reports
- Other places to consider looking for information
 - Current Students
 - Departments
 - Campus Directory

Step 3: Using the above resources enter the SSAO’s name, title, e-mail address, and approximate number of direct reports. The direct report number is not an essential element and is generally counted as number of departments reporting to the SSAO unless otherwise easily identified.

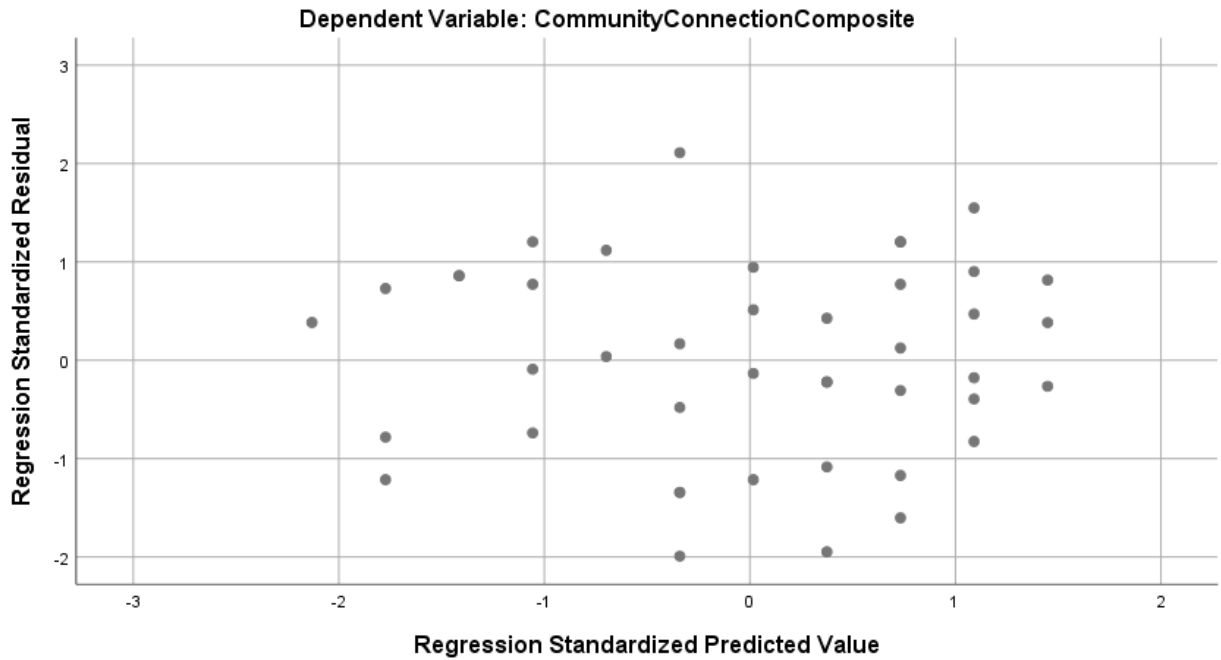
Step 4: In some cases, especially at private institutions, contact information is not available. If this is the case, provide as much information as possible in the note section and the University will be called for additional information.

APPENDIX G
Sample Spreadsheet

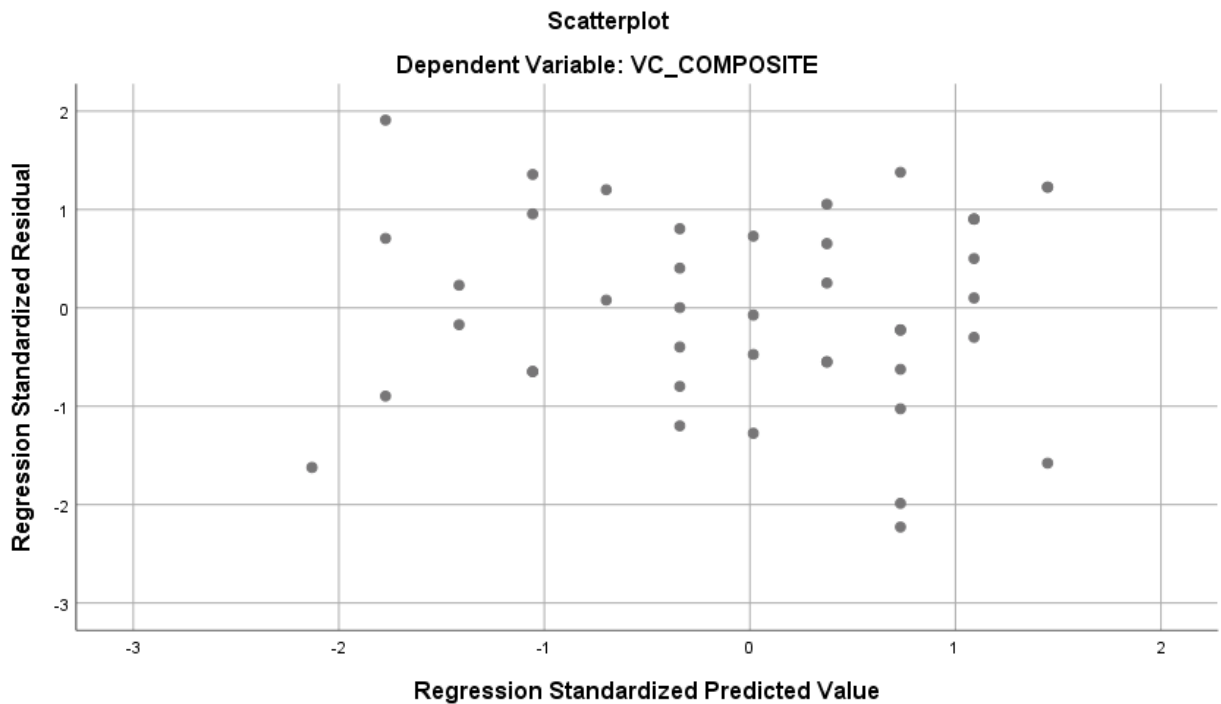
Institution	Type	Website	SSAO Name	SSAO Title	SSAO Email	#Reports
Adams State	Public	https://www.adams.edu/student-life/		Vice President for Student Services		17+
Bemidji State University	Public	http://www.bemidjistate.edu/		Dean of Students		8
Benedictine College	Private	https://www.benedictine.edu/student-life/services/dean-students		Dean of Students		6
Bethany College	Private	https://www.bethanylb.edu/		Dean of Athletics and Student Development		4
Bethel College – North Newton	Private	https://www.bethelks.edu/student-life/staff/		Vice President for Student Life		5
Black Hills State University	Public	http://www.bhsu.edu/StudentLife/tabid/83/Default.aspx		Dean of Students		7
Buena Vista University	Private	http://bv.u.edu/bv/student-affairs/staff-resources.dot		Vice President & Dean of Students		10

APPENDIX H

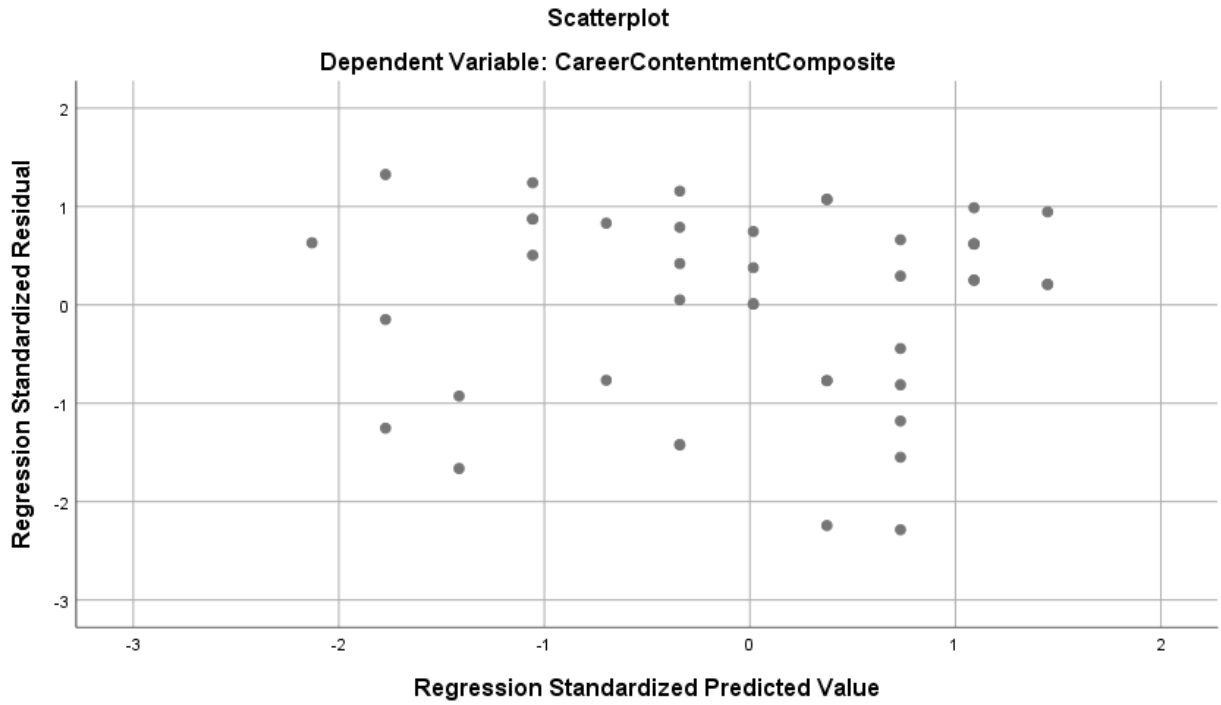
Scatterplot



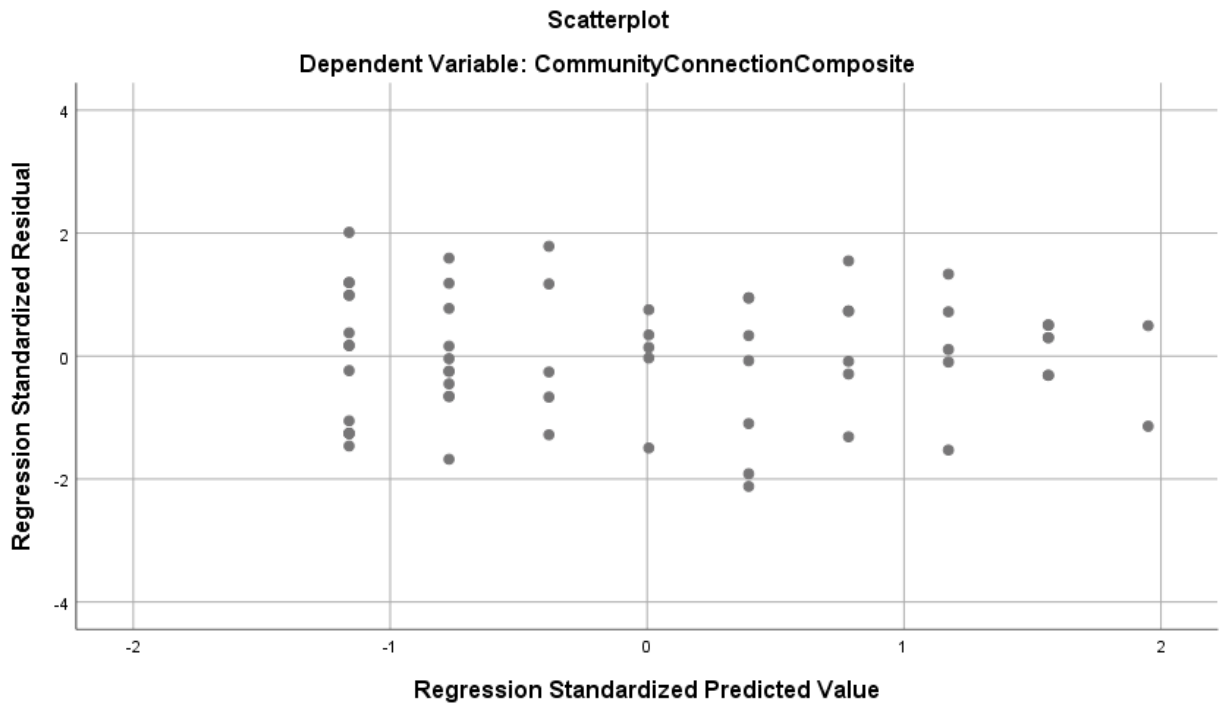
1a: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and community connection?



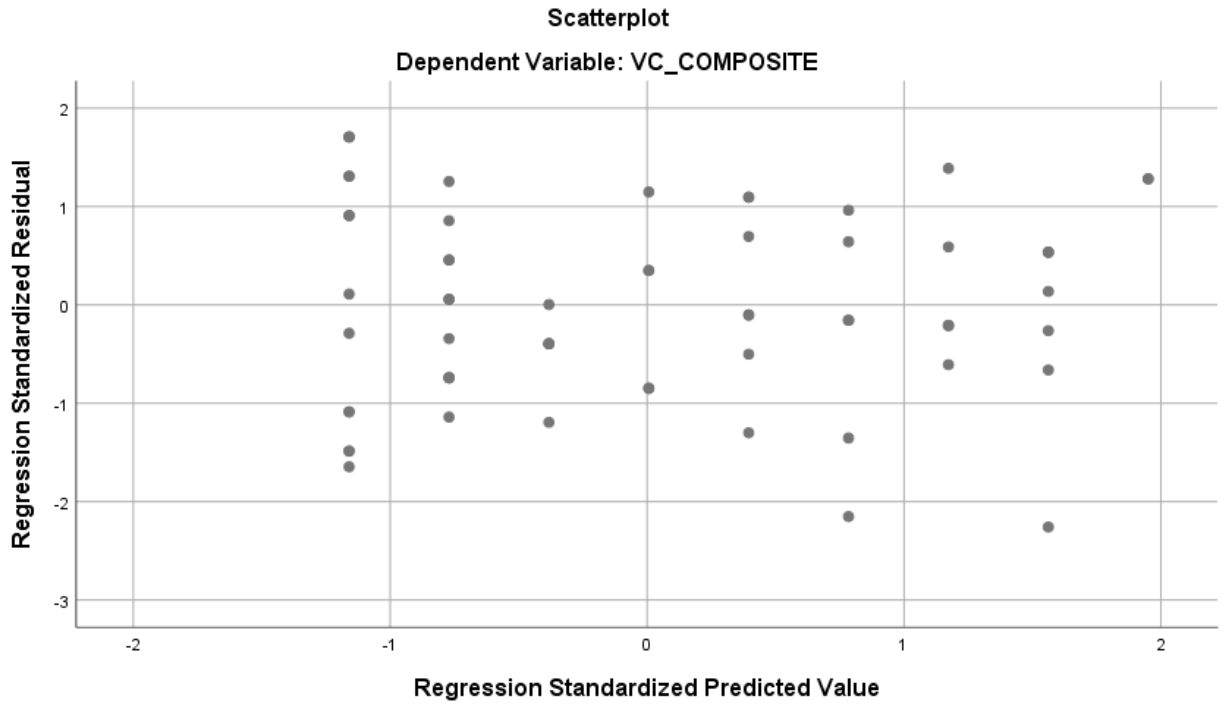
1b: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and values congruence?



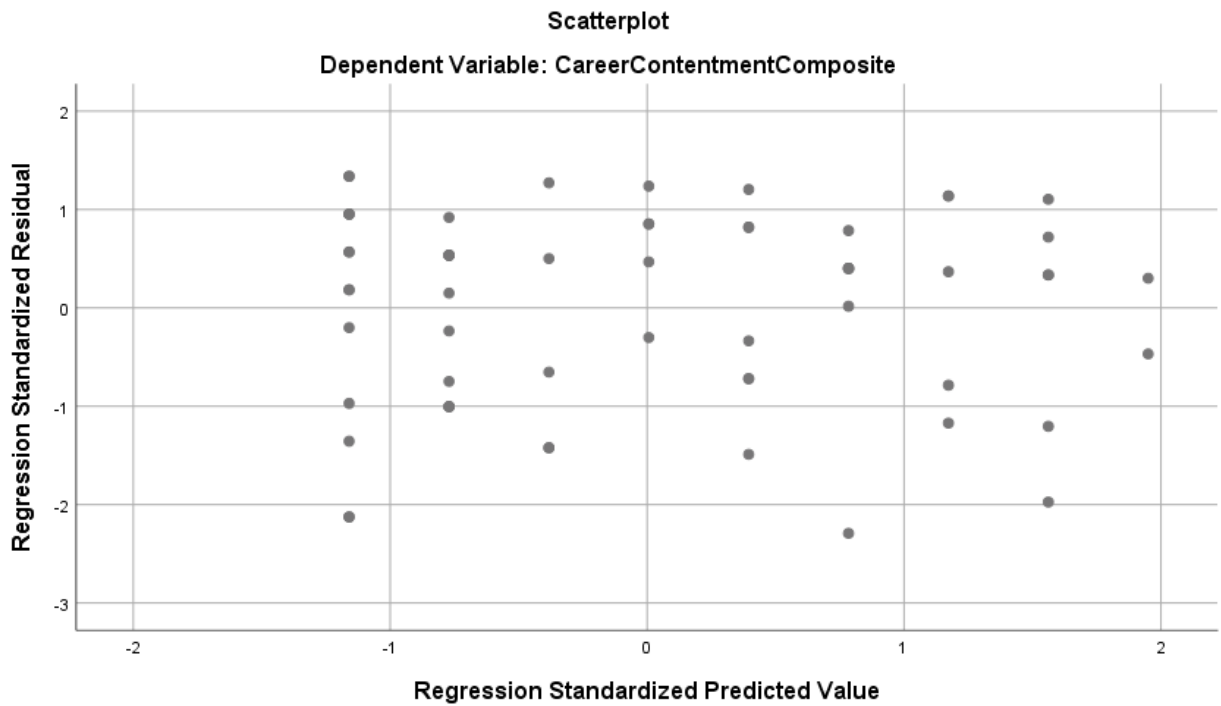
1c: Is there a relationship between master's program socialization factors and career contentment?



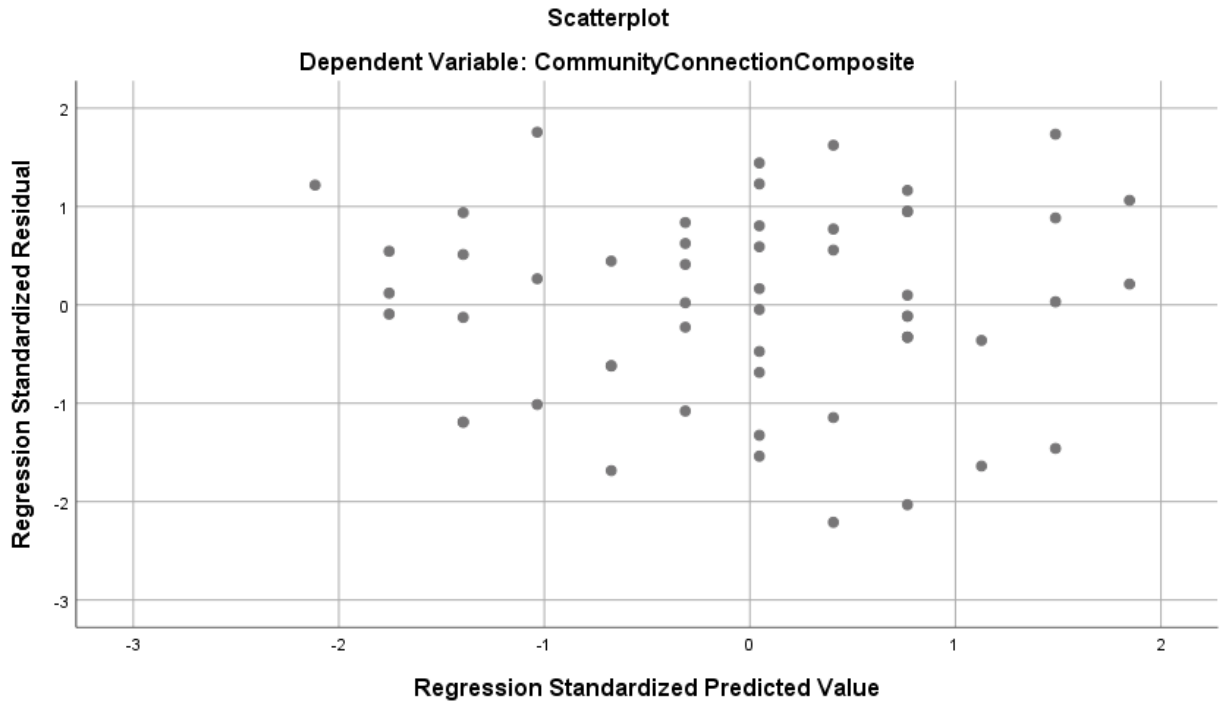
1d: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and community connection?



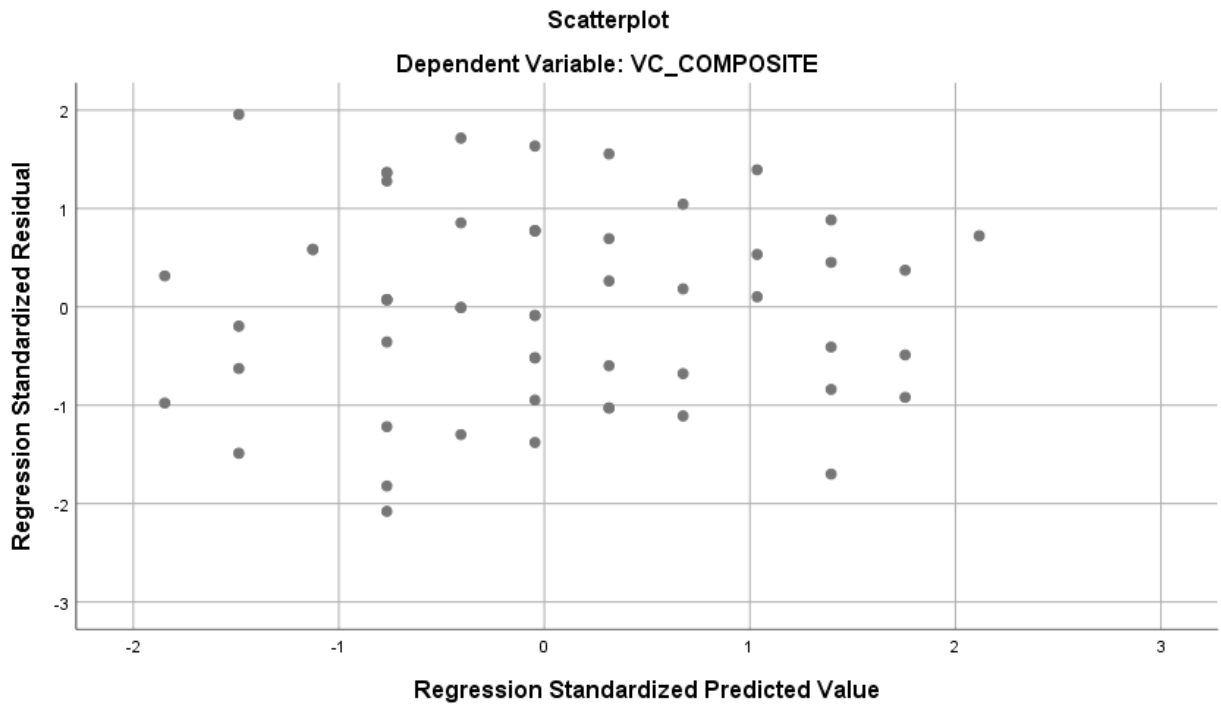
1e: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and values congruence?



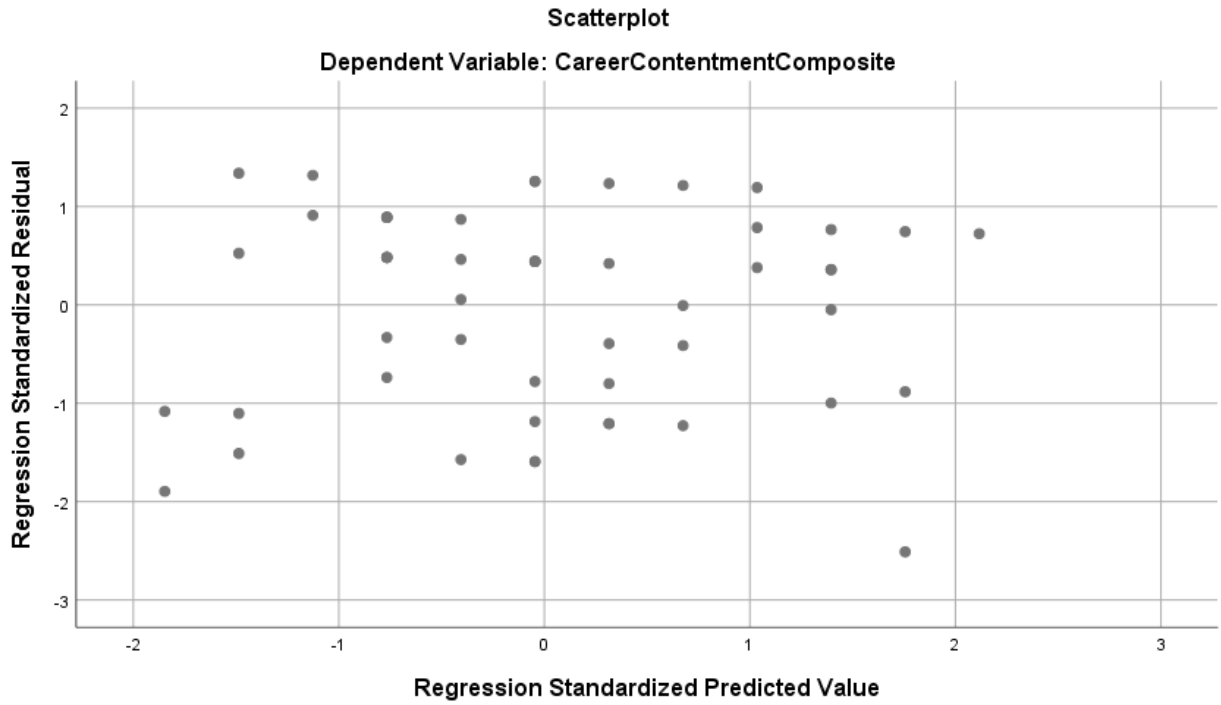
1f: Is there a relationship between employment socialization factors and career contentment?



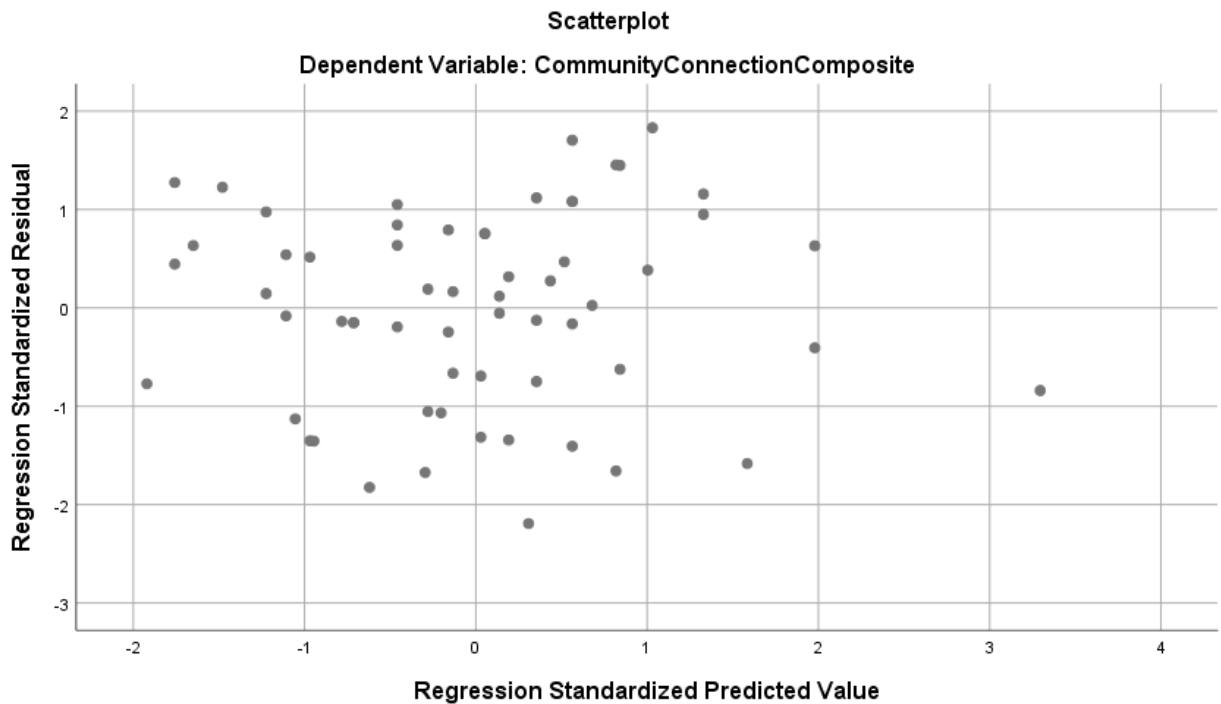
1g: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and community connection?



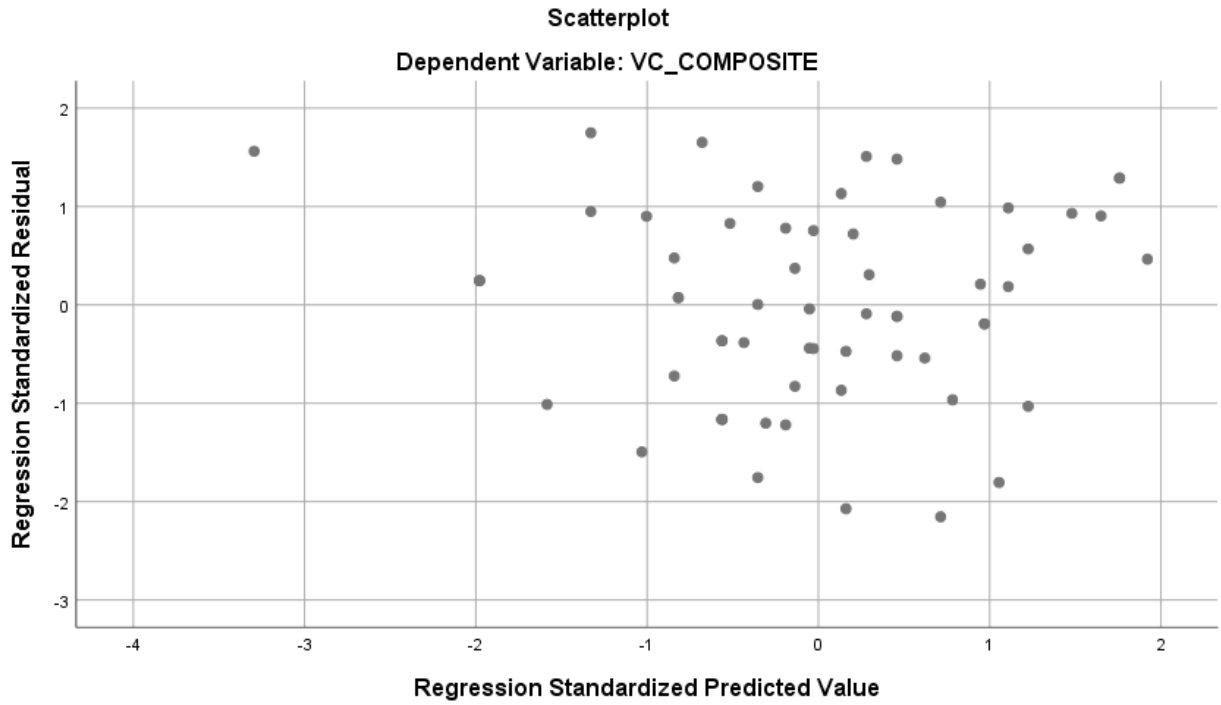
1h: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and values congruence?



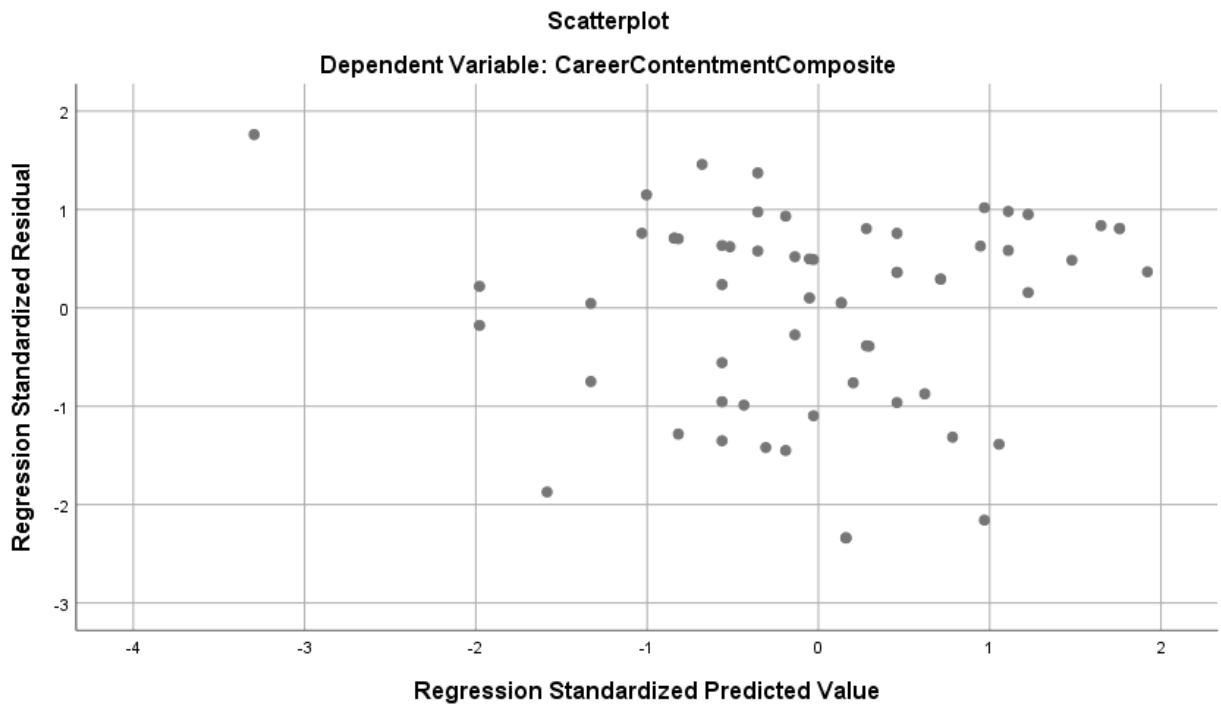
1i: Is there a relationship between professional association socialization factors and career contentment?



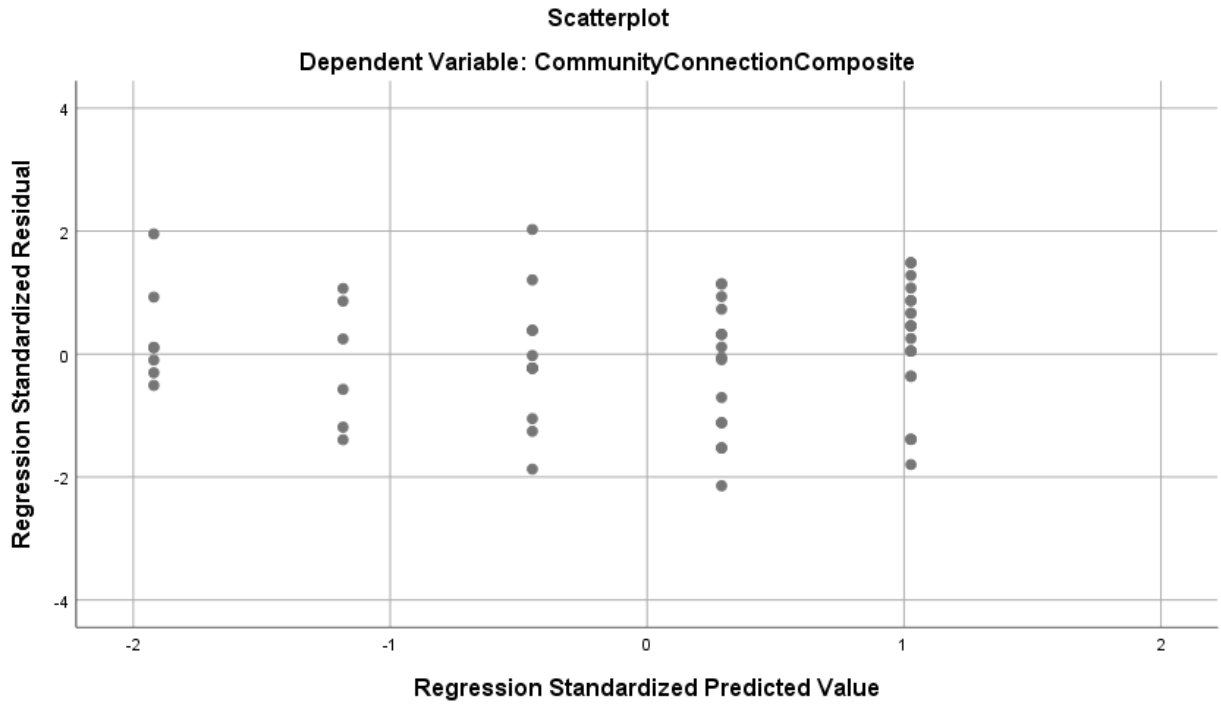
2a: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and community connection for rural student affairs professionals?



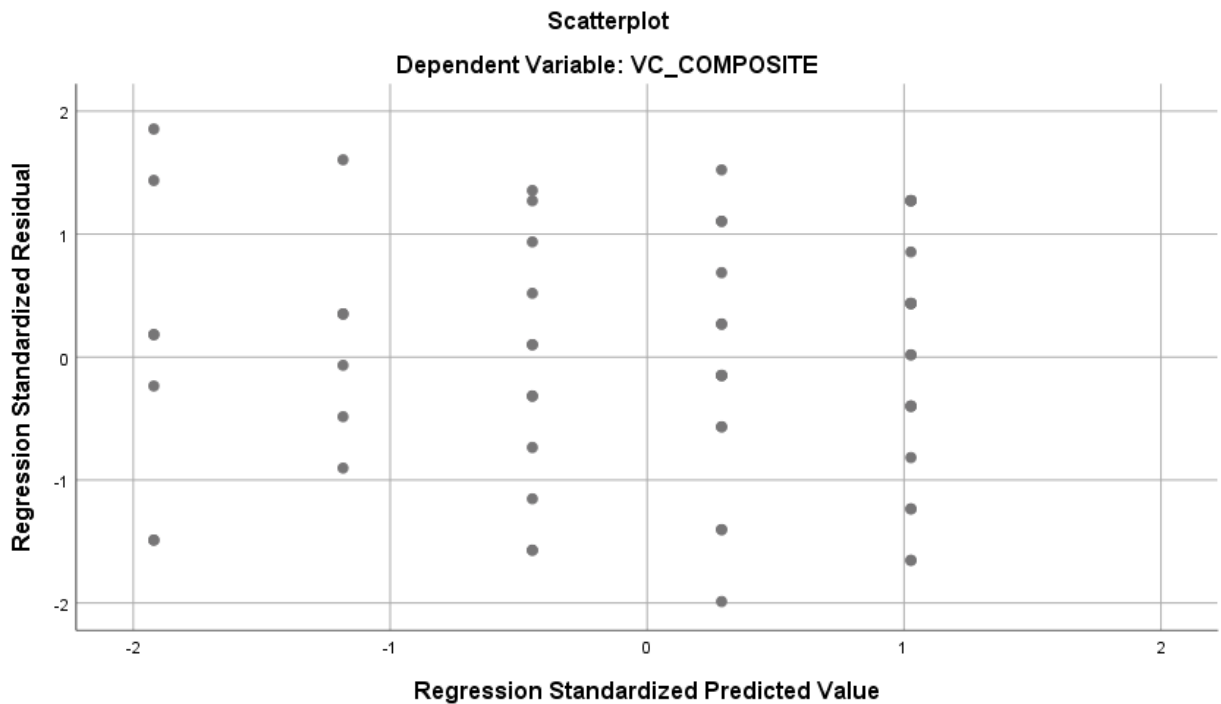
2b: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and values congruence for rural student affairs professionals?



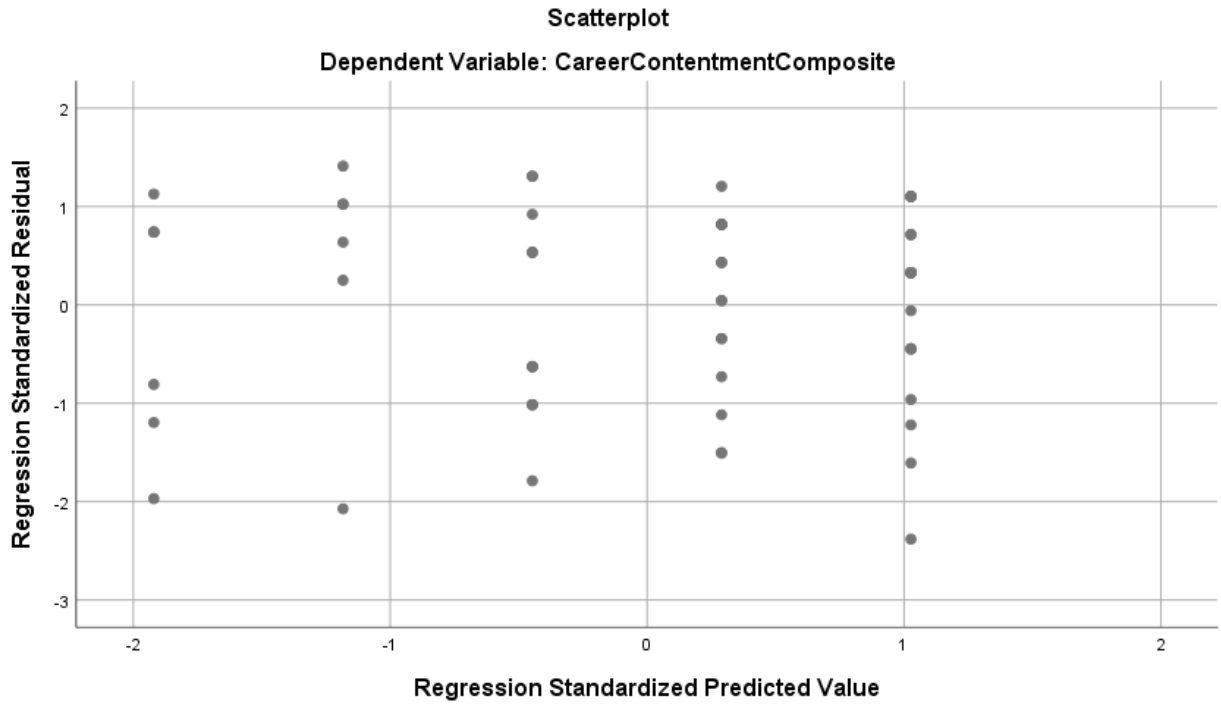
2c: Is there a relationship between the professional development composite and career contentment for rural student affairs professionals?



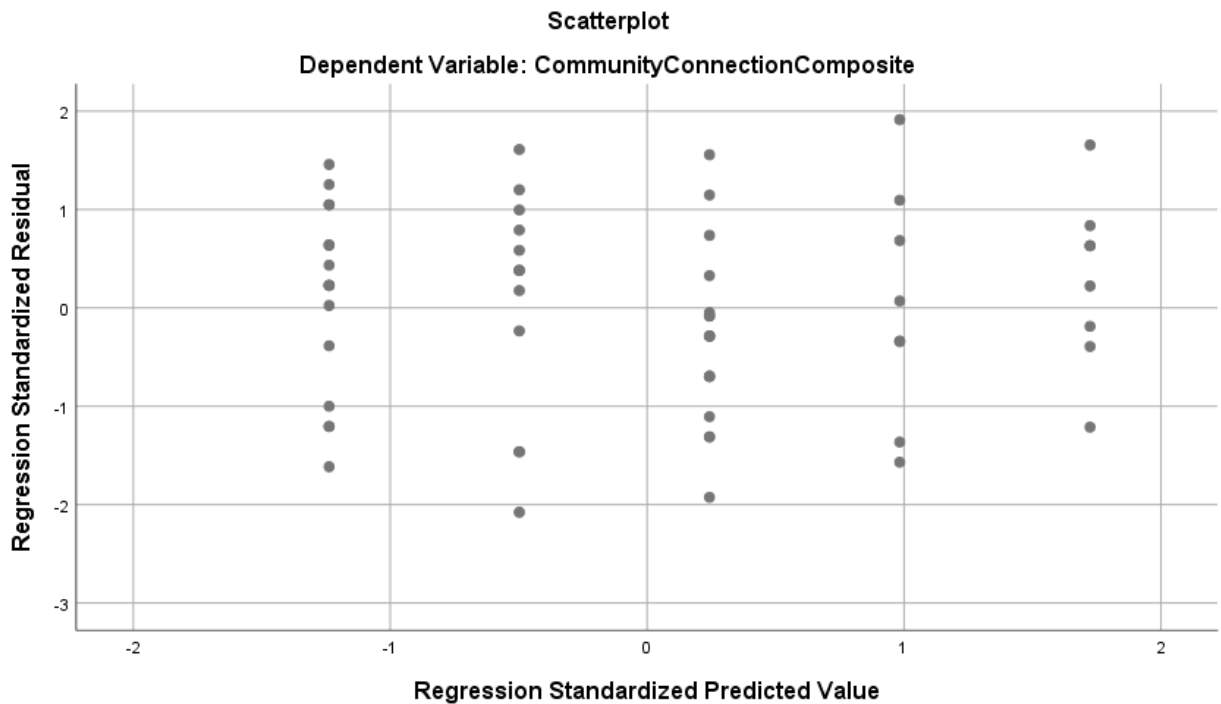
3a: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?



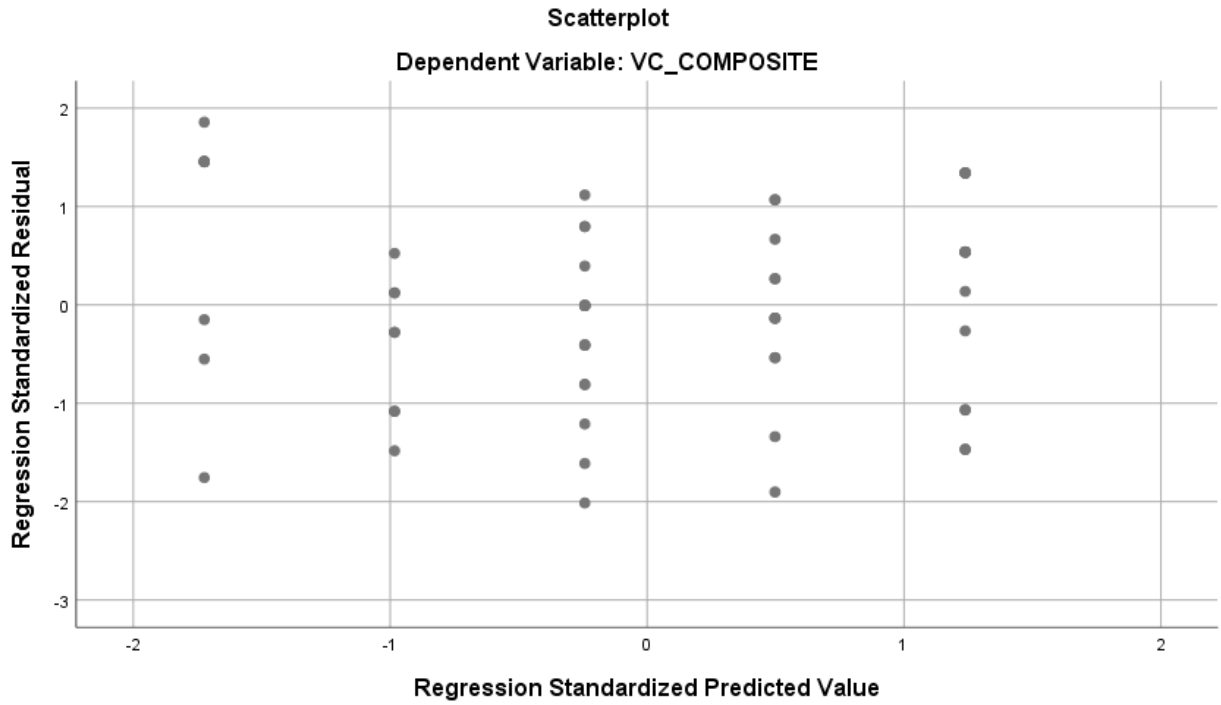
3b: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?



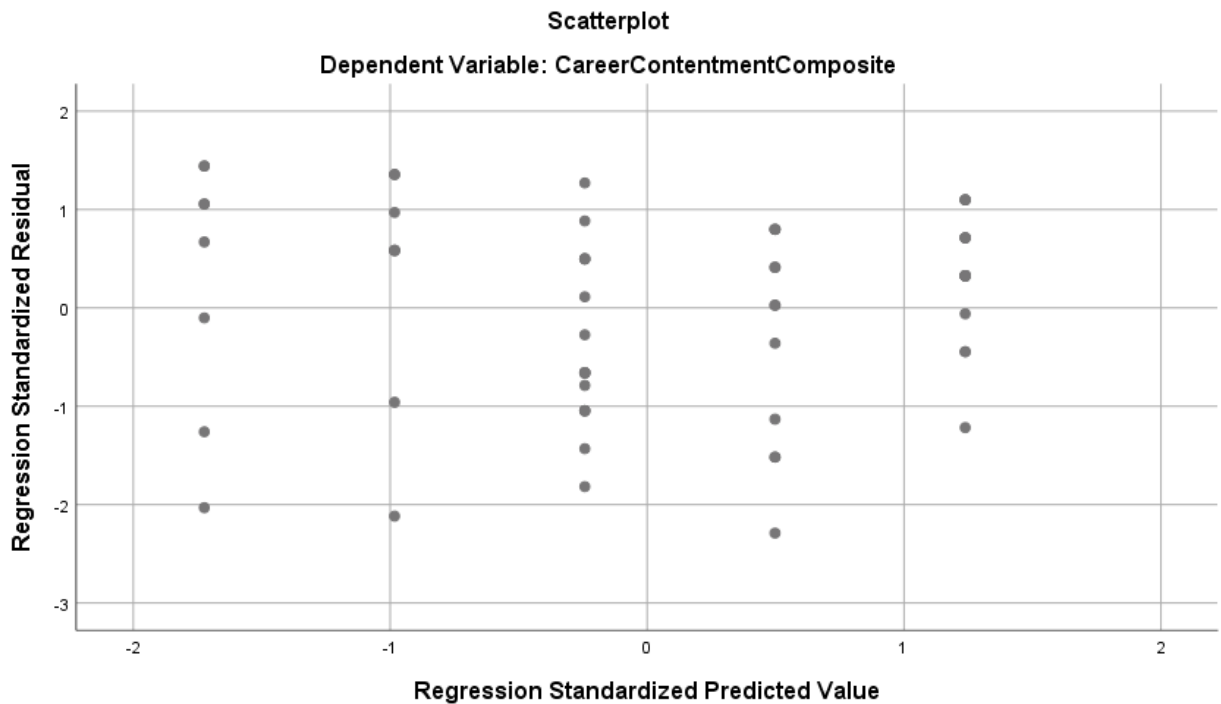
3c: Is there a relationship between local professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?



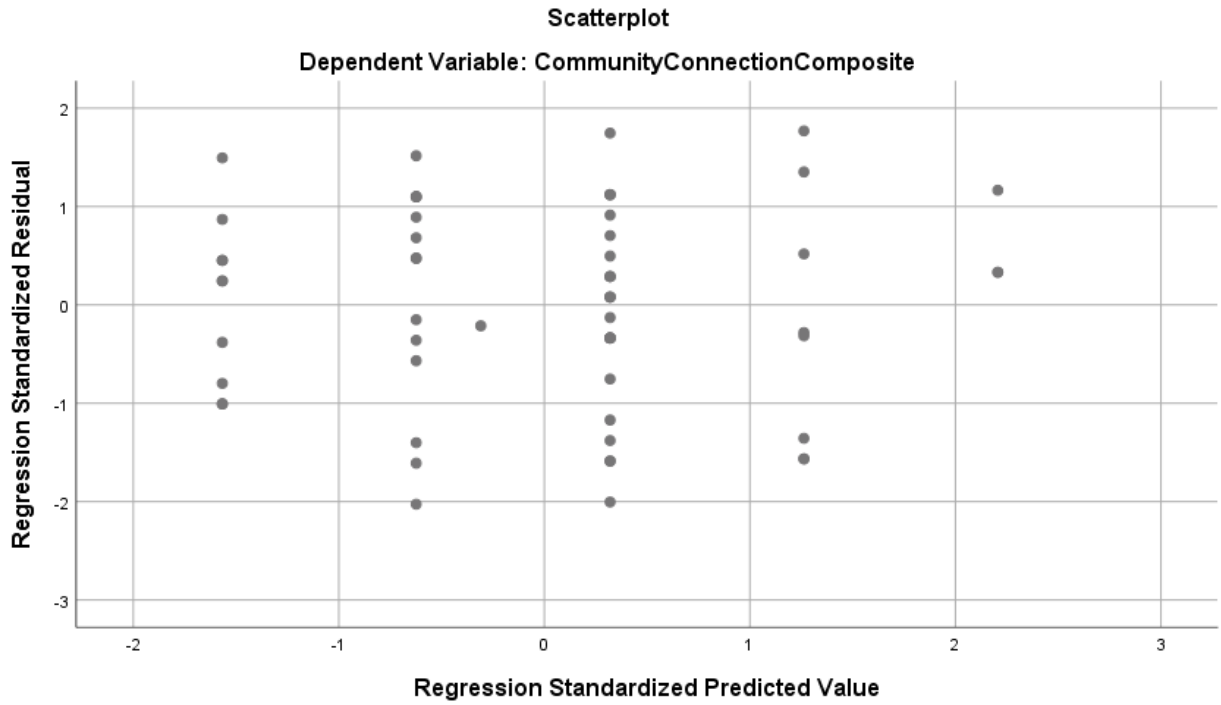
3d: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?



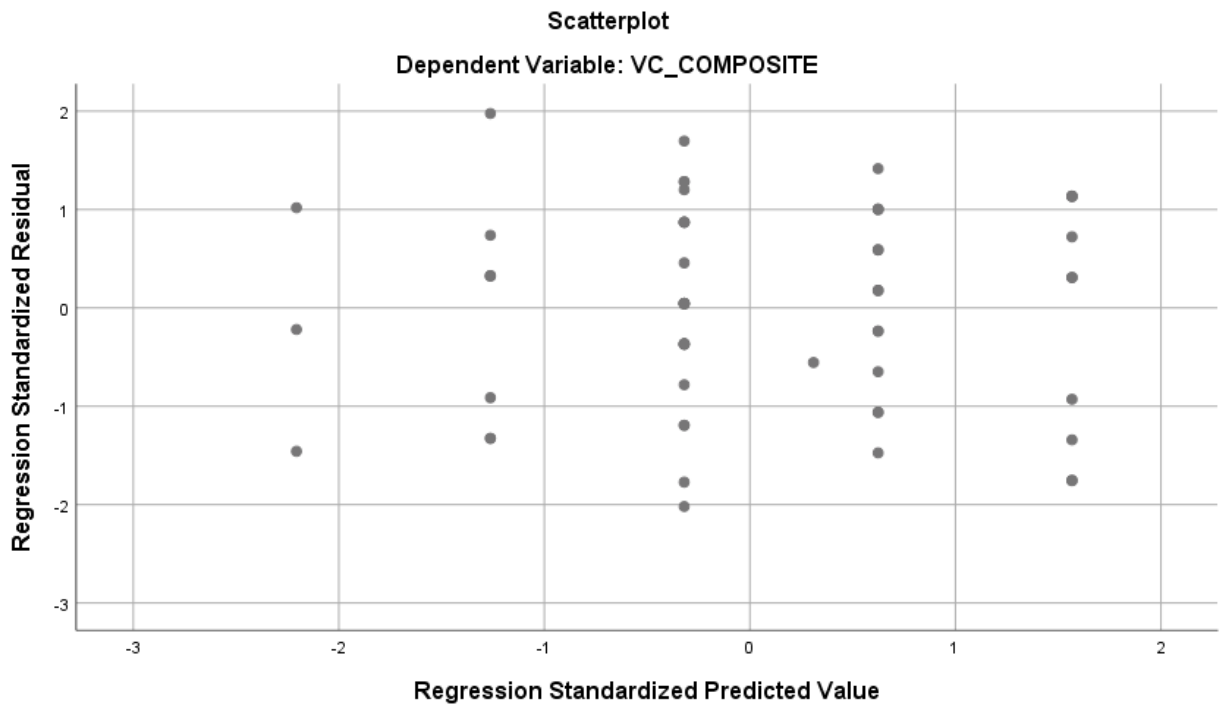
3e: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?



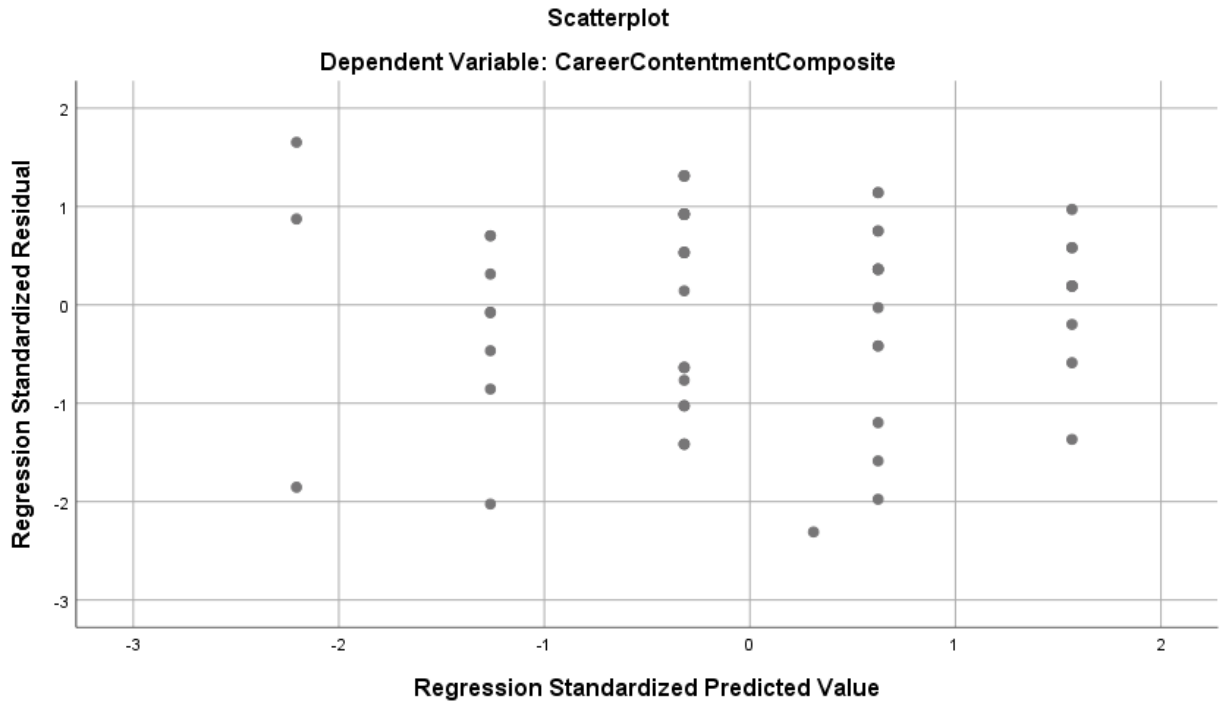
3f: Is there a relationship between regional professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?



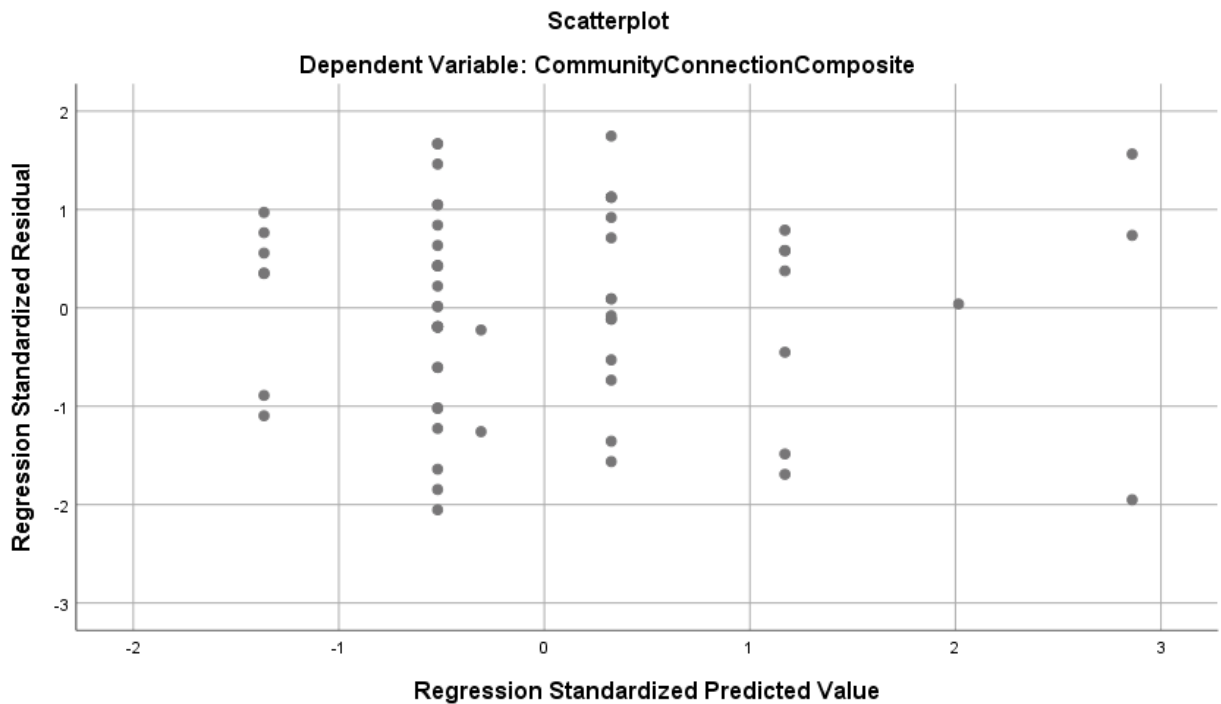
3g: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?



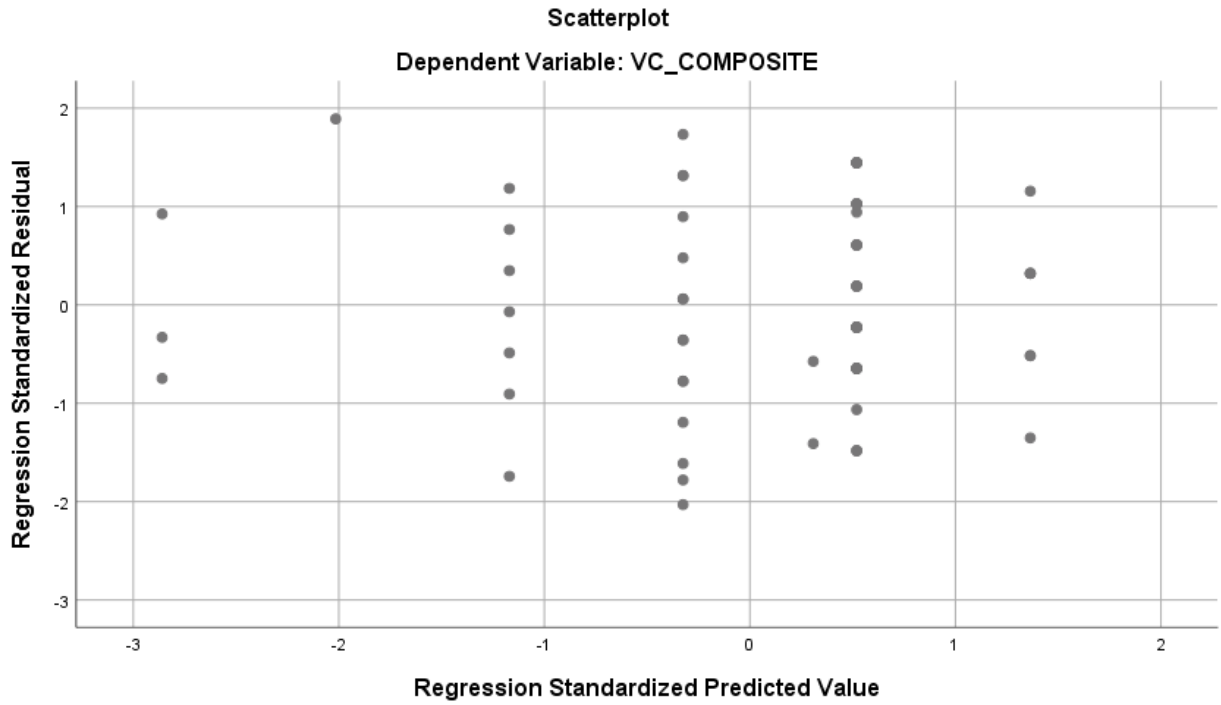
3h: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?



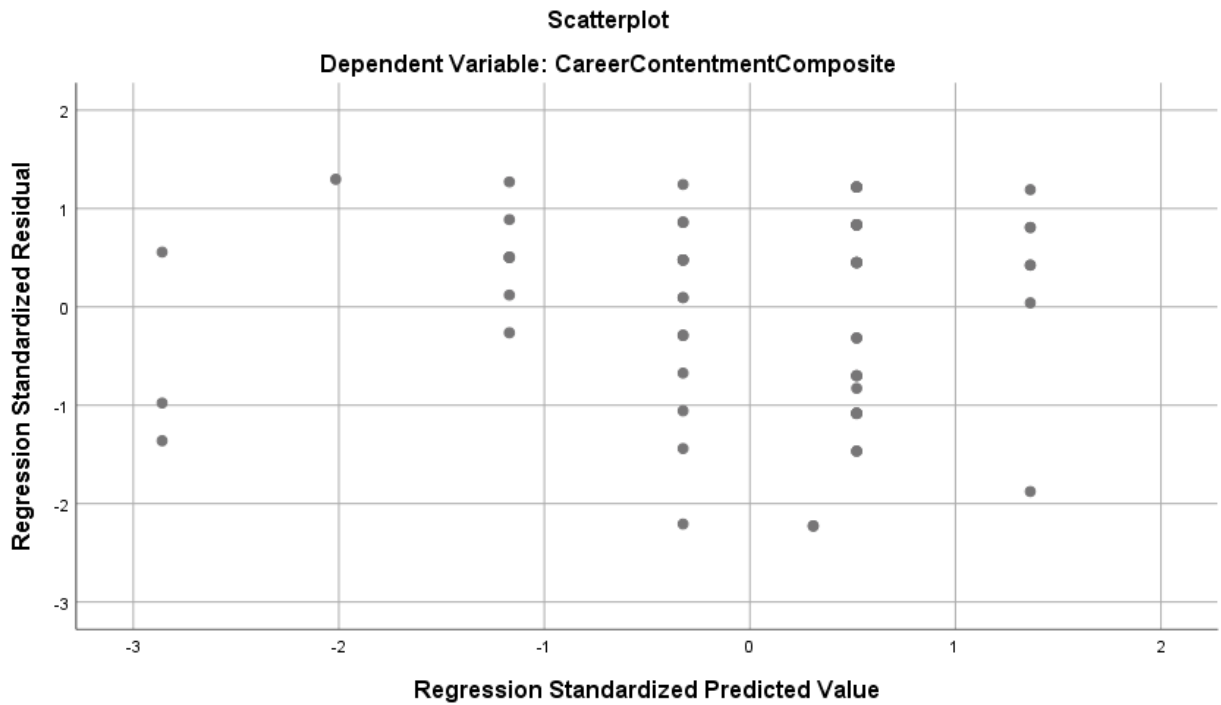
3i: Is there a relationship between national professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?



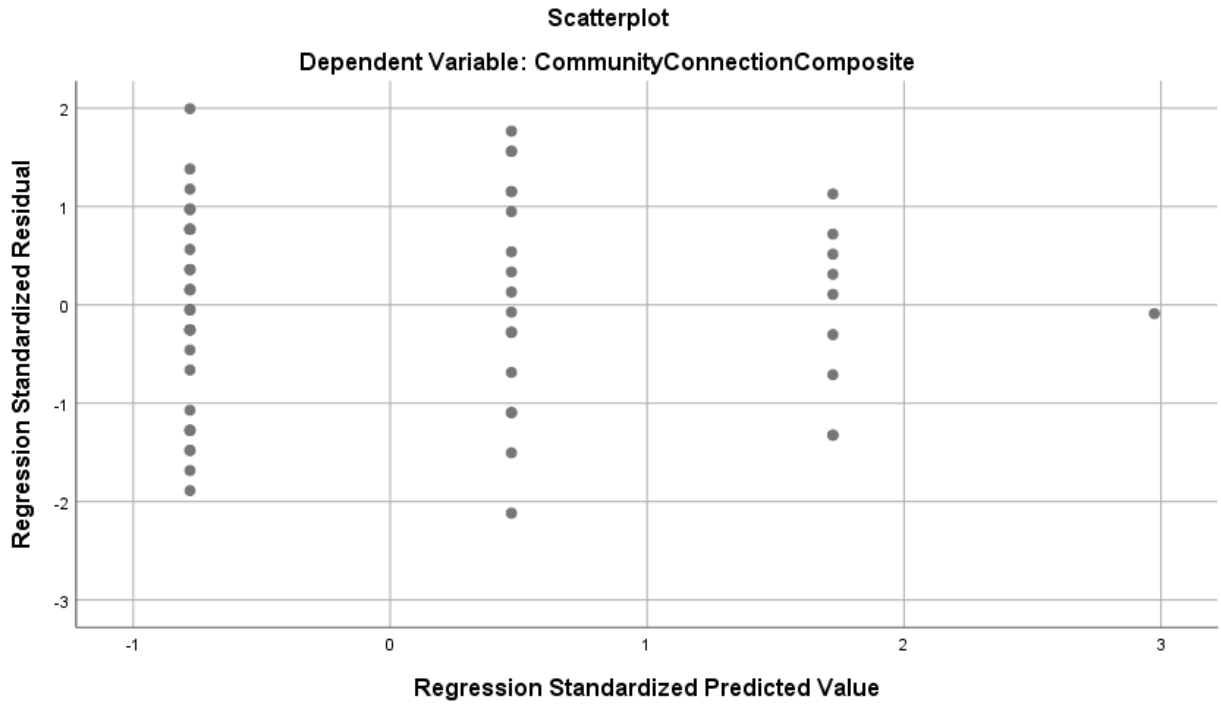
3j: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?



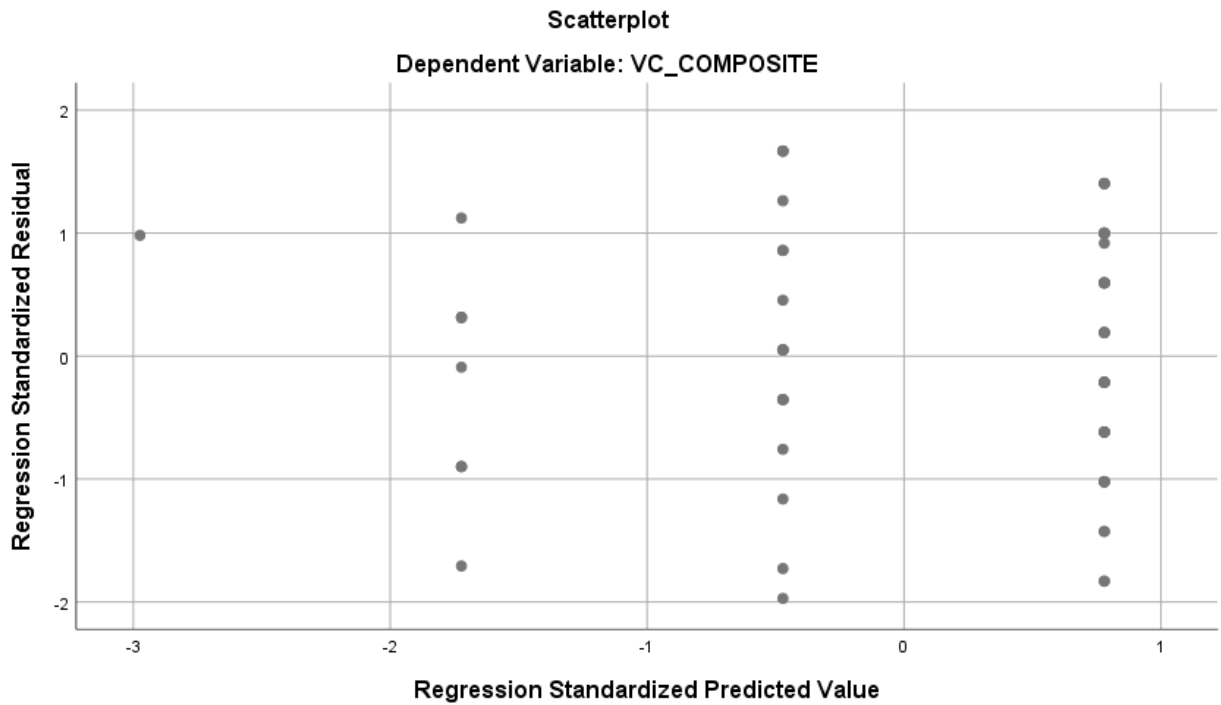
3k: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?



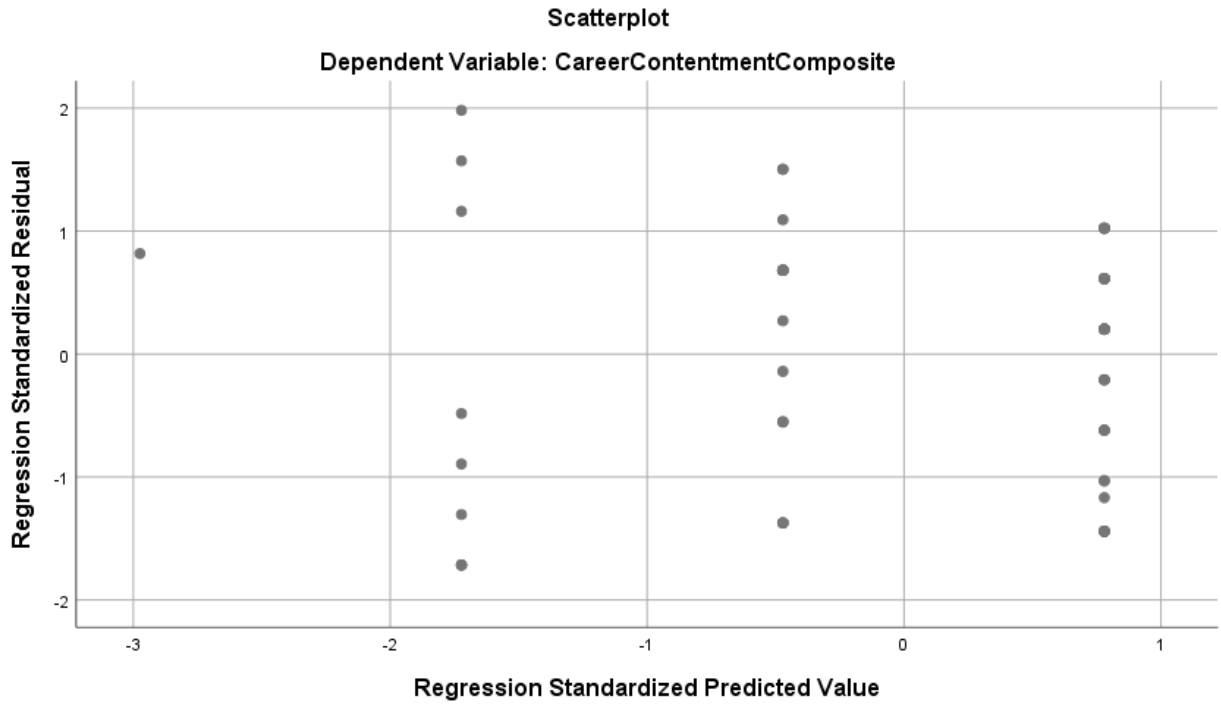
3l: Is there a relationship between continuing education professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?



3m: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and community connection amongst rural student affairs professionals?



3n: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and values congruence amongst rural student affairs professionals?



3o: Is there a relationship between networking professional engagement activities and career contentment amongst rural student affairs professionals?

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