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The Influence Of An Annual Meeting On The Sense Of Community Of Association Members, Their Satisfaction, And Future Intentions

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THE INFLUENCE OF AN ANNUAL MEETING ON THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY OF ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, THEIR SATISFACTION, AND FUTURE INTENTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, many studies have provided some understanding on what influences association members' decision to attend a meeting; however, more systematic and theoretical research is necessary. The decision making process of attendees is a complicated human behavior practice. The major contribution of this study is adopting the sense of community (SOC) model from psychology to gain a better understanding of the attendee behavior. By doing so, this study will add a theoretical foundation to the existing research in the meeting industry. Also, this study will contribute to the SOC research in psychology by applying the concept to a different setting.

This study investigates whether annual conferences build a SOC among association members. First, the SOC of association members at the conference will be analyzed. Second, the influence of SOC on members' satisfaction with the conference will be studied. Lastly, the direct and indirect relationship between SOC and future intentions (i.e., return to next meeting, membership renewal, and membership recommendation) will be examined.

Data was collected through an intercept survey approach at three annual conferences of national/international associations. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: sense of community, satisfaction with the conference, future intentions, and member profile. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the factor structure and structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationships, and Spearman's rank order correlation was used to see the strength of the relationship between respondent characteristics and sense of community. The results showed that sense of community was a strong predictor of future

intentions. Implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed in the final chapter.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the sense of community among association members. First, the role that the annual meeting plays in developing a sense of community will be considered. Second, the research will examine if a sense of community influences association members' satisfaction with the meeting. Finally, the direct and indirect influence of sense of community on future intentions will be analyzed. This first chapter will explore the background of the association industry and the meeting and convention industry, discuss research contributions, and provide the research problem and questions.

Background

Associations are membership organizations that are important to society at large. They are communities of varied interests and missions that are formed for different purposes. They provide a wide range of products and services for their members as well as the society. The early forms of associations in the United States were when the first settlers formed "guilds" to address common challenges and to support each other's work and lifestyle (American Society of Association Executives [ASAE], 2011). According to the Convention Industry Council (2011), an association is defined as "an organized group of individuals and/or companies who band together to accomplish a common purpose, usually to provide for the needs of its members."

Currently there are over 1.9 million associations in the United States (ASAE, 2011). These associations hold different types of meetings for the benefit of their membership and for the improvement of the organization. For membership, there are annual conventions, topical

conferences, world congresses, and topical workshops and seminars. For the organization, there are board of directors meetings, committee meetings, and leadership development workshops (Fenich, 2012). According to Meetings and Conventions' most recent Meetings Market Report, 227,000 association meetings were held in the United States in 2007 (Braley, 2008). Associations have reported that 32% of their organization's income is derived from conventions, exhibits, and meetings (Fenich, 2012). Therefore, holding meetings is vital to the success of an association. Conversely, association meetings are an integral part of the meeting and convention industry.

The meeting and convention industry has experienced dramatic growth over the last five decades in general (Spiller, 2002). However, the industry has experienced variations over the years as it is naturally cyclical and is affected by external factors such as the state of the economy, globalization, the rising cost of travel, and the increase in oil prices (Cetron & DeMicco, 2004; Meeting Professionals International [MPI], 2006). Since the 1960s, investment in infrastructure that supports conferences, meetings, and related events has been steadily increasing. The boom times for the industry were during the 1980s and 1990s (Cetron & DeMicco). The growth in investment was accelerated during the 1990s and continued into the year 2000 (Rogers, 2008) until the downturn since early 2001 exacerbated by the September 11 terrorist attacks. The September 11 terrorist attacks were a huge interruption for the meeting industry (Cetron & DeMicco, 2004). From 2004 to 2007, the industry saw moderate to dramatic growth in overall attendance, planner budgets, money spent per meeting, and the number and

length of meetings. Then, the growth was negatively impacted when the United States entered the recession at the end of 2007 leading to 2009 (MPI, 2010).

In 2009 the industry experienced the worst year in recent history with declines in attendance, number of exhibiting companies, net square footage of exhibit space booked, budgets, number of meetings, length of meetings, and revenues (Kovaleski, 2010; MPI, 2010). With a rebound in economic confidence, the industry has been gradually improving with a predicted increase in number of meetings and size of budgets (MPI, 2011). Steady economic growth will provide associations the demand for meetings and related services in the future (Cetron & DeMicco, 2004). In addition to the existing main considerations for potential attendees, such as whether to attend or not and which convention to attend, today's volatile environment creates more of a challenge for convention organizers to continue to attract members to annual meetings.

As aforementioned, conventions, exhibits, and meetings are extremely important for associations since they generate approximately 30% of their annual budget from attendance of those meetings (PCMA, 2011) and they provide the opportunity to meet a variety of association goals (Cetron & DeMicco, 2004). Even during the historically bad year of 2009, association meetings were among the best performing sectors in the industry (Kovaleski, 2010). One of the common goals of associations is to increase the number of attendees (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Var, Cesario, & Mauser, 1985). It has been found that only a small percentage of all association members actually attend an annual meeting (Var et al., 1985; Witt, Dartus, & Sykes, 1992). It remains a challenge to attract attendees due to the fact that typically people have a number of meetings to choose from as they hold more than one association membership (Yoo & Zhao, 2010)

and the decision to attend or not is mostly voluntary (Hiller, 1995). This makes the decision-making process similar to that of consumers in the marketplace (Yoo & Zhao, 2010). Moreover, in many cases the member is attending the same association's meeting more than once. One of the daunting tasks for convention organizers is to design memorable experiences that will keep association members coming back to the meeting year after year. Attendees of today have higher expectations as they grow more sophisticated (Lee & Back, 2009). Therefore, it is important for convention organizers to understand attendees and keep up with their changing needs and wants. In order to accomplish this, organizers have to value members' experience at annual meetings and recognize what contributes to the satisfaction and intention to attend. More specifically, organizers could benefit from properly understanding which aspects of the convention have the most impact on attendees' positive experience and intention to return (Cole & Chancellor, 2009). The first study that tested the relationship between satisfaction and intention to return from the attendee's perspective found that those with a strong satisfaction with educational benefits were more likely to return to and recommend the conference (Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007). This study proposes that the sense of community is a contributing factor to association members' satisfaction with the meeting and future intentions towards the meeting.

Problem Statement

To date, the studies on association meetings have been conducted on: the perspectives of meeting planners or organizers (e.g., Baloglu & Love, 2001; Baloglu & Love, 2003; Baloglu & Love, 2005; Choi, 2004; Choi & Boger, 2000; DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf, & Godlewska, 2008;

Fawzy & Samra, 2008); site/destination selection (e.g., Choi & Boger, 2000; DiPietro et al., 2008; Draper, Dawson, & Casey, 2011; Fawzy & Samra, 2008; Nelson & Rys, 2000); attendee meeting participation (e.g., Fjelstul, Severt, Breiter, 2009; Fjelstul, Severt, & Breiter, 2010; Lee & Back, 2007a; Lee & Back, 2007b; Lee & Back, 2008; Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Severt, Fjelstul, & Breiter, 2009); attendee satisfaction (Severt et al., 2007); and characteristics of association meetings (Jang & Woods, 2000). The studies that focused on the perspectives of attendees have examined their meeting participation behavior by looking at the motivations and/or inhibitors (e.g., Grant & Weaver, 1996; Jago & Deery, 2005; Lee & Back, 2007a; Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Oppermann, 1998; Price, 1993; Rittichainuwat, Beck, & Lalopa, 2001) or through a decision-making model (e.g., Lee & Back, 2007a, b, 2008; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Var et al., 1985; Yoo & Chon, 2010; Zhang, Leung, & Qu, 2007). The common thread of the motivation and inhibitor studies is that they have identified a wide array of motives for attendee participation including networking, education, leadership enhancement, and career enhancement. Annual association meetings unite those individuals and/or companies with the same interests and passion. These meetings offer connections, belonging, support, and empowerment. It could be the underlying reason why association members attend an annual meeting that has not been examined before.

According to Chaskin and Richman (1992), community is defined as "…a place of reference and belonging… the community includes dimensions of space, place, and sentiment as well as action" (p. 113). Definitions of community often make reference to a community's common component elements (e.g., individuals, physical contexts, activities) and to the

processes (whether psychological, social, or cultural) that occur among those components (Wiesenfield, 1996). The concept of sense of community is one of the concepts most used by community psychologists (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

The sense of community construct was first developed by Sarason (1974) to reflect the importance of community life and the strength of bonding among community members. It was defined as "the sense that one was part of a readily available mutually supportive network of relationship" (Sarason, 1974, p. 1). Sarason did not explicitly refer sense of community to territorial/geographical community. It can also be applied to relational and organizational settings (e.g., Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Heller, 1989; Obst, Smith, & Zinkiewicz, 2002). However, most of the empirical research has investigated sense of community at different levels of territorial/geographical community, from block to the whole city (e.g., Brodsky, O'Campo, & Aronson, 1999; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Doolittle & MacDonald, 1978; Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990; Prezza, Pilloni, Morabito, Sersante, Alparone, & Giuliani, 2001; Puddifoot, 2003). McMillan and Chavis (1986) provided a more theoretical model and defined sense of community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p.9). For more than two decades, the McMillan and Chavis model has remained the primary theoretical foundation for studies on the sense of community (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

The sense of community model was developed to be broad enough to include both territorial/geographical community (e.g., neighborhood) and relational community (e.g., work,

political, or recreational interests). The relational community is identifiable in terms of people, possibly from different residential localities, who interact to achieve a common goal. Based on this description, an association can be considered a relational community. In their description of an association, ASAE uses the sense of community construct stating that "a sense of community coordination is at the heart of the association profession." People become members of an association voluntarily because of the desire to work with others with a similar interest and to share their passion towards a common cause (ASAE, 2011). There has been anecdotal evidence as well as trade articles referring to the fact that association members are seeking a sense of community at annual meetings. However, no empirical research has been conducted to support this proposition. In an effort to examine the suggestion, the sense of community construct was chosen. Although the sense of community construct has been studied extensively in psychology research, it has been barely explored in the hospitality and tourism literature not to mention the meeting and convention industry research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand the sense of community of association members and whether the annual meeting enhances the sense of community that leads to satisfaction with the meeting and future intentions, operationalized by returning to the next annual meeting, membership renewal, and membership recommendation. This study will adopt and modify the sense of community model created by McMillan and Chavis (1986).

The research objectives for this study are as follows:

1) To test the conceptual sense of community model in the meeting industry
2) To examine the relationship between sense of community and satisfaction
3) To examine the relationship between sense of community and future intentions
4) To explore the strength of the relationships between sense of community and respondent characteristics

Based on the purpose of study and the research objectives, the following research questions were developed in an effort to gain a better understanding of whether annual meetings build a sense of community of association members and whether future intentions can be predicted:

1) Does the annual meeting enhance the sense of community of association members?
2) Does the sense of community of association members lead to satisfaction with the meeting?
3) Does sense of community predict future intentions?
4) Do respondent characteristics have a strong relationship with sense of community?

In this study, a community is defined as a non-geographic membership of an association. Sense of community in this study refers to members' feelings towards the annual meeting and their respective association. Future intentions as a dependent variable in this study is members' participation in next year's annual meeting, willingness to renew their membership to the association, and willingness to recommend membership to the association to others.

Significance of the Study

The major contribution of this study is adopting the sense of community model to gain a better understanding of the behavior of meeting attendees. To date, there has not been a measurement instrument that would reflect the needs and concerns of association members. In that sense, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the meeting and convention industry by providing a measurement scale and a theoretical foundation. In addition, this study will contribute to the current sense of community research in the psychology field by applying it to a different setting.

The shared goal between meeting planners and meeting organizations is to maximize attendance. The meeting will not be successful when there are only a few people attending. Therefore, it is important to understand what association members are looking for at an annual meeting. Associations should gain a perspective of their members that goes beyond the previously found motivational factors and inhibiting factors of attendees. However, the limited convention research on meeting attendees has concentrated on these motivational factors and inhibiting factors or their decision-making process (e.g., Grant & Weaver, 1996; Jago & Deery, 2005; Lee & Back, 2007a, b; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Oppermann, 1998; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Var et al., 1985; Yoo & Chon, 2010; Zhang et al., 2007). More importantly, there are no studies that look deeply into the psychological reason why members attend an annual meeting and how it impacts the satisfaction levels and future intentions.

One of the critical errors made by associations and meeting planners is to assume that the annual meeting itself will attract association members to attend (Lee & Back, 2005). However, association members have the freedom of choice when it comes to making a decision to attend or not attend an annual meeting. Potential attendees' travel patterns and buying behaviors are potentially influenced by many factors, such as their perception of the destination, convention organizers, individual needs and wants, financial factors, and other factors (Oppermann, 1997). There has been some research on why people attend meetings or not which are mostly descriptive. More recently, a few researchers have introduced meeting participation models (e.g., Lee & Back, 2007a) to explain the process attendees go through to make a decision to attend a meeting or not. However, these studies also have limitations in their models. The decision making process to attend a meeting or not is complicated as is any practice involving human behavior. Therefore a more systematic and theoretical research approach is necessary to better understand association members' meeting participation behaviors (Lee & Back, 2005).

The external validity of previous studies on convention attendee decision making have been limited because of the sample used. The studies available on meeting participation used samples of highly educated people working in hospitality education. There are a wide array of industries that rely on meetings and conventions to accomplish a number of important goals and there are many differences among them. Therefore, it is important to include other industries for a better understanding of meeting participation behavior. Another contribution of this study will be the sample consisting of members of different types of associations.

Lastly and most importantly, current research in the meeting and convention industry still lacks a theoretical foundation to explain attendee behavior. By applying the sense of community model, this study will be able to provide a deeper perspective on what an annual meeting means to association members.

In summary, this chapter provided an overview of the association industry and meeting and convention industry and discussed the importance of understanding the association meeting attendees. Although there have been studies investigating the decision-making process of association members, the studies have been limited in terms of profile of the sample and lack of theoretical application. To this end, the study purpose, research contributions, and the research problem and questions were discussed. The following chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings, proposed research model, and the development of the hypotheses.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter starts with the existing research on association members' meeting participation. Then, the discussion leads into the sense of community and its theoretical foundation. Finally, the last part of the chapter describes the theoretical framework and the development of the hypotheses.

Meeting Participation

The ultimate goal for associations when holding an annual meeting is building attendance. It is important for associations to understand the factors that influence association members' meeting participation as it is closely related to an association's annual revenue (Lee & Back, 2005). Although research in the meeting industry has been growing, for over a decade, the dominant topic for academic research in the convention and meetings industry has focused on the economic impact of conventions (e.g., Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Rutherford & Kreck, 1994) and association meeting planners' site selection process (e.g., Baloglu & Love, 2001; Oppermann, 1996) and little attention has been paid to individual convention attendees and their wants and needs (Lee & Back, 2005; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Zhang et al., 2007). Convention attendee decision-making process and behavior are important issues that call for more research (Lee & Back, 2005; Yoo & Weber, 2005). A substantial part of the success of a convention relies on attendance. Attendees have a large selection of meetings, conventions, and tradeshows to choose from (Severt et al., 2007) due to the fact that association members usually hold multiple memberships (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Attendees are becoming more sophisticated in their

tastes and choices with increasing experience with travel. In addition, attending an association meeting is a voluntary behavior where potential attendees have the choice to attend or not to attend (Hiller, 1995). The decision-making process of convention attendees is similar to that of leisure tourists but with some distinctions (Mair & Thompson, 2009). Association members' travel patterns and behaviors are potentially influenced by their perception of the destination, meeting organizers, personal needs and wants, financial factors, and other factors (Oppermann, 1997). In an effort to maximize attendance for a successful event and return to future events, it is important to identify and understand what influences the attendees' decisions to attend or not attend a meeting and design it accordingly (Grant & Weaver, 1996).

Motivational and Inhibiting Factors

Over the past decade, many studies have attempted to provide an understanding of what influences association members' decision to attend meetings by identifying motivational and inhibiting factors (Lee & Back, 2005). Several researchers have focused on examining what motivates association members' to attend a meeting (e.g., Grant, 1994; Grant & Weaver, 1996; Jago & Deery, 2005; Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Oppermann, 1998; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Yoo & Chon, 2008). The first empirical study in this context was Price (1993). The author identified four motivational factors – leadership, networking, education, and professional savvy – that influence attendees' decisions to participate in a meeting. Similarly, Grant (1994) found education, leadership, networking, and potpourri as motivational factors. Following the previous study, Grant & Weaver (1996) added the

destination factor to the motivational factors list. In addition to the factors recognized by the above mentioned researchers, Oppermann (1998) identified more factors that influenced attendees' decision to attend a meeting – career enhancement, respectful speakers, seeing people in their field, self-esteem (reputation), traveling opportunity, and representing their organization. In addition to assessing convention attendee motivation, Severt et al. (2007) examined the relationships between attendee's evaluation of conference performance, satisfaction judgment, and behavioral intentions. It was the first article in the industry to include satisfaction and its relationship. Fjelstul et al. (2009) took a different approach and focused on the motivations related to chapter, regional, annual, or international attendance. The study results showed that relevance of the program was the leading influence for all conferences which is consistent with previous literature. Overall, the outcome of these studies has led to identifying the leading motivators as education, networking, and leadership enhancement.

Although most of the research surrounding association members' meeting participation focuses on motivational factors, these factors alone do not explain how association members' meeting participation decisions are made. It is suggested to be even more important to identify and understand why many association members choose not to attend meetings (Lee & Back, 2005). In addition to the motivational factors, several studies (e.g., Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001) looked into the inhibiting factors and found that "lack of funding", "schedule conflicts", "inaccessibility of the destination", and "family obligations" are the main barriers to meeting participation. Furthermore, cost and time are the two major constraints for attending an annual association meeting. More recently, Severt

et al. (2009) examined the similarities and differences in what motivates and inhibits meeting attendance among three generational cohorts, namely Generation Xers, the younger Baby Boomers, and the older Baby Boomers. It is the first study to compare the different generational groups.

Meeting Participation Process

Previous research that has provided some understanding of association members' meeting participation behavior has mostly been descriptive. Considering the need for studies in convention research that apply consumer behavior, in this case attendee behavior, at conventions using rigorous statistical procedures (Severt, et al., 2007; Yoo & Weber, 2005), a couple of studies proposed and tested a model of the decision-making process of association meeting attendees. The first set of studies used the tourist's destination choice process as the basis to formulate their models. The first study related to convention attendance that introduced a model was done by Var et al. (1985). The study introduced an approach for identifying the determinants of convention attendance at four major convention destinations in the United States (i.e., Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C.). The authors developed the convention tourism model that stressed the accessibility and attractiveness of a destination. They proposed that once the potential attendee placed interest in attending the meeting in the decision process, the expected number of attendees was a function of accessibility and attractiveness of the destination under individual cost constraints. The results of the regression analysis of members of the

American Political Science Association in 21 states showed that accessibility was more important than attractiveness.

The next study that looked into the meeting participation process with a proposed model was conducted by Oppermann and Chon (1997). The authors looked at the three main players involved in the decision processes of an association conference, which are the association, the destination, and the potential attendees. There were two models developed, with one showing the relationships between the major players and numerous minor ones, such as exhibitors. The other model showed that four sets of influencing variables occur during the participant decision process. The model stems from the tourist destination selection decision process (Gartner, 1993: 191). The factors that were included in the Oppermann and Chon (1997) model were personal/business factors, association/conference factors, location factors, and intervening opportunities.

Zhang et al. (2007) proposed a refined convention participation decision-making model to overcome the shortcomings based on Oppermann and Chon (1997)'s model. The study provided a comprehensive analysis of factors and their relative influence on convention attendance. The "association /conference factors" and "personal/business factors" were used as in the original model. The other two factor dimensions were modified. One of the differences between the newly refined model and the Oppermann and Chon (1997) model is that the "location factors" were separated into two categories – "attractiveness" and "accessibility" of the convention destination. For measuring the attractiveness of the destination, attributes such as safety/security, common language, friendliness of locals, scenery/sightseeing opportunities,

availability of nightlife, food and restaurant facilities, and accommodation and hotel facilities were added. For the accessibility of the destination, the distance of the trip, availability of direct flights, and ease of visa application were added.

Another difference from the original Oppermann and Chon model is that "intervening opportunities" were replaced by "total cost factor". Furthermore, the total cost factor was divided into "monetary cost" and "time cost". "Monetary cost" included cost of transportation, accommodation, conference registration and exchange rate. "Time cost" refers to the fact that attending a convention requires a trade off with their time being away from home, office, family and friends. The construct included trade off on alternative conferences, trade off on vacations, trade off on time at the office, trade off on time with family, and trade off on time with friends. In terms of the model and constructs used, this study essentially is a combination of the first study presented by Var et al. (1985) and Oppermann & Chon's (1997) study.

More recently, Mair and Thompson (2009) proposed a model also based on the destination selection decision process to explain the decision-making behavior of association conference attendees in the United Kingdom. The stages of the model were identified as motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, decision, and post-decision behavior. In the motivation stage, the stimulus or motivation to attend a conference is likely to be the receipt of an association mailing or a call for papers for the forthcoming event, or perhaps word of mouth. The information search stage differs depending on how the attendee first learned about the conference and how much information has been provided to the attendee. Depending on this, very little further information could be sought or more detailed information will be needed.

Potential attendees could search the association website for all the supply side information needed in their decision to attend or not. The evaluation of alternative stage would be based more on a variety of factors rather than which of many conferences to attend. It is in this stage where most of the studies on the decision-making process of attendees start to fit in. There are "pull" factors such as an attractive location, or an interesting conference topic. There are also "push" factors such as getting away from the office. Also, there are situational constraints such as the time and money to attend that need to be considered in the process. The decision and post-decision stages are more similar to leisure tourists than the other stages were. In these stages, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the performance (actual or perceived) of a convention is likely to influence an attendee's decision to attend future events.

More recent studies adapted the theory of reasoned action or the theory of planned behavior to conceptualize the meeting participation process. Lee and Back (2007a) developed the meeting participation model (MPM) based on two human behavior models, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985), in an effort to better understand the psychological process of human behavior in making a decision to attend or not an association meeting. This study was the first to provide a sound theoretical foundation to convention and meeting industry related research. The authors added additional constructs (i.e., destination image and past experience) to the existing two intention-based human behavior models. The MPM provides a systematic synthesis of all major meeting participation factors. In a separate study (Lee & Back, 2007b), the authors empirically examined the influence of destination image on meeting participation decision of potential

attendees. The destination belief structure in the model was decomposed into destination attribute strength (DAS) and destination attribute evaluation (DAE). The results of the structural equation model showed that the most important destination attribute was accessibility, followed by safety/security and hotel facilities. In addition, the causal relationship between destination image and participation intention was significant. In the following year, Lee and Back (2008) developed and tested three competing models of conference participation. The authors demonstrated through structural equation modeling that all three models provide theoretical bases for understanding meeting participation behavior. However, a better understanding of this behavior is achieved by adding destination image and past experience.

Most recently Yoo and Chon (2010) took a longitudinal approach to examine whether or not the importance of convention participation decision-making factors that affect the participation decision change over time. The authors also adapted the TRA but focused on potential attendees' attitudes toward convention participation rather than attitudes toward attributes of the convention. The study integrates the contributions of the cognitive consumer decision-making models and attitude research. The authors found that the respondents had a different overall evaluation over time about professional and social networking opportunities, safety and health situation, and travelability factors. In addition, the major decision-making factor appeared to be professional and social networking opportunities.

Sense of Community

People become a member of an association to share the same interests and passion. Associations are a platform where members can exchange ideas, feel a sense of belonging, and lend or get support. It is where members feel the bond, the sense of community. It is not surprising that the concept of sense of community is used in describing an association: "a sense of community is at the heart of the association profession" (ASAE, 2011).

Annual meetings provide an important and unique forum for association members to come together face to face. As noted in previous studies, meeting attendees have stated numerous reasons as to why they attend a meeting. Although reasons related to networking or social interaction are among the most important reasons, they have not been further investigated. The concept of sense of community is not only new to the meeting and convention industry research but also hospitality and tourism research as a whole.

Community psychology appeared as a field of psychology in the early 1970s (McMillan, 1996). Sarason (1974) introduced this concept by being the first to identify and define psychological sense of community (PSOC). According to Sarason, "the sense that one was part of a readily available mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one could depend, and as a result of which one did not experience sustained feelings of loneliness …." (p. 1). The author argued that a sense of community was essentially a subjective experience associated with a feeling of belonging rather than the traditional objective approaches to group interaction. In addition, Sarason associated the absence of sense of community with loneliness, alienation, psychological distress, and a feeling of impotence regarding social forces (Townley & Kloos,

2009). Although Sarason (1974) is credited for creating the concept of sense of community, the author did not identify its components. McMillan and Chavis (1986) provided a more empirical examination of the concept and developed a stable framework for the sense of community construct.

Sense of community assumes that individuals are similar to each other and that individuals perceive a stronger sense of community in homogeneous groups (Townley, Kloos, Green, & Franco, 2011). Sarason's definition of sense of community states that the psychological sense of community is "the perception of similarity to others" (1974, p. 157). McMillan and Chavis emphasized a high degree of uniformity and homogeneity in reference to group values and norms (Colombo, Mosso, & DePiccoli, 2001). The membership component asserts that communities form boundaries of who can and cannot belong (Fisher and Sonn, 2007). It is common in community development that people seek similar others and safe places to be oneself. According to McMillan (1996): "If one can find people with similar ways of looking, feeling, thinking, and being, then it is assumed that one has found a place where one can safely be oneself" (p. 321).

McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined sense of community (SOC) as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p.9). The authors provided a theoretical model with four dimensions included in their definition: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The first dimension, *Membership*, refers to "… a feeling that results from investing part of

oneself to become a member and therefore feeling a right to belong" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). It is the shared investment in a common interest that allows individuals to feel a sense of belonging and identification with the group. It is the group cohesiveness. Cohesiveness is one of the key factors in the development of sense of belonging to a group (Griffin & Pennscott, 1991). This dimension is made up of five key attributes: emotional safety, boundaries, common symbol systems, personal investment, and sense of belonging (McMillan & Chavis). According to the authors, a person who feels safe in sharing his/her thoughts and concerns is clearly "in" the group instead of "out" of the group, understands shared symbols such as inside jokes, invests considerable time and energy to the group, and feels connected to the group will experience a heightened sense of membership.

Second, i*nfluence* refers to the bi-directional need for a group to offer its members a feeling of cohesion and for the members to feel they have some control over what happens in the group. Similarly, influence is the recognition that the group can control individual members. The sense of community is the product of a balanced distribution of control between the individual and the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Third, *integration and fulfillment of needs* places importance on common needs, goals, and beliefs and refers to the necessity for members to find group membership to be rewarding. It is the process of reinforcement. Reinforcers are symbolic indicators associated with status, success, and competence that allow individuals to feel close to a group because that group offers rewards (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Lastly, *shared emotional connection* is based on a sense of shared history, common places, time together, and similar experiences. It is also based on the identification with the community and the bonds developed

over time between group members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Obst & White, 2005). This shared emotional connection through extensive interaction between group members and intensity of the group effort contributes to a higher degree of "groupness" (Mullen & Cooper, 1994). This higher degree of groupness in turn leads to social attraction between members of the group, and an emotional attachment to the group occurs at the same time (Hogg & Abrams, 2001). The group is more cohesive but furthermore group members feel a sense of emotional connection and group self-esteem. Group members will support each other more than a member of an "out-group", and will be friendlier toward members of their own group. (Breunig, O'Connell, & Todd, 2010). This is also described as member attachment. Member attachment involves connecting with others not only for a common purpose but because of perceived common backgrounds (Turner, Sachdev, & Hogg, 1983).

Since the introduction of the four-factor model, the SOC construct has attracted major interest in community psychology (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). For more than two decades, the McMillan and Chavis' model has remained the most influential and primary theoretical foundation for studies on the SOC (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Several authors have agreed that sense of community should be a multidimensional concept but there is no consensus on the identification of its components (Long & Perkins, 2003; Obst et al., 2002; Puddifoot, 1995; Tartaglia, 2006). The majority of studies that followed McMillan and Chavis' (1986) work focused on examining the effects of SOC and clarifying its factor structure. Under the effects of SOC, one of the two main dependent variables is psychological well-being. Researchers have found that SOC correlates with indicators such as life satisfaction (e.g., Pretty, Conroy, Dugay,

Fowler, & Williams, 1996; Prezza, Amici, Roberti, & Tedeschi, 2001; Prezza & Costantini, 1998), perceptions of belonging and community connectedness (e.g., Sonn, 2002; Sonn & Fisher, 1996), mental health indicators (Ellaway, Macintyre, Kearns, 2001), and loneliness (Pretty, Andrews, & Collet, 1994). The other main dependent variable that has been investigated as an effect of PSOC is community involvement. Researchers have shown that SOC is related to participation in a community (e.g., Chavis & Wandersman, 1990), political participation (e.g., Berry, Portney, & Thomson, 1993; Brodsky et al., 1999; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Florin & Wandersman, 1984; Hughey, Speer, & Peterson, 1999; Kingston, Mitchell, Florin, & Stevenson, 1999; Obst et al., 2002; Prezza et al., 2001; Wenger, 1998; Xu, Perkins, & Chow, 2010), and intention to stay in residence (e.g., Perkins et al., 1990).

People can belong to many different communities. According to Gusfield (1975), there are two dimensions of community: territorial and relational. Several researchers have suggested that the communities that are most important to people may not be defined in a territorial/geographic sense (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985; Rheingold, 1991). In modern societies, communities tend to develop more around interests and shared goals than territories (Gusfield, 1975). Especially in large urban societies, relations and exchanges happen much more on the basis of similarity of interests and values than on the basis of physical closeness (Prezza & Costantini, 1998). The community may be comprised of people with common interests and who may not ever physically meet each other. Therefore, for a better understanding of sense of community, it should be researched in different settings (Hill, 1996).

Over the years, sense of community has been applied to many different social settings, such as the workplace (e.g., Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Catano, Pretty, Southwell, & Cole, 1993; Mahan, 2000; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991; Pretty, McCarthy, & Catano, 1992), religious communities (e.g., Miers & Fisher, 2002), immigrant communities (e.g., Hombrados-Mendieta, Gomez-Jacinto, & Dominguez-Fuentes, 2009; Sonn, 2002), student communities (e.g., Pretty, 1990), adolescents (e.g., Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007; Chiessi, Cicognani, & Sonn, 2010; Pretty et al., 1994; Reich, 2010; Pretty et al., 1996; Zani, Cicognani, & Albanesi, 2001), military (e.g., Wombacher, Tagg, Bürgi, & MacBryde, 2010), internet communities (e.g., Obst, Zinkiewicz, & Smith, 2002; Reich, 2010), and residential and geographic communities (e.g., Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Brodsky et al., 1999; Obst et al., 2002; Perkins et al., 1990).

Outside of psychology and closer to hospitality and tourism research, the concept of sense of community has appeared in leisure studies. It has been applied to outdoor pursuit programs of college students (Breunig et al., 2010) and older adults involved in an exercise intervention (Dionigi & Lyons, 2010). These studies showed that different understandings and experiences of community are evident in leisure contexts. It has been reported that development and relationships of sense of community may change from setting to setting. Regardless, the measures have been successfully used in different settings. However, there are other important elements of sense of community that could be unique to each setting (Hill, 1996). Although sense of community has been applied to a variety of settings, it has yet to be studied on association communities or association meetings.

Theoretical Foundation of Sense of Community

The question of the stability of the factor structure of SOC creates a challenge to develop a sound theory of SOC (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). Much of the debate surrounding this issue stems from the differences in the definition of community and what it means to experience a sense of community. Some researchers have suggested that experiencing sense of community may vary between different community settings. According to Nowell and Boyd's (2010) perspective, the ambiguous definition of SOC and the argument over alternative dimensions results from the lack of a rigorous theory that should establish coherence among the dimensions of SOC. The authors proposed that Need Theory by McClelland (1961) is the underlying assumption of SOC and that it has a prevalent influence in the theoretical and methodological development of SOC. The basic notion of human Need Theory is that "outcomes are valued by an individual to the extent that they satisfy the physiological or psychological needs of the individual, or to the extent that they lead to other outcomes that satisfy such needs or are expected by the individual to do so" (Miner, 2005, p. 76). Under this assumption, the community is viewed as a resource for meeting physiological or psychological needs of the individual. These needs are further met by the community where individuals are more likely to feel a sense of community. There are two major studies that have recognized the relationship between the Need Theory and the sense of community previously. Davidson, Cotter, and Stovall (1991) found that there was a significant relationship between psychological sense of community and need for affiliation in a family setting. Later, Burroughs and Eby (1998) supported this notion by adding the need for affiliation as an antecedent of psychological sense of community at work (PSCW).

The authors found that need for affiliation was positively related to PSCW. In other words, people that had a higher need for affiliation seemed to have a stronger PSCW.

Measurement of Sense of Community

Sense of community has been a major construct in the field of community psychology that has been validated and widely used. However, there has been a debate surrounding the theoretical and methodological development over decades (e.g., Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Kingston et al., 1999; Long & Perkins, 2003; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006).

For the measurement of sense of community, various instruments have been developed over the years. The first developed theory-based measure is the Sense of Community Index (SCI) by Perkins et al. (1990). Other scales include the Brief Sense of Community Index (BSCI) (Long & Perkins, 2003), Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS) (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008), the Multidimensional Territorial Sense of Community Scale (MTSOCS) (Prezza, Pacilli, Barbaranelli, & Zampatti, 2009), the Italian Sense of Community Scale (ISCS) (Prezza, Costantini, Chiarolanza, & Di Marco, 1999, Tartaglia, 2006), the Community Organization Sense of Community Scale (COSOC) (Hughey et al., 1999), and the Psychological Sense of Community at Work Scale (PSCW) (Burroughs & Eby, 1998).

Despite the further developed instruments, the Sense of Community Index (SCI) (Perkins et al., 1990) is still the most widely used. It is the first of its kind measurement based on the McMillan and Chavis (1986) four-factor framework with 12 items. The original index, which

was called a profile, was done by Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, and Wandersman (1986). The authors prepared 100 profiles of respondents to the Neighborhood Participation Project Questionnaire. The profiles were based on responses to 43 items from the survey. Of the items, 39 were believed to be related to one of the four factors in McMillan and Chavis' theory. After ratings from 21 judges on their perceptions of sense of community, 23 of the items were used to develop the SCI. The judges made high reliable ratings (97%) of sense of community. Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to rate how much sense of community they felt with residents of their own blocks. The total SCI scores were compared to the 100 profile sense of community scores. SCI was able to predict only 25% of the variance in individuals' ratings of their sense of community (Hill, 1996).

The SCI has been a subject of criticism over the years. Chipuer and Pretty (1999) argued that the theoretical foundation for alternative or additional dimensions are often unclear. Also, the authors pointed out the weak reliabilities for the overall SCI scale as well as the subscales. Long and Perkins (2003) criticized previous studies that used exploratory factor analysis rather than confirmatory factor analysis. Long and Perkins (2003) and Obst and White (2004) noted the weakness in validity by suggesting that the hypothesized factor structure of the SCI did not fit their data. According to Peterson et al. (2006), researchers have challenged the specificity of the construct (Hill, 1996), level of analysis (Buckner, 1988), reference of measurement (Brodsky, Loomis, & Marx, 2002; Hughey et al., 1999; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996; Sonn & Fisher, 1996), and the conception of community as a collective rather than an individual experience (van Uchelen, 2000). Other observed weaknesses include systematic error from the use of negatively

worded items and a lack of variability, sensitivity, and internal reliability due to a true/false response-format (Long & Perkins, 2003; Peterson et al., 2006). Despite the criticisms and arguments, Mannarini and Fedi (2009) concluded that McMillan and Chavis model still remains as the primary theoretical structure for most sense of community studies.

In an attempt to create a more stable factor structure of the sense of community model, Peterson et al. (2008) developed the Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS). It is an eight item scale to represent the sense of community dimensions. The authors found that the overall BSCS scale and its subscales correlated with community participation, psychological empowerment, mental health, and depression.

The Multidimensional Territorial Sense of Community Scale (MTSOCS), developed by Prezza et al. (2009), is a sense of community scale that refers to the geographical community. Also, based on McMillan and Chavis' four factor model, five subscales with a total of 19 items were proposed: membership, shared influence, social climate and bonds, help in case of need, and needs fulfillment. The results of the study showed that the MTSOCS is the same across different-sized geographical communities: small towns, cities, and metropolis neighborhoods. In addition, a positive relationship was found between total MTSOCS score and participation in groups/associations, cohabitation, community identification, life satisfaction, perceived social support, interpersonal trust and trust in local government.

The Italian Sense of Community Scale (ISCS) is adapted from Davidson and Cotter's Sense of Community Scale (1989) by Prezza et al. (1999). Most of the theoretical and empirical development of sense of community research has been produced in the United States. The

authors observed the need to develop a scale to accommodate the difference cultures and created and ISCS. In this scale, sense of community is operationalized as a single-factor construct. This unifactorial scale is composed of 15 items. The study used confirmatory factor analysis to test the predictive validity of the dimensions to confirm its structure. The results of the study validated the three-factor structure of Place Attachment, Needs Fulfillment, and Social Bonds. The ISCS proved to be a valid measure of sense of community.

The Community Organization Sense of Community Scale (COSOC) of 16 items was proposed by Hughey et al. (1999) to examine the role of community organizations as mediating structures between the individual and the broader community. The model looks at four components: Relationship to the Organization, Organization as Mediator, Influence of the Community Organization, and Bond to the Community. The authors conducted two studies to examine the dimensionality, reliability, and validity of the instrument. The first study that was conducted with participants from three community organizations matched the four factor framework. The second study was conducted with participants from five community organizations. This study confirmed three factors, namely Relationship to the Organization, Organization as Mediator, and Bond to the Community. In this second study, two factors, Relationship to the Organization and Influence of the Organization merged into one single factor. This suggests that sense of community within a community organization may be limited or promoted by both internal relationships and relationships outside the organization's boundaries. The authors concluded that sense of community is a multidimensional construct, at least when applied to community organizations.

Burroughs and Eby (1998) defined a sense of community at work by conceptualizing and developing a measure of Psychological Sense of Community at Work Scale (PSCW). The authors used individual characteristics (i.e., need for affiliation, tenure), group and organizational characteristics (i.e., size of workgroup, number of employee acquaintances), psychological contracts (i.e., transactional contracts, relational contracts) as antecedents of PSCW. Job satisfaction was utilized as a mediator between PSCW and organizational citizenship behaviors. The direct relationship of PSCW to organizational citizenship behaviors was also measured. According to their exploratory factor analysis, the PSCW construct turned out to be a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. The study identified nine factors and a total of 42 items on the PSCW scale.

Although there is debate surrounding the measurements, researchers have concluded that SCI and BSCS have relatively strong face validity (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). The factors and measurement items for each of the scales described are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement Scales of Sense of Community

Scale	Authors	Factors	Items
Sense of Community Index (SCI)	Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis (1990)	Integration and Fulfillment of Needs	I think my [block] is a good place for me to live.
			People on this [block] do not share the same values.
			My [neighbors] and I want the same things from the [block].
		Membership	I can recognize most of the people who live on my [block].
			I feel at home on this [block].
			Very few of my [neighbors] know me.
		Influence	I care about what my [neighbors] think of my actions.
			I have almost no influence over what this [block] is like.
			If there is a problem on this [block] people who live here can get it solved.
		Shared Emotional Connection	It is very important to me to live on this particular [block].
			People on this [block] generally don't get along with each other.
			I expect to live on this [block] for a long time.
Brief Sense of Community Index (BSCI)	Long & Perkins (2003)	Social Connections	I can recognize most of the people who live on my [block].
			Very few of my [neighbors] know me.
			I have almost no influence over what this [block] is like.
		Mutual Concerns	My [neighbors] and I want the same things from the [block].
			If there is a problem on this [block] people who live here can get it solved.
			In general, would you say that people on your [block] watch after each other and help out when they can, or do they pretty much go their own way?
		Community Values	Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important or not important to you to feel a sense of community with the people on your [block]?
			Would you say that you feel a strong sense of community with others on your [block], very little sense of community or something in between?
Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)	Peterson, Speer, & McMillan (2008)	Needs Fulfillment	I can get what I need in this neighborhood.
			This neighborhood helps me fulfill my needs.
		Membership	I feel like a member of this neighborhood.
			I belong in this neighborhood.
		Influence	I have a say about what goes on in my neighborhood.

Scale	Authors	Factors	Items
			People in this neighborhood are good at influencing each another.
		Emotional Connection	I feel connected to this neighborhood.
			I have a good bond with others in this neighborhood.
Multidimensional Territorial Sense of Community Scale (MTSOCS)	Prezza, Pacilli, Barbaranelli, & Zampatti (2009)	Membership	I feel like I belong here.
			When I travel, I am proud to tell others where I live.
			I would like to live somewhere else.
			This town is a part of me.
		Shared Influence	I feel I can contribute to town politics if I want to.
			If the people here get organized, they can achieve their goals.
			If there is a serious problem in this town, the people who live here can get it solved.
		Help in Case of Need	Many people in this town are available to give help if somebody needs it.
			If I had a problem few people in this town would try to help me.
			In this town people are not willing to help those in need.
			Surely here if I had an emergency even people I do not know would be willing to help me.
		Social Climate and Bonds	I have good friends in this town.
			I feel at ease with the people in my town.
			People are sociable here.
			It is difficult for me to form bonds with the people in my town.
		Needs Fulfillment	This town provides opportunities for me to do a lot of different things.
			If I need help this town has many excellent services to meet my needs.
			In this town there is never much to do.
			In this town I have few opportunities to satisfy my needs.
Italian Sense of Community Scale (ISCS)	Tartaglia (2006)	Place Attachment	I like the neighborhood in which I live.
			This is a pretty neighborhood.
			When I travel I am proud to tell others where I live.
			I feel like I belong here.
			I like the house in which I live.
			I feel safe here.
		Needs Fulfillment and Influence	This city gives me an opportunity to do a lot of different things.
			If people here get organized they can achieve their objectives.

Scale	Authors	Factors	Items
			If I need help, this neighborhood has many excellent services available to meet my needs.
		Social Bonds	I do not like my neighbors.
			The people in this neighborhood are polite and well-mannered.
			Many people in this neighborhood are available to give help if somebody needs it.
			In this neighborhood there are customs and traditions that I usually respect.
			It is hard to have positive social relations in this neighborhood.
			It would take a lot for me to move away from this neighborhood.
Community Organization Sense of Community Scale (COSOC)	Hughey, Speer, & Peterson (1999)	Relationship to the Organization	If I were in trouble, I could count on people in [organization name] to help.
			I trust the leader of [organization name] to do what is best for me.
			Most members of [organization name] forget the meaning of brother/sisterhood when they get out of the meetings.
			People in [organization name] have no say in what goes on in the organization.
			My goals for [organization name] are pretty much the same as everybody else's.
			No one in [organization name] responds to what I think is important.
			Everyone in [organization name] is pushing in different directions.
		Organization as Mediator	Membership in [organization name] allows me to be a part of other groups in [city name].
			Being in [organization name] allows me to be around important people.
			Because of [organization name] I am connected to other groups in [city name].
		Influence of the Organization	[Organization name] gets overlooked in [city name].
			[Organization name] gets very little done in this [city name].
			[Organization name] has had a part in solving at least one problem in [city name].
		Bond to the Community	I would really rather live in a different town. [city name] is just not the place for me.
			[City name] is a good place for me to live.
			Living in [city name] gives me a sense of community.
Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW)	Burroughs & Eby (1998)	Emotional Safety	It is safe enough to share my successes and strengths with others in this organization.
			It is safe enough to share my personal limitations (e.g., areas in which I lack competency) with others in this organization.
			I feel safe enough to ask for help from others in this organization.
			Management feels safe sharing information with staff.
			I am able to freely share my passion about my work to others in this organization.
			It is safe enough to share difficult emotions (e.g., hurt, loss, fear) with others in this organization.

Scale	Authors	Factors	Items
		Coworker Support	I regularly stop and talk with people in this organization.
			I rarely visit with my co-workers throughout the workday.
			I am committed to my co-workers, even to those individuals who I don't personally like.
		Team Orientation	This organization takes time to reflect and discuss how we work together as a whole.
			This organization looks at how groups work together as well as at individual performance.
			This organization takes time to discuss how we communicate.
			There is a real sense of community here.
			There is a sense of shared mission and common purpose among the people who work here.
			Differences and conflicts are dealt with respectfully in this organization.
			There is good team spirit in this organization.
		Spiritual Bond	Spiritual perspectives/dimensions can be talked about in this organization.
			I feel secure/safe enough in this organization to share my spiritual beliefs with others.
		Sense of Belonging	Membership in this organization is meaningful and valuable to me.
			I really care about the fate of this organization.
			If given the opportunity, I would invest (e.g., buy stock) in this organization.
			I feel loyal to the people in this organization.
			There is a friendly atmosphere in this organization.
			I benefit from the skills or knowledge of my coworkers.
			The friendships and associations I have with other people in this organization mean a lot to me.
			This organization feels like a community.
		Tolerance for Individual Differences	In this organization, people usually break-up into cliques.
			After meetings, people say negative things about others, usually in a gossipy fashion.
			People's feelings in this organization are just as accepted as their thoughts and ideas.
			Differences and conflicts are dealt with openly in this organization.
			People in this organization see each other as a larger group supporting one another, rather than maintaining separate "turfs" or "territories".
			There is a high level of respect for others in this organization.
			Individual differences are tolerated in this organization.
		Neighborliness	If I needed advice about something I could go to someone in this organization.
			I borrow things and exchange favors with my coworkers.
			There are people who really care about me in this organization.

Scale	Authors	Factors	Items
		Sense of Collectivism	I like to think of myself as similar to the people who work in this organization.
			I think I agree with most people in this organization about what is important in life.
			If the people in this organization were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing.
			Each person is equally responsible and takes ownership for the success of this organization.
		Reflection	During meetings, people call for a "time out" when necessary to deal with potential problems so certain individuals do not go on feeling hurt or unheard.
			There is time set aside to support each other as people in this organization.

Conference Satisfaction

Satisfaction is measured from the perspectives of consumers (Baker & Crompton, 2000). It has been found that consumer satisfaction is an essential element in anticipating positive future behavior (Peter & Olson, 1999). Assessing the satisfaction levels of conference attendees is essential to the well-being of attendees, to the profits of the host venues, and to the stability of destinations and convention centers (Oliver, 1996). Therefore, it is important to understand the complex dimensions used by attendees in their assessment of the conference and future intentions (Severt et al., 2007).

Research related to satisfaction in the meetings and convention industry have been mostly applied to meeting planners with destination choice, not the attendee's satisfaction with the event (Baloglu, Pekcan, Chen, & Santos, 2003; Lee & Back, 2005; Yoo & Weber, 2005). There have been a variety of approaches adopted to explain the measurement of satisfaction (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). Of the approaches, satisfaction studies had centered on the comparison paradigm which is comparing the expectations and performances (Severt et al., 2007). According to Churchill and Surprenant (1982), performance determines satisfaction. The authors also found that perceived performance had a direct impact on satisfaction. Furthermore, they showed that evaluation of overall satisfaction may be based on performance at the attribute level where attributes defined what the consumer deems critical within the evaluated event (Oliver & Mano, 1993). Because of the complex nature of measuring attendee expectations (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), many studies only assess the perceived performance as a predictor of satisfaction (Severt et al., 2007). With the collection of information regarding the level of

satisfaction of specific attributes, practitioners have access to more information leading to efficient product management (Rodoula, 2006) and enhancing the conference experience (Severt et al., 2007). In addition, evaluating satisfaction using performance attributes provides researchers with the ability to use more specific questions in the measurement instruments (Mittal, Kumar, & Tsiros, 1999). Therefore, this study used the performance of the conference in measuring the level of satisfaction with the meeting. The eleven satisfaction measurement items for this study were derived from several different studies (i.e., Bauer, Law, Tse, & Weber, 2008; Breiter & Milman, 2006; Deng & Pierskalla, 2011; Hede, Jago, & Deery, 2004; Krohn & Backman, 2011; Severt et al., 2007).

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of the study is to understand the sense of community of association members and whether the annual meeting enhances the sense of community that leads to satisfaction with the meeting and future intentions, operationalized by returning to the next annual meeting, renewal of membership, and membership recommendation.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1) Does the annual meeting enhance the sense of community of association members?
2) Does the sense of community of association members lead to satisfaction with the meeting?
3) Does sense of community predict future intentions?
4) Do respondent characteristics have a strong relationship with sense of community?

In order to answer the research questions, a theoretical framework (Figure 1) is presented and hypotheses have been developed based on existing literature. The following section presents the development of hypotheses.

Sense of Community and Satisfaction

There are two main dependent variables that have been studied with sense of community. The first main dependent variable that has been tested as an effect of sense of community is satisfaction. It has been found that sense of community correlates with life satisfaction and job satisfaction (Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Perkins et al., 1990; Prezza & Contantini, 1998). Sense of community encourages a greater sense of identity and greater self-confidence, facilitating social relations (Martini & Sequi, 1995, as cited in Prezza & Costantini, 1998). Davidson and Cotter (1991) found that sense of community is significantly related to subjective well-being. Of the three components (i.e., happiness, worrying, and personal coping), the happiness component showed the strongest relationship with sense of community. Pretty et al. (1996) found that sense of community was the primary correlate with subjective evaluations of well-being.

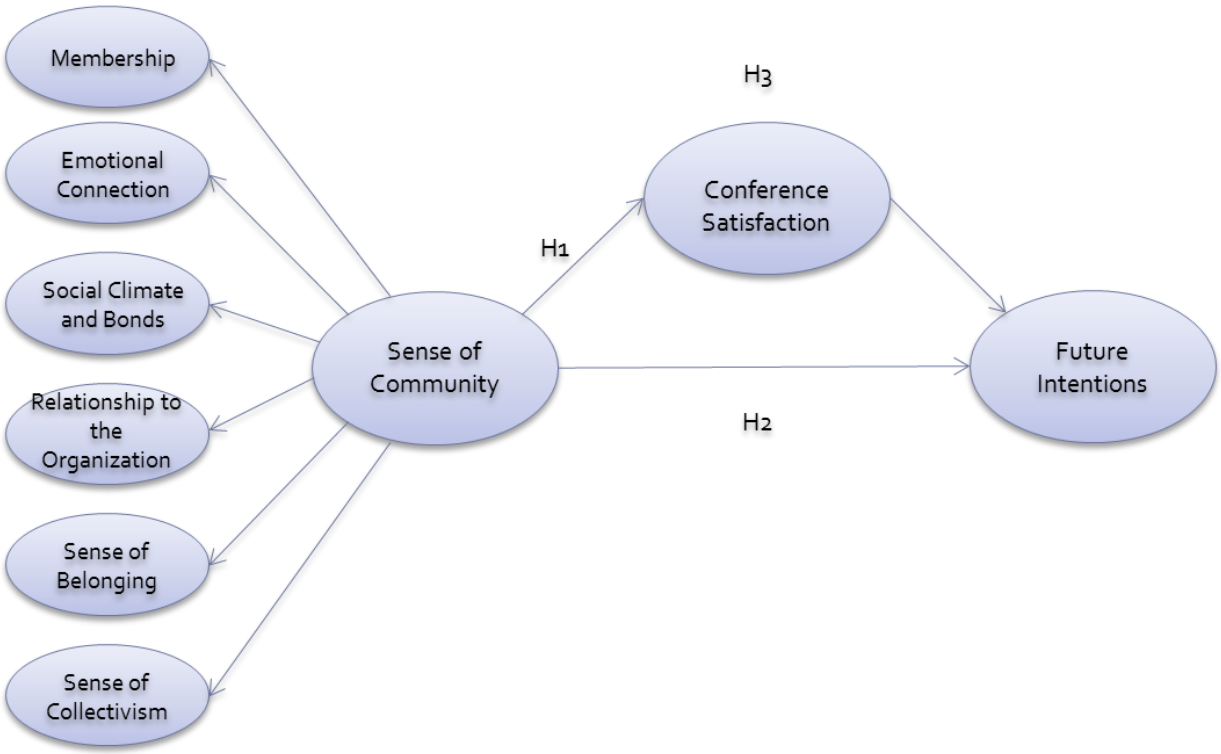

Figure 1: Sense of Community at an Annual Meeting

According to Puddifoot (1995), there is a greater sense of community in the small town, as well as with more life satisfaction and satisfaction with services provided by the community and greater perceived social support (Prezza & Costantini, 1998). Prezza and Costantini (1998) investigated relationships between sense of community, life satisfaction, self-esteem, perceived social support, and satisfaction with community services in three territorial communities of different sizes. The study uses Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin's (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) which is comprised of five items showing the overall subjective evaluation of life satisfaction. The scale to evaluate the efficiency of community services was created by the

authors and included social-health services, school system, social, cultural, and recreational services, road maintenance, and green areas in the town/city/neighborhood. The results of the study showed that sense of community relates to life satisfaction in the town and the small city but not in the larger communities. Also, there was a positive correlation between sense of community and evaluation of efficiency of services in all three territorial communities, the small town, the small city, and the city. However, participation in meetings and groups was significantly related to sense of community only in the small town.

According to Klein and D'Aunno (1986), sense of community is intrinsically gratifying which may lead to enhanced satisfaction. Sense of community may influence an individual's affection towards an organization he or she belongs to and what it offers (Burroughs & Eby, 1998). Burroughs and Eby (1998) found that psychological sense of community in the workplace was significantly related to job satisfaction.

Hede et al. (2004) conducted a study at a theatre-event to examine personal values, satisfaction, and post-consumption behavioral intentions. The authors found that attendees who were more inclined to place importance on their 'connectedness' with others were generally more satisfied with their attendance overall and with most of the attributes that were measured at the theatre-event.

Consequently, the following hypothesis about sense of community and satisfaction is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Sense of community is positively related to satisfaction with the meeting.

Sense of Community and Future Intentions

The other main dependent variable that has been investigated as an effect of sense of community is community involvement or participation. Community psychologists have suggested that identifying the psychological correlates of participation can facilitate community organizers and service providers to find realistic strategies to encourage more involvement in organizations (Perkins et al., 1990). The assumption is that if a greater sense of community exists, it is more likely that people will gather together and promote participatory processes for the solution of their problems (Francescato & Ghirelli, 1988, as cited in Prezza & Costantini, 1998). Researchers have shown that sense of community is related to participation in different settings: participation in a community (e.g., Chavis & Wandersman, 1990); political participation (e.g., Berry et al., 1993; Brodsky et al., 1999; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Florin & Wandersman, 1984; Hughey et al., 1999; Kingston et al., 1999; Obst et al., 2002; Prezza et al., 2001; Wenger, 1998; Xu et al., 2010); and intention to stay in residence (e.g., Perkins et al., 1990). For political participation, different measures of participation have been used, such as general political participation, voting in elections, engaging in discussions about political issues with family and friends, or reading about political issues. Several studies (e.g., Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989) have confirmed the positive and circular relation between sense of community and effort, participation in groups, and in the political life of the community. Chavis and Wandersman (1990) found that a sense of community may lead to individual-level participation. However, Perkins et al. (1990) found that sense of community did not have a significant zero-order correlation with participation, but significant

partial correlation. Burroughs and Eby (1998) found a significant relationship between sense of community in the workplace and behavior both directly and indirectly.

Consequently, the following hypothesis about sense of community and future intentions is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Sense of community is positively related to future intentions.

Satisfaction and Future Intentions

In sense of community research, Perkins et al. (1990) noted that community satisfaction may encourage participation by enhancing residents' sense of community along with other factors. The authors found that neighboring, perceived incivilities block satisfaction, and perceived block association efficacy were significantly and positively correlated with block-level participation. The community-oriented aggregated psychological variables, such as satisfaction with community predicted participation

The study of Burroughs and Eby (1998) is the only one in sense of community research that specifically tested both direct and indirect effects of sense of community with behavior. They examined the direct relationship between sense of community in the workplace and organizational citizenship behavior (i.e., loyalty, civic virtue, altruism, and courtesy) as well as the indirect effect through job satisfaction. The results showed that job satisfaction partially mediated the sense of community and organizational citizenship behavior relationship. In other words, the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction was significant as well

as the path between job satisfaction and behavior. The direct path between sense of community and behavior was also significant.

Evaluations of satisfaction come from a post-experience comparison of the level of product or service performance or quality with some preconceived standard (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Much of the research in hospitality and tourism acknowledges the importance of satisfaction as an assessment after a service. In addition, many researchers have examined the relationship between satisfaction and a number of outcomes, such as positive word of mouth and repurchase intention. Researchers have indicated that satisfaction is a reliable predictor of behavioral intention (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Patterson, 1993; Tam, 2000). For example, Cronin and Taylor (1992) found that satisfaction affected repurchase intention significantly. Kozak (2003) suggested that increased satisfaction has been repeatedly linked to increased repeat behavior and loyalty.

It has been suggested that satisfied consumers are more likely to contribute to developing the reputation of the organization (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Hede et al. (2004) found that attendees who tend to place more importance on their 'connectedness' with others were more likely to attend the theatre-event again, attend more theatre-events, and recommend the host destinations to others. Severt et al. (2007) assessed convention attendee motivations, performance evaluation, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions at a regional conference. It was the first study in the convention industry to test satisfaction, word-of-mouth communication and intentions to return from the perspective of the attendees. The authors found that respondents

with a stronger satisfaction with the conference were more likely to return and to tell others to attend the conference.

Consequently, the following hypotheses about satisfaction and future intentions are proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Sense of community is indirectly related to future intentions.

Individual Characteristics and Sense of Community

Prolonged interaction has been related with the extent of exchange between individuals (Rousseau & Parks, 1993). According to Klein and D'Aunno (1986), the longer the employee has been affiliated with an organization, the more opportunities the individual had to become integrated with others in that organization. Moreover, years with the organization is consistently related to satisfaction with, and commitment to, an organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In studies of territorial sense of community, years of residence was found to have a significant influence on sense of community (Prezza et al., 2009; Tartaglia, 2006). Time of residence influenced only the membership factor in Prezza et al. (2009) study. The authors found that the longer the residents had lived in the community, the more they felt a part of it. Although some studies (e.g., Buckner, 1988; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981) have found a positive correlation between sense of community and years spent in a community, this finding has not been supported in all investigations (Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991).

Age has been found to correlate with sense of community in some studies (Hill, 1996). Severt et al. (2009) were the first in the convention industry to examine the similarities and

differences in what motivates and inhibits meeting attendance within generational groups. However, they found that motivations and inhibitors to conference attendance by three cohorts (i.e., older Generation Xers, the younger Baby Boomers, and the older Baby Boomers) were relatively similar.

Consequently, the following hypotheses about individual characteristics and sense of community are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between respondent characteristics and a sense of community.

H4a: There is a relationship between generational groups and sense of community.

H4b: There is a relationship between years of membership with the association and sense of community.

H4c: There is a relationship between the number of times the respondent has attended the conference and sense of community.

In summary, this chapter began by looking into previous research regarding meeting attendees. Existing research has focused on examining what motivates or inhibits people to attend a meeting and the process individuals go through when they make the decision to attend a meeting or not. Then, the sense of community theory is introduced. The extensive research on sense of community including the theory and measurement scales is presented. Lastly, the proposed framework along with the research hypotheses is provided.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand the sense of community among association members. First, the researcher investigated whether the annual meeting creates a sense of community. Second, the researcher examined if sense of community leads to satisfaction with the meeting and future intentions of attendees which is operationalized by attendees' intentions to return to the next annual meeting, renew their membership, and recommend membership to others.

This chapter presents the research design and procedures to achieve the purpose of this study. The sampling frame, questionnaire instrument, data collection procedure, and data analysis technique used to test the research hypotheses are described.

Sampling Frame

The target population for this study was members of international/national associations in the United States. The sampling frame was comprised of association members that were attending their association's 2012 annual conference.

International/national professional/trade associations that held their annual conferences from April to August of 2012 were solicited to participate in the study. First, the researcher approached the host venues or the conference management of the associations. In cases when the host venue was the first contact, then the venue approached the association on behalf of the researcher. In the end, three associations agreed to participate in the study. Once this process of gaining permission from the associations was complete, the three parties worked closely to

facilitate the data collection process. Respondents were purposely sampled through an intercept survey approach at three different venues where the each of the conferences was held.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed based on an extensive review of previous research in sense of community and convention research. The questionnaire was designed to capture the required information that can provide answers to the research questions. The questionnaire can be seen as largely four sections: 1) sense of community, 2) satisfaction with the conference, 3) future intentions, and 4) profile of respondents.

The first section assesses the sense of community of association members. Sense of community in this study uses an annual conference as a point of reference. For measuring the sense of community of association members, items from five of the major sense of community scales were utilized: the Sense of Community Index (six items), the Brief Sense of Community Scale (two items), the Multidimensional Territorial Sense of Community Scale (four items), the Community Organization Sense of Community Scale (five items), and the Psychological Sense of Community at Work (eleven items). These commonly used SOC scales include many items and multiple dimensions with widely tested reliability and validation (e.g., Long & Perkins, 2003; Peterson et al., 2008). The scale possesses a wide-range of attitudes, feelings, and social bondings connected with sense of community. All of the measurement items from the major scales were taken into consideration. The items that are relevant for this particular study were chosen and some wording was modified to fit the current study. For example, “this block” is

replaced with “this annual conference” and “neighbors” is replaced with “attendees”. The measurement items selected for this study are presented in Table 2.

There were six constructs (i.e., membership, emotional connection, social climate and bonds, relationship to the organization, sense of belonging, and sense of collectivism) and a total of 29 items selected for the proposed sense of community at an annual conference scale. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). One of the criticisms about the earlier sense of community scales (e.g., SCI, BSCI) was with regards to the true/false response-format, researchers have recommended future applications to use a 5-point Likert scale response format to increase variability and sensitivity (Long & Perkins, 2003; Townley & Kloos, 2009). It has been found that respondents can only hold a limited number of categories in their head at once, so fewer categories can help reduce the cognitive complexity of providing a response. For bipolar scales which measure both the direction and intensity of the construct, five or seven categories seem to be the optimal number (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

Table 2: Sense of Community Measurement Items

Factor	Items
Membership	I can recognize most of the people who are at this annual conference. (SCI)
	I feel comfortable at this annual conference. (SCI)
	Very few of the attendees know me. (SCI)
Emotional Connection	It is very important to me to be at this particular annual conference. (SCI)
	People at this conference generally don't get along with each other. (SCI)
	I expect to attend this annual conference of this association for many years to come. (SCI)
	I feel connected to this annual conference. (BSCS)
	I have a good bond with others in this annual conference. (BSCS)
Social Climate and Bonds	I have good friends at this annual conference. (MTSOCS)
	I feel at ease with the people at this conference. (MTSOCS)
	People are sociable here. (MTSOCS)
	It is difficult for me to form bonds with the people at this annual conference. (MTSOCS)
Relationship to the Organization	If I were in trouble, I could count on people at the association to help. (COSOC)
	I trust the leadership of the association to do what is best for me. (COSOC)
	People in the association have no say in what goes on in the association. (COSOC)
	My goals for the association are pretty much the same as everybody else's. (COSOC)
	No one in the association responds to what I think is important. (COSOC)
Sense of Belonging	Membership in this association is meaningful and valuable to me. (PSCW)
	I really care about the fate of this association. (PSCW)
	If given the opportunity, I would invest in this association. (PSCW)
	I feel loyal to the people in this association. (PSCW)
	There is a friendly atmosphere in this association. (PSCW)
	I benefit from the skills or knowledge of my fellow members. (PSCW)
	The friendships and associations I have with other people in this association mean a lot to me. (PSCW)
	This association feels like a community. (PSCW)
Sense of Collectivism	I like to think of myself as similar to the people who are a member in this association. (PSCW)
	I think I agree with most people in this association about what is important in life. (PSCW)
	If the people in this association were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing. (PSCW)

The second section was comprised of questions regarding respondents' satisfaction with the annual conference. Participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with eleven items regarding the conference. These items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied). The focus of this study is not satisfaction with specific attributes of the conference. Therefore, the items were more generic and broad in nature but capture the overall experience for each category that could have a direct influence on the overall satisfaction with the conference and future intentions. Based on previous research, the areas that affect the most were related to the destination, site, and event attributes (Krohn & Backman, 2011). The items to measure satisfaction in this study were: general session(s), educational sessions, networking opportunities, leadership enhancement, career enhancement, self-esteem enhancement, conference destination, management of the conference, conference venue (hotel and convention center), and overall conference experience.

The third section asked questions regarding future intentions of association members. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with three items: attending the same annual conference next year, membership renewal, and recommending membership to others. These three items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

The fourth and final section consisted of questions for understanding the profile of association members that responded to the survey. The variables to measure respondents' demographics were the number of times attended same annual conference in the past (including the current conference), whether or not they hold a leadership position with the association, who

is paying for conference related fees, number of years as a member with association, gender, age by generations, and ethnic background.

Questionnaire Reliability

A pilot study was conducted to check for face validity before implementing the final survey. The proposed questionnaire and implementation procedures were tested on the study population. The completed questionnaires were used to identify problems with the survey instrument and implementation procedures. It is a strategy used to check for face validity and reduce measurement error (Dillman et al., 2009). Any problems with the questionnaire design and grammatical or spelling errors could affect measurement error. Poor question design can also result in less motivation to respond to each question (Dillman et al.).

The questionnaire was distributed to 25 university faculty members that were attending a faculty development conference. Each participant was asked to complete the questionnaire and provide comments regarding the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions.

In order to test the interrelated reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's coefficient alpha procedure was used. The reliability of a scale indicates how free it is from random error (Pallant, 2003). The internal consistency was measured on the 30 questionnaire items originally proposed that make up the sense of community scale in an effort to find out that the items are all measuring the same underlying attribute. Cronbach's alpha is used to provide an indication of the average correlation among all of the items in the measurement instrument. Alpha values range

from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater reliability (Pallant, 2003) and a minimum level of .7 is recommended (Nunnally, 1978).

The results of the reliability analysis showed that the scales were internally reliable: Alpha = .878 for sense of community. Based on the results of the pilot test and feedback from the faculty members, the final version of the questionnaire was complete. There was only one measurement item (SOCAC13) that was removed from the proposed scale. With the removal of this item, the reliability increased to .889. The previous section and Table 2 has already incorporated the removal of this measurement item resulting in a total of 29 items.

Data Collection

The data collection method chosen for this study was an intercept survey approach. The following section presents the data collection procedure.

Data Collection Procedure

The finalized questionnaire was distributed and collected at three different annual conferences. With permission from the three associations, members of the associations that were attending their association's annual conference were purposely sampled on site. The data collection began in May and ended in August of 2012. It was predicted that recall bias was significantly reduced due to respondents being asked to reflect on their current association's conference while attending.

The first set of data was collected at a professional art association's annual international conference held at a major convention center located in the southeast of the United States. There were 115 surveys collected from this conference resulting in a response rate of approximately 82.1%. The second set of data was collected at a hospitality educator association's annual international conference held at a convention center located in the northeast. There were 447 attendees and 145 complete surveys collected from this conference (response rate of 96.7%). The last set of data comes from a meeting professionals' association regional conference held at a convention hotel in the southeast. There were 427 attendees and a total of 91 complete surveys were collected from this conference (response rate of 60.7%). Overall, the total sample included 351 members of three international associations that attended their annual international or regional conference (Table 3).

Table 3: Sample Size by Sources

Conference Name	Frequency	Percent (%)
ICHRIE	145	41.3
NAMTA	115	32.8
MPISEC	91	25.9
Total	351	100.0

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, it was coded and entered into SPSS version 20.0. First, the data was screened to check for any deviation from normality. Then, missing data and outliers

were checked. Descriptive statistics was used to understand the demography and representativeness of the sample.

The 29-items of sense of community with six factors were derived from four different scales. Since the constructs were previously defined, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach was used to statistically test the hypothesized higher-order factor model to see if the sample data confirms the model and its constructs (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

CFA is used to provide a confirmatory test of measurement theory. Structural equation modeling (SEM) often involves both a measurement theory and a structural theory. A measurement theory specifies a series of relationships that suggest how measured variables represent a latent construct that is not measured directly (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005).

Once the measurement model is specified, the validity of the model depends on goodness-of-fit for the measurement model and specific evidence of construct validity (Hair et al., 2005). The difference in the covariance matrices is the key value in assessing goodness-of-fit. A chi-square (χ^2) test provides a statistical test of the resulting difference. It should be noted that the χ^2 value increases as sample size increases. However, sample size does not affect the degrees of freedom but influences the use of chi-square as a goodness-of-fit measure (Hair et al.).

Various fit measures are available for evaluating the measurement model. There are absolute fit indices and incremental fit indices. Absolute fit indices are a direct measure of how well the model specified by the researcher reproduces the observed data. They provide the most

basic assessment of how well a researcher's theory fits the sample data. Each model is evaluated independently of other possible models (Hair et al., 2005).

The most fundamental absolute fit index is the χ^2 statistic. It is the only statistically based SEM fit measure. In SEM, the researcher is looking for low χ^2 values to support the model as representative of the data. However, there is a problem with using the χ^2 statistic as a goodness-of-fit measure. As the sample size increases, so does the χ^2 value as well as when the number of observed variables increases. Therefore, there are several goodness-of-fit indices developed as alternative measures of fit to correct the bias against large samples and increased model complexity: Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Root Means Square Residual (RMSR), Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Hair et al., 2005).

In addition to the absolute fit indices, there are incremental fit indices that assess how well a specified model fits relative to some alternative baseline model: Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Relative Noncentrality Index (RNI) (Hair et al., 2005).

The next step was to test the proposed framework and analyze the data through SEM. SEM uses various types of models to depict both latent and observed relationships among variables in order to provide a quantitative test for a theoretical model hypothesized by the research (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Latent variables were not directly observed or measured but rather were inferred from the prescribed set of variables that are measured by a survey. The observed variables were used to define or infer the latent variables (Schumacker & Lomax,

2010). In this study, the observed variables are the items that make up the sense of community model and these are considered independent variables. The latent variables represent the dependent variables.

In order to examine the relationships among sense of community, satisfaction, and future intentions simultaneously SEM was employed. SEM is especially useful in testing theories that contain multiple equations involving dependence relationships. Unlike any previously available methods, SEM allows the researcher to assess both measurement properties and test the key theoretical relationships in one technique (Hair et al., 2005).

The last hypothesis was examined by conducting the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (rho). This non-parametric technique is used to calculate the strength of the relationship between two continuous variables or with a continuous and ordinal variable (Pallant, 2003).

In summary, this chapter described the research methodology used in this study. The sampling frame and survey instrument were described in detail. The data collection procedure using an intercept survey method was explained. Finally, the data analysis techniques (i.e., reliability and validity analysis, CFA, SEM, and Spearman's rank order correlation) were presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter reports the results of the primary data collection analysis. The chapter covers results of the descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), structural equation modeling (SEM), and Spearman's rank order correlation.

Data Collection

Three hundred fifty-one (351) surveys were completed during the data collection process at three different conferences. After inputting the data into SPSS version 20, frequencies on categorical and ordinal variables and descriptive statistics on the Likert scale items were run to check for any possible data input errors. It was found that five cases were missing large amounts of data and thereby were eliminated. Additional procedures were taken to make sure the data did not violate any assumptions for univariate and multivariate statistical procedures. Also, there were two extreme outliers that were removed. A final number of 344 usable responses was achieved.

Of the 344, responses from non-members were filtered out. The first question in the demographics section of the questionnaire was a screening question that asked if the respondent is a member of the association that is hosting the conference. There were 37 participants (10.8%) that were identified as non-members. Since this study is interested in members' experience with the conference and association, non-members' responses were removed from further data analyses and only those identified as members (N = 305, 89.2%) were used (Table 4).

Table 4: Sample Size by Sources after Data Cleaning

Conference Name	Frequency	Percent (%)
ICHRIE	126	41.3
NAMTA	111	36.4
MPISEC	68	22.3
Total	305	100.0

Data Preparation

The data were collected from three different conferences from various industries where attendees might possess different characteristics. Therefore, before aggregating the data for further analysis, the three groups were compared to ensure there are no statistically significant differences among the groups for the data to be combined. Three separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to explore any differences among the three conference groups on the three major constructs, namely sense of community, satisfaction, and future intentions. First, the results of the ANOVA on sense of community showed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 302) = 4.355$, $p = .014$]. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed a statistically significant difference only between NAMTA ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .51$) and MPISEC ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .53$). However, the actual difference in mean score between the groups was quite small. The effect size was calculated using eta squared and resulted in .028 which is a small effect. According to Cohen's (1988) classification, .01 is a small effect, .06 is a medium effect, and .14 is a large effect. When the sample size is large as it is in this study, even small differences could trigger a statistically significant difference. ICHRIE ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .59$) did not differ significantly from either group.

Next, ANOVA was conducted on satisfaction. There was a statistically significant difference among the three groups [$F(2, 302) = 12.478$, $p = .000$]. Post hoc comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between ICHRIE ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .67$) and MPISEC ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .57$) in addition to NAMTA ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .61$) and MPISEC. The effect size using eta squared was .076 which is a medium effect (Cohen, 1988). Lastly, ANOVA was performed on future intentions. There was no statistically significant difference among the groups.

In addition to the ANOVA tests, frequencies on the responses of demographics and conference-related characteristics were compared among the three groups. All of the responses showed the same pattern, such as the distribution of respondents regarding gender, age, and ethnicity. Based on the ANOVA results and a comparison of the frequencies, the decision was made that the three groups do not differ significantly and to move forward with the data analysis using the aggregate data.

Descriptive Statistics

This section focuses on the descriptive statistics performed to describe the characteristics of the studied sample and present frequencies for all of the questions that are contained in the questionnaire.

Profile of Respondents

Individual Characteristics

Demographics of the respondents were measured by gender, age by generations, and ethnicity on nominal scales (Table 5). The sample of respondents was found to be predominantly non-Hispanic whites (75.8%). More than half were females (58.1%) and about half of the respondents were born between 1946 and 1964 (45.4%).

Table 5: Individual Characteristics (N = 305)

Category	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Gender		
Female	173	58.1
Male	125	41.9
Missing	7	
Age		
Before 1946	16	5.3
Between 1946 and 1964	137	45.4
Between 1965 and 1979	95	31.5
After 1979	54	17.9
Missing	3	
Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White	225	75.8
Hispanic or Latino	19	6.4
African American or Black	12	4.0
Asian or Asian American	41	13.8
Missing	8	

Conference-Related Characteristics

To understand the respondents' conference attendance behavior, several conference-related questions were asked. Table 6 presents conference related factors of attendees. It shows that 27% were first time attendees. Almost half of the participants have been to the same conference two to five times (43%) including the current conference. There were 43 respondents that have been to the same conference for six to nine times (20.1%) and 35 respondents that have been to the same conference more than 18 times (16.4%). Only 15.2% hold a leadership position with the association. Of the 15.8% that hold a leadership position, most of them identified themselves as serving on a chapter board (46.5%) or serving as a board director (44.2%). More than half of the respondents received conference fee funding from their employer (68.8%). The number of years of being a member of the association hosting the event was the category closest to an even distribution where 29.5% have been a member for less than three years, 24.5% for four to seven years, and 17.9% for more than 20 years. Overall, more than half have been a member for less than 12 years.

Table 6: Conference-Related Characteristics (N = 305)

Category	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
First time attendees		
Yes	82	27.0
No	222	73.0
Missing	1	
Number of times attended (incl. this year)*		
2-5 times	92	43.0
6-9 times	43	20.1
10-13 times	23	10.7
14-17 times	21	9.8
More than 18 times	35	16.4
Missing	91	
Leadership position		
Yes	48	15.8
No	256	84.2
Missing	1	
Type of leadership position*		
Serve on Board of Directors	19	44.2
Serve as a Committee Chair	4	9.3
Serve on Chapter Board	20	46.5
Missing	262	
Conference fee funding		
Self	49	16.3
Employer	207	68.8
Combination	45	15.0
Missing	4	
Membership years		
Less than 3 years	89	29.5
4-7 years	74	24.5
8-11 years	35	11.6
12-15 years	30	9.9
16-19 years	20	6.6
More than 20 years	54	17.9
Missing	3	

*Number of times attended (incl. this year) and Type of leadership position were follow up questions. These two items have large amount of explainable missing values.

Descriptive Analysis of Measurement Items

Results of Sense of Community

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis for the sense of community scale are presented in Table 7. The measurement scale consisted of 29 items. Respondents were asked to provide answers on each item that was measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). According to the mean score of each item, respondents were in an agreement that people at the annual conference get along with each other (M = 4.44, SD = 0.83) and that people are sociable at the annual conference (M = 4.26, SD = 0.70). Also, respondents generally felt comfortable at the annual conference (M = 4.24, SD = 0.81) and felt a friendly atmosphere at the annual conference (M = 4.21, SD = 0.77). On the other hand, respondents were not in an agreement regarding how many attendees know them (M = 3.05, SD = 1.17) and that they can recognize most of the people at the annual conference (M = 3.07, SD = 1.08).

Table 7: Descriptive Analysis of Sense of Community Items (N = 305)

Sense of Community Measurement Items	*M*	*SD*
Membership		
I feel comfortable at this annual conference. (SOCAC02)	4.24	0.813
I can recognize most of the people who are at this annual conference. (SOCAC01)	3.07	1.077
Many of the attendees know me. (SOCAC03)*	3.05	1.173
Emotional Connection		
People at this annual conference generally get along with each other. (SOCAC05)*	4.44	0.834
I expect to attend this annual conference of this association for many years to come. (SOCAC06)	4.03	1.004
I have a good bond with others in this annual conference. (SOCAC08)	3.95	0.904
It is very important to me to be at this particular annual conference. (SOCAC04)	3.90	1.008
I feel connected to this annual conference. (SOCAC07)	3.85	0.955
Social Climate and Bonds		
People are sociable here. (SOCAC11)	4.26	0.792
I feel at ease with the people at this annual conference. (SOCAC10)	4.15	0.817
It is easy for me to form bonds with the people at this annual conference. (SOCAC12)*	4.03	1.051
I have good friends at this annual conference. (SOCAC09)	3.96	1.033
Relationship to Organization		
People in the association respond to what I think is important. (SOCA05)*	3.84	0.949
People in this association have a say in what goes on in the association. (SOCA03)*	3.68	0.954
I trust the leadership of the association to do what is best for me. (SOCA02)	3.46	0.956
If I were in trouble, I could count on people at this association to help. (SOCA01)	3.45	1.075
My goals for the association are pretty much the same as everybody else's. (SOCA04)	3.37	0.818
Sense of Belonging		
There is a friendly atmosphere in this association. (SOCA10)	4.21	0.771
I benefit from the skills or knowledge of my fellow members. (SOCA11)	4.20	0.771
The friendships and associations I have with other people in this association mean a lot to me. (SOCA12)	4.10	0.866
I really care about the fate of this association. (SOCA07)	4.05	0.876
Membership in this association is meaningful and valuable to me. (SOCA06)	3.91	0.912
This association feels like a community. (SOCA13)	3.91	0.893
I feel loyal to the people in this association. (SOCA09)	3.74	0.881
If given the opportunity, I would invest in this association. (SOCA08)	3.40	1.059
Sense of Collectivism		
I like to think of myself as similar to the people who are a member of this association. (SOCA14)	3.80	0.850
I think I agree with most people in this association about what is important in life. (SOCA15)	3.50	0.828

Sense of Community Measurement Items	*M*	*SD*
If the people in this association were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing. (SOCA16)	3.42	0.964
Each person is equally responsible and takes ownership for the success of this organization. (SOCA17)	3.29	0.977

Note: 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), * indicates reverse-coded items

Results of Satisfaction

The results of the descriptive analysis for the satisfaction scale are presented in Table 8. The results showed that association members were most satisfied with the networking opportunities (*M* = 4.07, *SD* = 0.869), followed by their overall conference experience (*M* = 3.97, *SD* = 0.697), conference venue – convention center (*M* = 3.84, *SD* = 0.927), and educational sessions (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 0.907). It seems that the respondents were not very satisfied with self-esteem enhancement (*M* = 3.36, *SD* = 0.978), followed by career enhancement (*M* = 3.41, *SD* = 0.999).

Table 8: Descriptive Analysis of Satisfaction with Conference (*N* = 305)

Satisfaction with Conference	*M*	*SD*
Networking opportunities (SAT03)	4.07	0.869
Overall conference experience (SAT11)	3.97	0.697
Conference venue - Convention center (SAT09)	3.84	0.927
Educational sessions (SAT02)	3.71	0.907
General session(s) (SAT01)	3.70	0.899
Conference destination (SAT07)	3.70	1.041
Conference venue – Hotel (SAT10)	3.65	1.029
Management of the conference (SAT08)	3.56	1.002
Leadership enhancement (SAT04)	3.44	0.948
Career enhancement (SAT05)	3.41	0.999
Self-esteem enhancement (SAT06)	3.36	0.978

Note: 5-point Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied)

Future Intentions

The results of the descriptive statistics for future intentions revealed very positive future intentions (Table 9). The respondents mostly agreed on renewing their membership to the association (M = 4.40, SD = 0.842). This response had the highest mean score and lowest standard deviation among the three items. The respondents also pretty much agreed that they will recommend membership in this association to others (M = 4.27, SD = 0.910). Lastly, among the three future intention variables, respondents were in the least agreement on whether or not they will attend the same annual conference next year (M = 4.06, SD = 1.050). This item has the lowest mean score and the highest standard deviation.

Table 9: Descriptive Analysis of Future Intentions (N = 305)

Future Intentions	*M*	*SD*
I will renew my membership to this association. (INTENT02)	4.40	0.842
I will recommend membership in this association to others. (INTENT03)	4.27	0.910
I will attend the same annual conference next year. (INTENT01)	4.06	1.050

Note: 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Reliability and Validity of Measurement Scales

Reliability of Measurement Scales

Reliability is an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a latent construct (Hair et al., 2005). It is usually measured by internal consistency that specifies the homogeneity of items consisting of a measurement scale. The internal consistency

means the extent that its items are correlated to each other. High inter-item correlations mean that the items of a scale have a solid association to the latent construct and are possibly measuring the same thing. Typically, the internal consistency of a measurement scale is evaluated by calculating the Cronbach's alpha along with the item-to-total correlation for each item examined in the overall reliability of the measurement scale (Zikmund, 2003). The general recommendation for an acceptable Cronbach's alpha is above .70. If the scale has a Cronbach's alpha below .70, it should be examined for any sources of measurement error such as inadequate sampling of items, administration errors, situational factors, sample characteristics, number of items, and theoretical errors in developing a measurement scale (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

Table 10: Summary of the Measurement Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)

Measurement Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's α
Sense of Community	29	0.935
Satisfaction	11	0.891
Future Intentions	3	0.852

In an effort to examine the reliability of the measurement scales of the three constructs proposed in this study, Cronbach's alpha were calculated (Table 10). All of the measurement scales obtained an acceptable level of an alpha coefficient above .70 without any removal of items. The results of the reliability analysis showed that the measurement scales were internally reliable and fitting for further analysis: alpha = .935 for sense of community (29 items), alpha = .891 for satisfaction with conference (11 items), and alpha = .852 for future intentions. In addition to the Cronbach's alpha, the construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted

(AVE) were calculated. These results are presented in the next section under Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

Validity of Measurement Scales

Validity generally denotes the extent to which the measurement items measure what they are supposed to measure (Hair et al., 2005). Validity of a measure can be inferred through two validity checks: content validity and construct validity. Content validity is the extent to which a measurement reflects the specific intended domain of content. For this study, content or face validity for the constructs was verified during the pilot study which was presented in the methodology section.

Construct validity is an overarching term that encompasses all forms of validity. It deals with the appropriateness of a scale as a measure of a specific variable. In other words, construct validity refers to how the measure adequately assesses the theoretical concept it suggests to assess (Nunnally, 1978). There is no simple metric to quantify the extent to which measure can be described as construct valid. Researchers generally establish construct validity by correlating a measure of a construct with a number of other measures that should be associated with it (i.e., convergent validity) or vary independently of it (i.e., discriminant validity).

Convergent validity was used to assess the degree to which items claiming to assess one construct actually converge. This type of validity evidence can be measured by investigating the *t*-tests for CFA loadings, since statistically significant *t*-tests for all CFA loadings show effective measurement of the same construct (Hair et al., 2005). The convergent validity of the scale was

measured by tests of CR and AVE. Higher CR and AVE values indicate higher convergent reliability of the measurement. Discriminant validity is a measure of the indicators of different constructs that theoretically and empirically should not be related to each other (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2007). Therefore, the indicators that measure a construct should not be correlated to the indicators that measure another construct if the constructs have discriminant validity. This type of validity can be judged by observing χ^2 in terms of every possible pair of estimated constructs. Discriminant validity is established when the AVE values exceed the square of the correlations between each pair of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run on the data (N = 305) using AMOS version 20. CFA was used to assess the items for each construct more rigorously using the correlation matrix of the items. CFA is used to identify unidimensionality of each construct or find evidence that a single trait or construct underlies a set of unique measures (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Based on theory, CFA allows the researcher to specify the number of existing factors and which factor each variable will load on before results can be computed (Hair et al., 2005). CFA provides a more rigorous interpretation of dimensionality than does EFA. For these reasons, CFA was used as a confirmatory test of the measurement theory and specified the series of relationships that suggest how the measured variables represent the latent factor that are not directly measured (Hair et al., 2005).

Each measurement model of the three major constructs were proposed and tested. Then, the overall measurement model was assessed. The three constructs were sense of community, satisfaction, and future intentions. The model estimation process for each model will be presented along with statistical results. Modification indices such as absolute fit indices, incremental fit indices, and parsimonious fit measures were used to evaluate the proposed models. Moreover, maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) was employed because the collected sample size was sufficient and there were no missing values. This method has been most commonly used in SEM studies due to its robustness even if the normal distribution of the observed variables is violated (Hu & Bentler, 1999). It has been found to provide valid results with sample sizes as small as 50. However, the recommended minimum sample sizes to ensure stable MLE solutions are 100 to 150. The recommended sample size to provide a sound basis for estimation is 200. When the sample size becomes large (over 400), the method becomes more sensitive and almost any difference is detected which makes goodness-of-fit measures suggest poor fit. Therefore, large sample sizes (150 to 400) are subject to other considerations (Hair et al., 2005).

There are situations where a larger sample size is required. This could be related to model complexity in that more indicators to be measured require larger sample sizes. Another issue is related to missing data. The researcher should plan for an increase in sample size to offset any potential problems of missing data. Lastly, studies show that larger sample sizes are required as communalities become smaller. Models containing multiple constructs with communalities less

than .5 (i.e., standardized loading estimates less than .7) require larger sample sizes for convergence and model stability (Hair et al., 2005).

Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Model for Sense of Community

A higher-order factor analysis was employed for the hypothesized sense of community model. Higher-order CFA is most often used to test a second-order factor structure that contains two layers of latent constructs. They introduce a second-order latent factor that causes multiple first-order latent factors, which in turn cause the measured variables. The decision to form a second-order measurement model is theory (Hair et al., 2005). In this study there are six first-order latent factors to measure the second-order latent factor, sense of community (Figure 2). Each first-order latent construct had a set of variables acting as indicators. Each of the 29 observed variables was directly affected by a unique unobserved error. Each error was uncorrelated with other errors, and all errors were uncorrelated with the unobserved factors. Since all CFA models must account for relationships among constructs (Hair et al.), the first-order latent factors were allowed to correlate with one another during the first-order factor analysis. Each relationship was estimated directly via free elements in a construct covariance/correlation matrix (two-headed arrows) (Hair et al.). Empirically, higher-order factors can be thought of as one way of accounting for covariance between constructs just as first-order factors account for covariation between observed variables (Hair et al.). Single-headed arrows lead from the second-order factor (sense of community) to each of the first order factors. These regression paths represent second-order factor loadings, and all are freely estimated. The impact

of sense of community on each of the lower order factors is of primary interest in the model, the variance of the higher order factor was constrained to equal 1.0 in doing so, leaving the second-order factor loadings to be freely estimated (Byrne, 2010).

In the second-order factor model, the first-order factors now act as indicators of the second-order factor. All considerations and rules pertaining to items per factor, identification, and scale apply to the second-order factor just as they do to the first-order factors. The researcher must consider the first-order constructs as indicators of the second-order construct (Hair et al., 2005).

The results of the measurement model were first examined for offending estimates (i.e., coefficients that exceeded acceptable limits) (Hair et al., 2005). Some examples of offending estimates are: (1) negative error variances for any construct; (2) standardized coefficients exceeding or very close to 1.0; (3) very large standard errors associated with any estimated coefficients (Hair et al.; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). These offending estimates need to be corrected before evaluating the model fit. There were no offending estimates found in the initial measurement model. The decision was made to proceed to assess the goodness-of-fit.

The sense of community second-order model was evaluated to determine good model fit. Three types of overall model fit measures were used: (1) absolute fit measures (i.e., chi-square test, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), and the Root Mean Residual (RMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)); incremental fit measures (i.e., Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Normed Fit Index (NFI)); and (3) parsimonious fit measures.

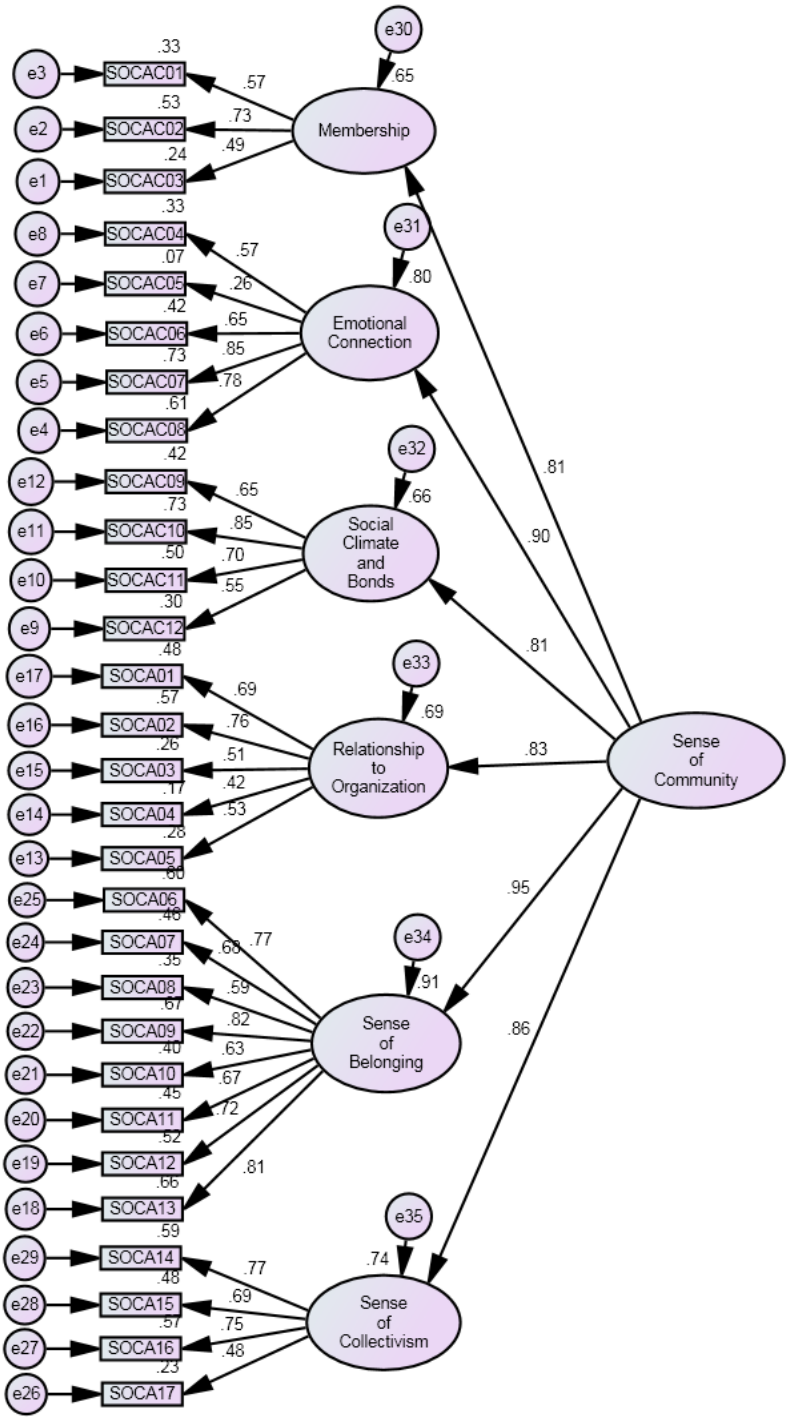

Figure 2: Sense of Community Measurement Model

The first-order model will always fit better in absolute terms because it uses more paths to capture the same amount of covariance (Hair et al., 2005). In contrast, the higher-order model is more parsimonious (it consumes fewer degrees of freedom). Thus, it should perform better on indices that reflect parsimony (i.e., PNFI, RMSEA) (Hair et al.).

The first absolute fit measure of chi-square statistic had a statistically significant level ($\chi^2_{(371)} = 1402.90$, $p = .000$). The chi-square statistic failed to support the idea that the differences of the predicted and actual models are not significant. However, it is generally agreed that the chi-square value should be used only as a guide due to its sensitivity to sample size. With sample sizes larger than 200, the chi-square is almost always significant (Hair et al., 2005). Hence, many other fit indices were developed to be used. In estimating the model, the minimum was achieved indicating that AMOS was successful in estimating all model parameters, thus resulting in a convergent solution (Byrne, 2010).

The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = .72) represents the overall degree of fit which is indirectly sensitive to sample size. The possible range is 0 to 1 with higher values indicating better fit, preferably over .90 (Hair et al., 2005). The Root Mean Residual (RMR) shows the average residuals between observed and estimated input matrices. Lower RMR values represent better fit and higher values represent worse fits (Hair et al.). The original second-order model had a RMR of .071 which is a good fit (cut off value is .08 or less). Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) better represents how well a model fits a population, not just a sample used for estimation than RMR. It explicitly tries to correct for both model complexity and sample size by including each in its computation. Lower RMSEA values indicate better fit. Good

RMSEA has been debated but typically values below .10 are acceptable (Hair et al.). The RMSEA value for this model was .096 which is just acceptable.

In addition to the absolute measures, incremental fit indices were examined. These indices are divided into three types: type 1, type 2, and type 3. Type 2 or type 3 indices perform much better than the absolute fit indices or type 1 indices because they are less susceptible to sample size. The commonly used incremental fit measures are Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (type 3), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) (type 2), and Normal Fit Index (NFI) (Hu & Bentler, 1995). The values of these indices range between 0 to 1 with higher values representing good fit. Generally, TLI and CFI provide very similar values (Hair et al., 2005). The results of this second-order model are as follows: CFI = .774, TLI = .753, and = .718.

The various measures to assess model fit for the sense of community second-order factor model suggested a poor model. The model required respecification. There are some areas that can be used to identify problems with the model. The first one could be by comparing the estimated loadings (i.e., the path estimates linking constructs to indicator variables). The rule of thumb is that loadings should be at least .5 and ideally .7 or higher. Low loadings are subject to deletion from the model but simply dropping the items may not provide the best solution. The researcher should examine the loadings to see if it makes sense (Hair et al., 2005).

Secondly, standardized residuals output provided by the SEM programs should be observed. Residuals refer to the individual differences between observed covariance terms and the fitted covariance terms. The better the fit, the smaller are the residuals. Standardized

residuals that are higher than 4.0 suggest a potentially unacceptable degree of error. Therefore, one of the items associated with a residual greater than 4.0 could be dropped (Hair et al., 2005).

Lastly, modification indices should be checked. Modification index is calculated for every possible relationship that is not free to be estimated. It shows how much the overall model chi-square statistic would be reduced by freeing that single path (Hair et al., 2005). Based on the modification indices, the model would achieve a better fit if highly correlated items were adjusted. There are three alternative ways to improve the model fit: (1) one of the correlated items can be deleted; (2) the estimation of two error-correlated items can be performed by adding the error covariance; and (3) the composite mean score from two error-correlated items can be used to reconstruct the correlation matrices (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). It is not recommended to make model changes solely based on modification indices (Hair et al.). Based on the above criteria, the model was respecified and estimated after each step.

In reviewing the modification indices related to covariances, four values were substantially larger than the rest of the estimates. These relate to covariation between the error terms associated with SOCAC08 and Social Climate and Bonds (e4 ↔ e32; MI = 61.800), Membership and Social Climate and Bonds (e30↔ e32; MI = 54.332), SOCAC06 and SOCAC04 (e6↔ e8; MI = 53.056), and SOCAC08 and SOCAC09 (e4↔ e12, MI = 52.227).

Large modification indices claim for the presence of factor cross-loadings and error covariances. For these items, a high degree of overlap in item content might have triggered error covariances. In certain cases, two items might be asking the same question, although worded differently. For example, there are two similar statements: “very few of the attendees know me

(SOCAC03)." and "I can recognize most of the people who are at this annual conference (SOCAC01)." The modification index for the two items was 30.915. In one case, the statement is worded negatively but essentially both are asking the same question. Based on the large modification indices, a covariance was added between error terms 6 and 8. The model fit improved to the following: $\chi^2_{(370)} = 1344.75$, $p = .000$; GFI = .731; RMR = .070; RMSEA = .093; and CFI = .787. Next, another covariance was added between error terms 1 and 3. The fit slightly improved again: $\chi^2_{(369)} = 1309.68$, $p = .000$; GFI = .737; RMR = .068; RMSEA = .092; and CFI = .794.

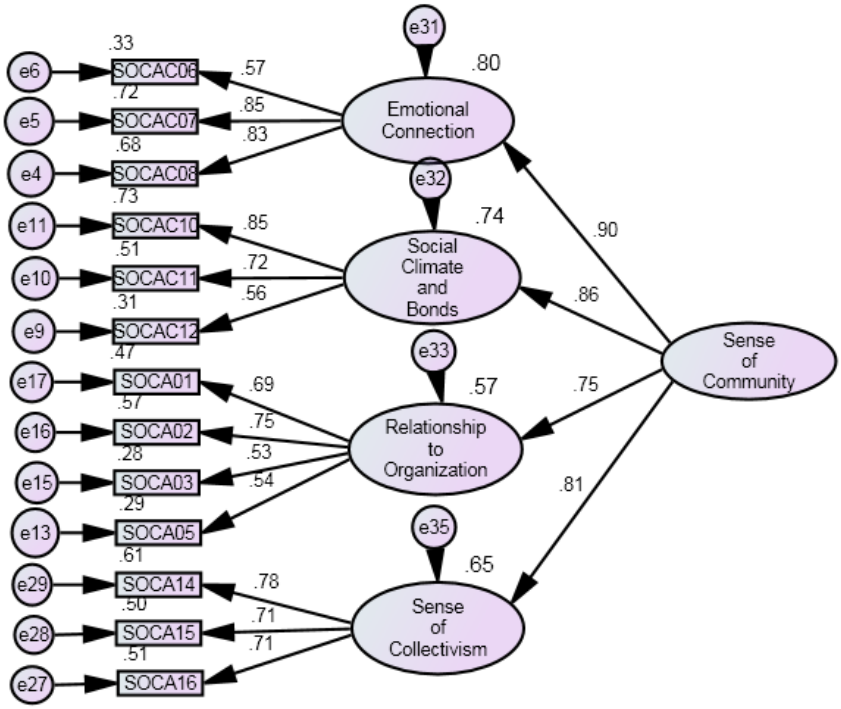

Figure 3: Respecified Sense of Community Measurement Model

In addition to the modification indices, unstandardized and standardized factor loadings, factor covariances, and error covariances were examined. When reviewing the unstandardized estimate, all were found to have critical ratio values > 1.96, which means that they are statistically significant. Turning to standardized factor loadings, there are items that fall below the .5 cutoff point: SOCAC05 (β = .239), SOCA04 (β = .418), SOCA17 (β = .478), and SOCAC03 (β = .485). In reviewing the standardized residuals, there were no values over 4.0. Continuing with finding the best model fit and the most parsimonious model, SOCAC05 was eliminated based on the lowest factor loading. The goodness-of-fit improved: $\chi^2_{(342)} = 1206.633$, $p = .000$; GFI = .751; RMR = .067; RMSEA = .091; and CFI = .807. Then, SOCA04 was removed from the model based on its low factor loading of .418. The model fit improved barely. A decision was made to delete the Membership construct which had three items. This construct continued to cause problems such as large modification indices and low factor loadings. The model fit improved as follows: $\chi^2_{(225)} = 827.706$, $p = .000$; GFI = .787; RMR = .061; RMSEA = .094; and CFI = .842. The next low loaded items accompanied by an examination of standardized residuals call for a removal of SOCA17 (β = .478), SOCAC04 (β = .570), and SOCAC09 (β = .648). Lastly, the Sense of Belonging construct was removed from the model. The construct had a high factor loading initially at .953 and during the modification process went up to 1. Also, the variance became negative. Therefore, the decision was made to remove the construct. The final goodness-of-fit indices for the modified model are provided in Table 11.

Table 11: Fit Indices for Sense of Community

Chi-square (χ^2) of estimate	221.13 (df = 61, p = .000)
GFI	0.898
AGFI	0.848
RMR	0.570
RMSEA	0.930
NFI	0.868
TLI	0.872
CFI	0.900

After gaining acceptable model fit, each of the constructs were evaluated separately by assessing the convergent validity of the constructs by examining the statistical significance of the indicator loadings and calculating the construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Also, the discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed by inspecting the correlation (phi) matrix and comparing the AVE with the squared correlations from the phi matrix.

First, *t* values associated with each of the variables were significant at the p = .000 level. These results indicate that all variables were significantly related to their specified constructs, verifying the posited relationships among indicators and constructs. The next step involved estimating the reliability and variance-extracted measures for each construct to see if the specified indicators were sufficient in their representation of the constructs. The results of the standard loadings, CR, and AVE are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: CR and AVE for Sense of Community

Construct and Indicators	Std. Loading	CR	AVE
Emotional Connection		**0.79**	**0.58**
I expect to attend this annual conference of this association for many years to come.	0.575		
I feel connected to this annual conference.	0.849		
I have a good bond with others in this annual conference.	0.827		
Social Climate and Bonds		**0.67**	**0.52**
I feel at ease with the people at this annual conference.	0.855		
People are sociable here.	0.716		
It is easy for me to form bonds with the people at this annual conference.*	0.558		
Relationship to Organization		**0.69**	**0.40**
If I were in trouble, I could count on people at the association to help.	0.689		
I trust the leadership of the association to do what is best for me.	0.753		
People in the association have a say in what goes on in the association.*	0.530		
People in the association respond to what I think is important.*	0.538		
Sense of Collectivism		**0.80**	**0.54**
I like to think of myself as similar to the people who are a member in this association.	0.781		
I think I agree with most people in this association about what is important in life.	0.708		
If the people in this association were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing.	0.714		

Note: * indicates reverse-coded items

Construct reliability (CR) refers to a measure of the internal consistency of indicators to the construct, describing the extent to which they show the corresponding latent construct (Hair et al., 2005). These values lie between 0 and 1. The closer the value is to 1, the better the variable acts as an indicator of the latent construct. A commonly used threshold value for an acceptable level of CR is .70. If the CR is above .70, it means that the indicators for the latent construct are reliable and are assessing the same construct. As a complementary measure of the CR, the

average variance extracted (AVE) can be considered to explain the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the corresponding latent construct. A commonly used acceptable cut-off point is .50. If the AVE values are high, the indicators are truly representative of the latent construct (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

The results showed that CR values ranged from .67 to .80 with almost all of the constructs exceeding the suggested level of .70. The AVE values ranged from .40 to .58. Except for "Relationship to Organization", the other three constructs exceeded the minimum cutoff of .50. These results suggest that the four constructs explain a good amount of variance in their respective indicators taken together. Both convergent validity and discriminant validity of the second-order sense of community scale was supported.

Confirmatory Factor Model for Satisfaction with Conference

The satisfaction model was represented by only one construct, satisfaction. There were originally eleven variables acting as indicators. Each of the eleven observed variables was directly affected by a unique unobserved error. Each error was uncorrelated with other errors, and all errors were uncorrelated with the unobserved factors.

The results of the satisfaction model were first examined for offending estimates (i.e., coefficients that exceeded acceptable limits) (Hair et al., 2005). There were no offending estimates found in the initial model. The decision was made to proceed to assess the goodness-of-fit.

The satisfaction model was evaluated to determine good model fit. Again, three types of overall model fit measures were used: (1) absolute fit measures (i.e., chi-square test, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), and the Root Mean Residual (RMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)); incremental fit measures (i.e., Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Normed Fit Index (NFI)); and (3) parsimonious fit measures.

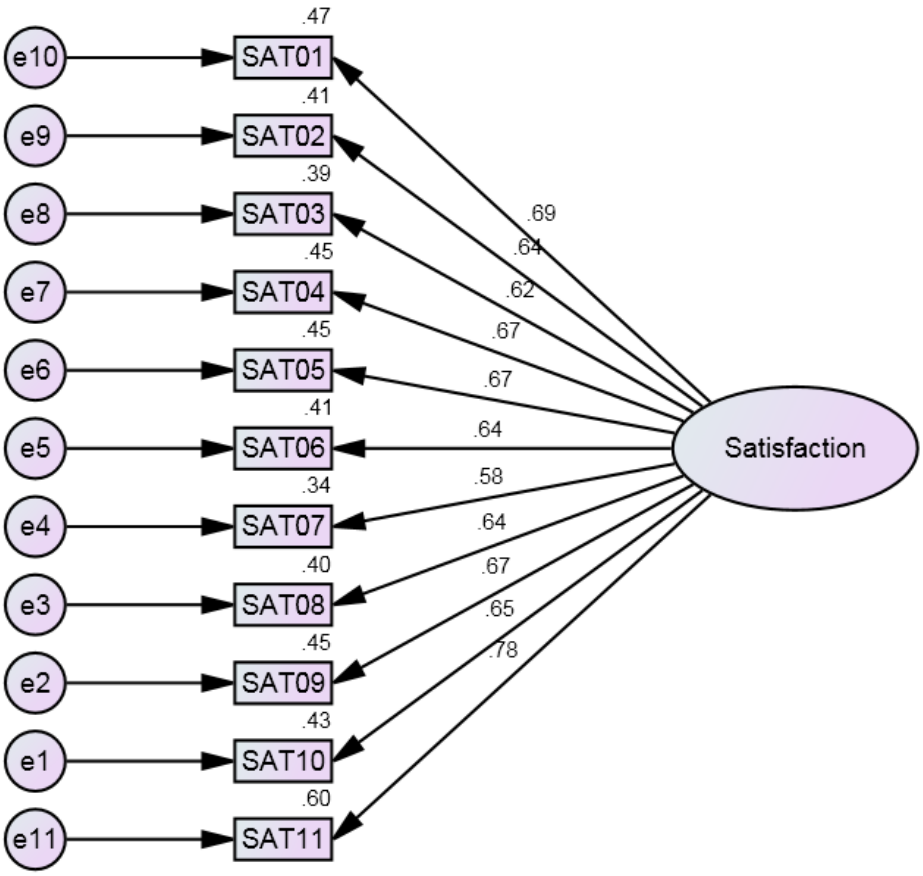

Figure 4: Satisfaction Measurement Model

The first absolute fit measure of chi-square statistic had a statistically significant level ($\chi^2_{(44)} = 332.020$, $p = .000$). The chi-square statistic failed to support that the differences of the predicted and actual models are not significant. As aforementioned, with sample sizes larger as 200, the chi-square is almost always significant (Hair et al., 2005). The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = .811) came out to be marginal. The Root Mean Residual (RMR) was .075 which is a good fit (cut off value is .08 or less). Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was .147; however, good RMSEA has been said to be below .10 (Hair et al.). The RMSEA value for this model was too high.

The incremental fit indices were examined. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (type 3) had values of .811, the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) (type 2) with values of .764, and Normal Fit Index (NFI) was .790. The values of these indices range between 0 to 1 with higher values representing good fit.

As presented above, the original satisfaction model (Figure 4) only had a marginal model fit which required model respecification. The same criteria were used, such as comparing estimated loadings (< .50), checking standardized residuals (> 4.0), and examining modification indices. The estimated loadings for all of the items were above .50, meeting the criteria. However, in checking the standardized residuals two items – Conference Venue – Convention Center (SAT09) and Conference Venue – Hotel (SAT10) – had a value of 4.150 which is above the cutoff value of 4.0. In addition, modification indices related to the covariances were checked. The error terms associated with two items – SAT09 and SAT10 – were the largest at 76.670. Also, each of these two items had large modification indices with Conference Destination

(SAT07). These three items that were deemed problematic were eliminated first. In an effort to have the best fitting and most parsimonious model, more items were removed. Again, three items with low loadings, high standardized residuals, and high modification indices were removed. However, before any removal of items, each of the items were examined to make sure that the removal would make sense theoretically.

Table 13: Fit Indices for Satisfaction with Conference

Chi-square (χ^2) of estimate	12.09 (df = 5, p = .034)
GFI	0.985
AGFI	0.954
RMR	0.025
RMSEA	0.068
NFI	0.977
TLI	0.972
CFI	0.986

Consequently, six items were deleted from the original satisfaction scale: General Session(s) (SAT01), Conference Destination (SAT07), Management of the Conference (SAT08), Conference Venue – Convention Center (SAT09), Conference venue – Hotel (SAT10), and Overall Conference Experience (SAT11). The new goodness-of-fit indices are provided in Table 13.

After the model fit was accepted, each of the constructs were evaluated separately by assessing the convergent validity of the constructs by examining the statistical significance of the indicator loadings and calculating the construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted

(AVE). Also, the discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed by inspecting the correlation (phi) matrix and comparing the AVE with the squared correlations from the phi matrix.

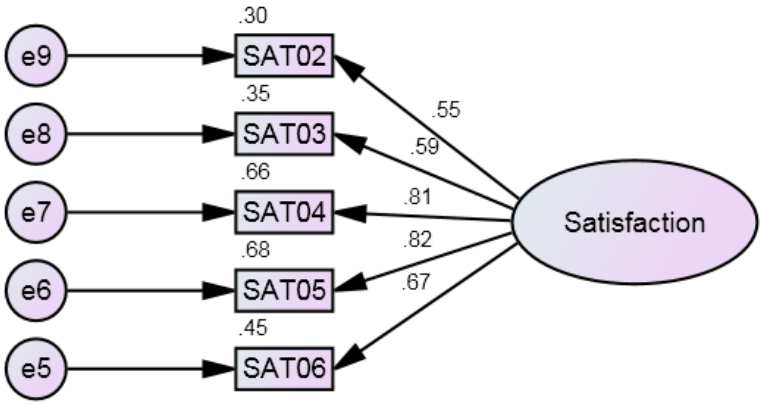

Figure 5: Respecified Satisfaction Measurement Model

First, *t* values associated with each of the variables were significant at the $p = .000$ level. This indicates that all five variables were significantly related to their specified constructs, verifying the posited relationships among indicators and constructs. Next, the results of the standard loadings, CR, and AVE are presented in Table 14.

The CR value was .758 exceeding the suggested level of .70. The AVE value was .489 which is slightly lower than the minimum of .50. The results suggest that the satisfaction as a construct explains a good amount of variance in the indicators taken together. Both convergent validity and discriminant validity of the satisfaction scale was supported.

Table 14: CR and AVE for Satisfaction with Conference

Construct and Indicators	Std. Loading	CR	AVE
Satisfaction		**.758**	**.489**
Educational sessions	.551		
Networking opportunities	.592		
Leadership enhancement	.812		
Career enhancement	.824		
Self-esteem enhancement	.674		

Confirmatory Factor Model for Future Intentions

The future intentions construct has only three measurement items. It is a just-identified model that includes just enough degrees of freedom to estimate all free parameters. The degrees of freedom for a three-item factor are zero based on the equation. This type of model has perfect fit and is referred to as saturated. The resulting chi-square goodness-of-fit statistic is also zero. This type of model is not testing a theory but rather the fit is determined by the circumstances (Hair et al., 2005).

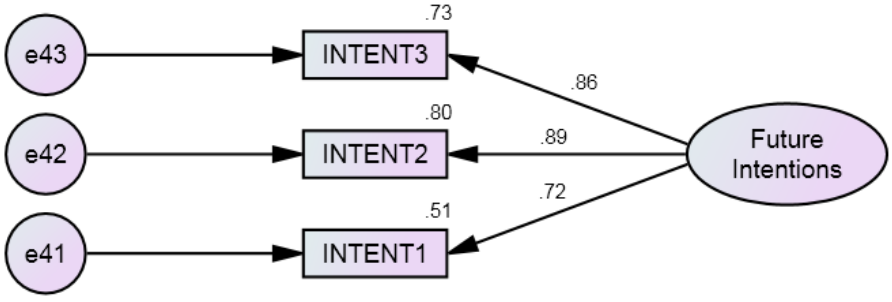

Figure 6: Future Intentions Measurement Model

Testing the Hypothesized Model

The first three research objectives for this study were: 1) To test the conceptual sense of community model in the meeting industry; 2) to examine the relationship between sense of community and satisfaction; and 3) to examine the relationship between sense of community and future intentions. Three of the four hypotheses were tested using SEM. The six stage process for SEM was applied (Hair et al., 2005).

Stage 1: Defining Individual Constructs

This first stage stresses on the importance of beginning with a good definition and operationalization of the constructs. Measurement scale items are selected from prior research or can be newly developed (Hair et al., 2005). For this study, the first approach was chosen. An extensive review of the literature in sense of community was conducted and several established scales were selected. For the satisfaction and future intentions scale items, literature in the convention and meeting industry were used. This essential and critical process sets the foundation for the entire remainder of the SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2005).

Stage 2: Developing and Specifying the Measurement Model

This stage involves specifying the measurement model. All constructs fall into two categories: exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous constructs (latent constructs) are independent variables that are not caused or predicted by any other variable in the model. Endogenous constructs are predicted by other constructs and relationships contained in the model. Each latent

construct included in the model is identified and the indicator variables are assigned to latent constructs. This is better presented with a diagram. For this study, AMOS Graphics version 20 was used to depict the measurement model and later the structural model. During this stage, individual variables and constructs are assigned. Once the exogenous and endogenous constructs are defined, relationships by drawing arrows are graphically illustrated in a path diagram. A straight arrow indicates a direct causal relationship from a construct to its indicators and direct causal effect relationship between constructs.

In this study, the exogenous construct was sense of community. Sense of community was a second-order factor with four first-order factors indicating it. It was represented by emotional connection, social climate and bonds, relationship to organization, and sense of collectivism. The endogenous constructs were satisfaction and future intentions. Satisfaction with the conference was operationalized with five variables and future intentions had three variables. The relationships were depicted by a direct arrow from sense of community to satisfaction and future intentions indicating that sense of community causes satisfaction with the conference and future intentions. A direct arrow from satisfaction to future intentions was also illustrated.

Even if using a well-established scale, it is imperative to confirm the validity and unidimensionality in the specific context. Also, any issues related to the number of indicators and type of construct specification need to be addressed. In this study, content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed and presented.

Stage 3: Designing a Study to Produce Empirical Results

This stage involves research design and estimation. The issues related to research design are: (1) the type of data being analyzed (i.e., covariances or correlations); (2) missing data, and (3) sample size (Hair et al., 2005). SEM can be estimated with either covariances or correlations. The researcher must choose the appropriate type of matrix based on interpretive and statistical issues that could address the research question. Using covariances has statistical advantages over correlations in terms of its statistical impact. When the hypotheses concern questions related to the scale or magnitude of values, then covariances must be used because this information is not retained in correlations. Lastly, when comparing between samples, covariances must be used as input (Hair et al., 2005).

The sample size and missing data can have an extreme effect on the results no matter what kind of method is used (Hair et al., 2005). Therefore, missing data were carefully screened and treated. Some of the missing data were part of the research design (i.e., dichotomous questions) and for this reason were ignorable. For example, in the demographics section, a question asks, "Is this the first time attending this annual conference?" For the remaining data that is critical to the data analysis, less than 5% were missing and missing completely at random. There were five cases with extensive missing data and those cases were removed from further analysis. Other randomly missing values were replaced by mean substitution. In addition there were two extreme outliers identified by the univariate and multivariate assumptions check, such as normality, homoscedasticity, linearity, and uncorrelated errors. The valid sample came down to 344. For further analysis, another 39 cases were removed because those cases did not fit the

criteria of having to be a member of the association. The final sample size came down to 305 for further analysis including SEM. According to Hair et al. (2005), SEM models containing five or fewer constructs, each with more than three items (observed variables), and with high item communalities (.6 or higher), can be adequately estimated with samples as small as 100-150. Therefore, the sample size was appropriate for this study despite the removal of 52 cases.

For SEM, there are issues related to model estimation. There are several options available for obtaining a SEM solution. Maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) is an efficient and unbiased technique when the assumption of multivariate normality is met and is the most widely used approach (Hair et al., 2005). As for computer programs, LISREL (Linear Structural RELations) is the traditionally used flexible program that can be applied in numerical situations. AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) is a program that gained popularity because of its user-friendliness and availability as an addition to SPSS. It has a simplified interface where researchers could perform an analysis without having to write any computer codes (Hair et al.). For this study, IBM SPSS AMOS version 20 was used with MLE. MLE was the selected technique because the data met the assumptions of normality.

Stage 4: Assessing the Measurement Model Validity

This stage is the most fundamental event in SEM testing (Hair et al., 2005). Appropriate evaluation of the measurement model is a pre-requisite to the evaluation of the structural model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Measurement model validity depends on goodness-of-fit for the measurement model and specific evidence of construct validity (Hair et al.).

The convergent validity of the measurement scale was examined. First, the evaluation of the loadings of the indicators, particularly focusing on any non-significant loadings that should be deleted or transformed for better fit with the construct. Table 15 presents the results for the measurement model. All of the factor loadings were statistically significant for the proposed constructs. This supports the theoretical basis for assignment of indicators to each construct. In addition, each of the set of the indicators for the three constructs had moderate to high values.

Squared multiple correlation coefficients (SMC) indicate how well the variables measure the latent construct, the largest amount of variance accounted for by the constructs, and the extent to which the individual variables are free from measurement error (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). These values also represent the reliabilities (i.e., convergent validities) of these measures. SMCs lie between 0 and 1. A value of a variable that is closer to 1 acts as an indicator of the latent construct. The results show that SMC values for the endogenous variables ranged from 0.316 to 0.776. For the exogenous variables, second-order factors' SMC values ranged from 0.633 to 0.754, indicating that Emotional Connection is a better indicator of sense of community than the other second-order factors. The values for first-order factors ranged from 0.273 to 0.739. For Emotional Connection, "I feel connected to this annual conference." was the best indicator of that factor. For Social Climate and Bonds first-order factor, "I feel at ease with the people at this annual conference." was the best indicator. For Relationship to Organization, "I trust the leadership of the association to do what is best for me." was a good indicator for that factor. Lastly, for Sense of Collectivism, the values were similar among the three factors.

To examine convergent validity, the construct reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were computed for the latent constructs (Table 15). For the CR, the values for all three constructs were over the threshold of .70. However, for the AVE, the value for sense of community passed the .50 threshold and future intentions barely made it over the cutoff value. Satisfaction with conference was just below .50 at .492. It can be concluded that the indicators for all three constructs were good enough in terms of how the measurement model was specified.

Table 15: Results for Measurement Model

Construct and Indicators	Std. Loading	SMC	CR	AVE
Exogenous: Sense of Community			**0.952**	**0.692**
Emotional Connection	**0.868**	**0.754**		
I expect to attend this annual conference of this association for many years to come.	0.604	0.365		
I feel connected to this annual conference.	0.859	0.739		
I have a good bond with others in this annual conference.	0.806	0.650		
Social Climate and Bonds	**0.819**	**0.671**		
I feel at ease with the people at this annual conference.	0.842	0.708		
People are sociable here.	0.729	0.532		
It is easy for me to form bonds with the people at this annual conference.	0.561	0.315		
Relationship to Organization	**0.796**	**0.633**		
If I were in trouble, I could count on people at the association to help.	0.688	0.473		
I trust the leadership of the association to do what is best for me.	0.761	0.579		
People in the association have a say in what goes on in the association.	0.523	0.273		
People in the association responds to what I think is important.	0.535	0.286		
Sense of Collectivism	**0.845**	**0.713**		
I like to think of myself as similar to the people who are a member in this association.	0.764	0.583		
I think I agree with most people in this association about what is important in life.	0.698	0.487		
If the people in this association were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing.	0.740	0.547		
Endogenous: Satisfaction with Conference			**0.846**	**0.492**
Educational sessions	0.562	0.316		
Networking Opportunities	0.628	0.395		
Leadership enhancement	0.805	0.648		
Career enhancement	0.802	0.643		
Self-esteem enhancement	0.676	0.457		
Endoenous: Future Intentions			**0.861**	**0.681**
I will attend the same annual conference next year.	0.735	0.540		
I will renew my membership to this association.	0.853	0.727		
I will recommend membership in this association to others.	0.881	0.776		

To examine discriminant validity, the correlations among latent constructs were reviewed. It is suggested that high values exceeding .80 should be noted as an indication of a problematic level of inter-correlated constructs (Hair et al., 2005). For this study, the correlations between the exogenous and endogenous constructs were examined. The correlations were moderate (Table 16) suggesting appropriate level of inter-correlations. The results suggested that the discriminant validity supported the measurement model.

Table 16: Correlation between Exogenous and Endogenous Constructs

	Sense of Community	Satisfaction	Future Intentions
Sense of Community	1.000		
Satisfaction	0.560	1.000	
Future Intentions	0.656	0.394	1.000

The goodness-of-fit statistics were analyzed to determine the overall acceptability of the structural model. Figure 2 presents the standardized path estimates of the sense of community of association members' model. The results indicate that the proposed model has an acceptable fit based on sample size (N = 305), degrees of error, and model complexity (Hair et al., 2005). The fit indices are provided in Table 17: The chi-square statistic was $\chi^2_{(182)} = 588.85$, RMSEA = 0.086, RMR = 0.070, GFI = 0.845, AGFI = 0.803, NFI = 0.815, TLI = 0.843, CFI = 0.864. Based on the examination of the fit indices, it can be concluded that the measurement model has acceptable fit. It should be noted that the fit cutoff values are guides for usage, not rules that guarantee a correct model. Therefore, no specific value on any index can separate models into acceptable and unacceptable fits. Researchers should allow room for unanticipated circumstances

that may affect the interpretation of model results whether there are issues related to the model itself, the sample, and the research context. The situation does and should affect the acceptability of models. When samples are large and the model contains a large number of measured variables and parameter estimates, cutoff values of .95 on key goodness-of-fit values are unrealistic (Hair et al., 2005).

Table 17: Fit Indices for Measurement Model

Chi-square (χ^2) of estimate model	588.85 (*df* = 182, *p* = .000)
GFI	0.845
AGFI	0.803
RMR	0.070
RMSEA	0.086
NFI	0.815
TLI	0.843
CFI	0.864

Stage 5: Specifying the Structural Model

In Stage 2, the measurement model was specified by assigning indicator variables to the constructs they should represent. During this stage of the SEM process, the relationships are assigned from one construct to another based on the proposed theoretical model. Structural model specification focuses on using straight arrows to represent structural hypotheses of the researcher's model. Each hypothesis depicts a specific relationship that must be specified (Hair et al., 2005).

Based on theory presented in the literature review, the following structural relationships were proposed:

***H*1**: Sense of community is positively related to satisfaction with the meeting.
***H*2**: Sense of community is positively related to future intentions.
***H*3**: Sense of community is indirectly related to future intentions.

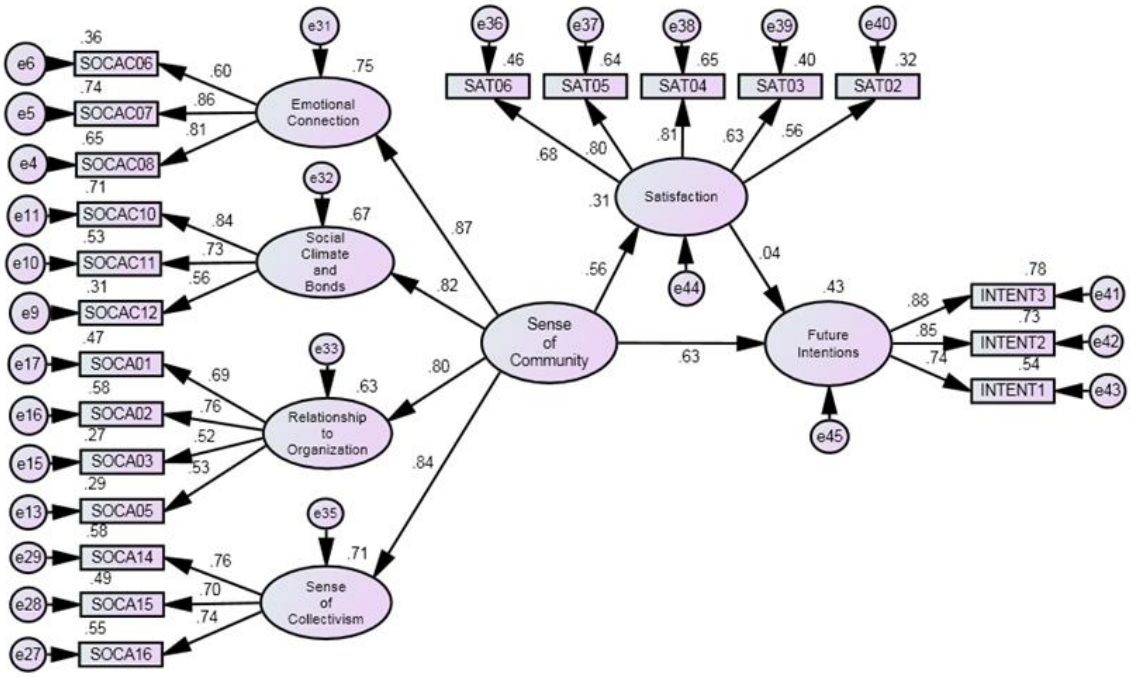

Figure 7: Structural Model

These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2. *H*1 is specified with the arrow connecting Sense of Community and Satisfaction. Similarly, *H*2 is specified with the arrow connecting Sense of Community and Future Intentions and *H*3 is specified with the arrow connecting Sense of Community and Satisfaction and Satisfaction and Future Intentions. The SEM model presents

both the measurement and structural part of SEM in one overall model (Hair et al., 2005). Now the model is ready for estimation in the next step.

Stage 6: Assessing Structural Model Validity

This final stage involves testing the validity of the structural model and its corresponding hypothesized theoretical relationships (*H*1 – *H*3). If the measurement model was validated in Stage 4, then the validity of the structural relationships can further be tested (Hair et al., 2005).

The overall fit can be assessed using the same criteria as the measurement model. These measures should be compared with the measurement model. In almost all SEM models, the goodness-of-fit for the measurement model will be less than that of the structural model. When the values differ, the structural model fit must be assessed as well (Hair et al., 2005). In this study, the goodness-of-fit of the structural model matched the measurement model. Generally, the closer the structural model goodness-of-fit comes to the measurement model, the better the structural model fit since the measurement model fit provides an upper-bound to the goodness-of-fit of a conventional structural model (Hair et al.).

The individual parameter estimates are examined once model fit is established. Good model fit itself does not support a proposed structural theory (Hair et al., 2005). A theoretical model is considered valid to the extent that the parameter estimates are: (1) statistically significant and in the predicted direction and (2) nontrivial which is checked using the completely standardized loading estimates (Hair et al.).

The loading estimates were compared to the CFA model and there were no changes found from the CFA results. Therefore, no problem stems from interpretational confounding, which further supports the measurement model's validity (Hair et al., 2005). Next, the individual parameter estimates were examined. All of the structural path estimates are significant and in the expected direction. The estimate coefficients presented in Figure 2 show that sense of community has a positive and strong direct relationship with both satisfaction (γ = .56, t = 6.897, p < .000) and future intentions (γ = .63, t = 7.237, p < .000). Also, sense of community has an indirect relationship (.56 x .04 = .02) with future intentions through satisfaction. However, sense of community through satisfaction has a very small impact on future intentions. The total effect of sense of community on future intentions is .65, the sum of direct (γ = .63) and indirect (.02) relationships between them. The direct relationship of sense of community and future intentions is very strong (γ = .63). However, there was no statistically significant relationship between satisfaction and future intentions (β = .04, t = .538, p = .590).

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation

The last set of hypotheses concerns the strength of the relationship between individual and conference-related characteristics with sense of community. Of the individual characteristics, age by generations was used. Of the conference-related characteristics, the numbers of times participants have attended the same annual conference including this year and how long they have been a member of the association were used. In this study, the characteristics of interest for analysis were measured on an ordinal scale. Therefore, Spearman's rank order correlation (rho)

was used because it is a technique to calculate the strength of the relationship between two ordinal or ranked variables. This is a non-parametric alternative to Pearson's *r*. The direction of the relationship and the strength of the relationship are of consideration. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, r = .10 to .29 or r = -.10 to -.29 is a small relationship, r = .30 to .49 or r = -.30 to -.49 is a medium relationship, and r = .50 to 1.00 or r = -.50, to -1.00 is a large relationship.

First, the relationship between age groups by generations and sense of community was examined. There was a weak, negative correlation between the two variables (r = -.117, N = 302, p = .042) which means the younger generation showed a lower level of sense of community. Next, the relationship between the number of years the participant has been a member of the association and sense of community was explored. There was a small and positive correlation between the two variables (r = .207, N = 302, p <.000). This means that the longer the respondent has been a member, the higher the level of sense of community. Lastly, the relationship between the number of times the respondent attended the annual conference and sense of community was examined. There was a small but almost moderate and positive relationship between the two variables (r = .273, N = 214, p < .000) which means that the longer the respondent has been attending the conference, the higher the level of sense of community.

Table 18: Correlation between Sense of Community and Respondent Characteristics

	Age group	Number of years as member	Number of times attended
Sense of Community	-0.117 (p = .042)	0.207 (p < .000)	0.273 (p < .000)

Results for Hypothesis Tests

This section will present the data analysis results compared to the research hypotheses.

Sense of Community, Satisfaction, and Future Intention Constructs

The relationships that were predicted in the hypotheses were based on previous literature in sense of community research. However, these relationships have not been tested in the meeting industry.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that sense of community is positively related to satisfaction with the meeting. Sense of community was a second-order factor composed of four first-order constructs – emotional connection, social climate and bonds, relationship to organization, and sense of collectivism. Satisfaction was operationalized by five variables. The results showed that sense of community has a positive and strong direct relationship with satisfaction ($\gamma = .56$, $t = 6.897$, $p < .000$). Hence, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that sense of community is positively related to future intentions. The results showed that sense of community has a positive and very strong relationship with future intentions ($\gamma = .63$, $t = 7.237$, $p < .000$). Therefore, it can be said that hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that sense of community is indirectly related to future intentions through satisfaction with the meeting. The results indicated that sense of community has an indirect relationship with future intentions through satisfaction (.56 x .04 = .02). However, this indirect relationship has a very small impact on future intentions. The total effect of sense of

community on future intentions is .65, the sum of direct (γ = .63) and indirect (.02) relationships between them. The direct relationship of sense of community and future intentions is very strong (γ = .63). One unexpected outcome was that despite supporting literature in the hospitality and tourism industry including the meeting industry, there was no statistically significant relationship between satisfaction and future intentions (β = .04, t = .538, p = .590). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Individual Characteristics, Conference-related Characteristics, and Sense of Community

Hypothesis 4 explored the strength of the relationship between individual characteristics and conference-related characteristics and sense of community. The individual characteristic used was age by generation and conference-related characteristics were years of membership with the association and number of times the respondent has attended the meeting. The results showed that there were statistically significant relationships between the variables of interest. There was a weak, negative correlation between the age by generations and sense of community (r = -.117, N = 302, p = .042) meaning the younger generation showed a lower level of sense of community. Next, There was a small and positive correlation between the number of years the participant has been a member of the association and sense of community (r = .207, N = 302, p <.000). This means that the longer the respondent has been a member, the higher the level of sense of community. Lastly, there was a small but almost moderate and positive relationship between the number of times the respondent attended the annual conference and sense of community (r = .273, N = 214, p < .000) which means that the longer the respondent has been

attending the conference, the higher the level of sense of community. Hence, hypothesis 4 was supported.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analyses including descriptive statistics, reliability and validity tests, CFA, SEM, and Spearman's rank order correlation. Significant relationships were found between sense of community and satisfaction and future intentions. However, the link between satisfaction and future intentions was not supported. It was found that sense of community is a strong predictor of future intentions. Also, statistically significant relationships were found between sense of community and individual and conference-related variables.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand the sense of community of association members and whether the annual meeting enhances the sense of community that leads to satisfaction with the meeting and future intentions.

This final chapter presents the overall study and discusses its major findings. A summary of the study and methodology followed by a discussion of the major findings of the study, conclusions, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research is contained in this chapter.

Summary of Methods and Results

Based on an extensive review of the literature on sense of community, 29 measurement items were selected to be used in the current study. For the satisfaction and future intentions, previous research in the meeting industry was reviewed. There were eleven items to measure satisfaction and three items to measure future intentions.

The survey was conducted at three different annual conferences. These three conferences represented different types of industries. The respondents from the first annual conference were professionals in the art industry, the next annual conference was comprised of hospitality educators, and the last conference represented meeting professionals.

Prior to conducting the primary data analysis, the three groups were compared to make sure there were no issues with combing the three data sets into one. The demographics were compared among the groups and similar patterns were found. For example, for all three groups,

there were more females than males, the respondents were predominantly non-Hispanic whites and mostly born between 1946 and 1964. In addition, the ANOVA results showed no statistically significant difference among the three groups and the three major constructs. After the data screening and exclusion of non-members from the data, a total of 305 responses were used for primary data analysis.

First, descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for all of the measured items. Then, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the model in a new setting. Each measurement model of the three major constructs (i.e., sense of community, satisfaction, and future intentions) were proposed and tested. Then, the overall measurement model was assessed. Maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) was employed because the collected sample size was sufficient and there were no missing values. The results of the measurement model were first examined for offending estimates (i.e., coefficients that exceeded acceptable limits) (Hair et al., 2005). There were no offending estimates found in the initial measurement model. Therefore, the decision was made to proceed to assess the goodness-of-fit. Three types of overall model fit measures were used: (1) absolute fit measures (i.e., chi-square test, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), and the Root Mean Residual (RMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)); incremental fit measures (i.e., Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Normed Fit Index (NFI)); and (3) parsimonious fit measures.

The sense of community second-order model was evaluated to determine good model fit. The various measures to assess model fit for the sense of community second-order factor model suggested a poor model. The model required respecification. The estimated loadings (less

than .5), standardized residuals (above 4), and modification indices were checked and compared. In addition, whether or not a removal or freeing of an item makes theoretical sense was taken into consideration. As a result, two first-order constructs were removed resulting in four first-order constructs to be used in structural equation modeling (SEM). For the satisfaction construct, there were originally eleven items. After the CFA, six items were removed and five were used for SEM. The future intentions construct had three items that met the minimum criteria for CFA and SEM. The model was just-identified and therefore, had a perfect fit. The goodness-of-fit for each construct's CFA models presented acceptable model fit based on the criteria by Hair et al. (2005).

The overall measurement model was also found to have acceptable fit. The structural relationships were examined among the three constructs. The results showed that the structural path estimates were statistically significant, in the right direction, and supported by the data. This study proposed that the sense of community is the contributing factor to association members' satisfaction with the meeting and future intentions toward the meeting. The results of SEM supported this premise. The direct link between sense of community to future intentions had the strongest relationship ($\gamma = .63$, $t = 7.237$, $p < .000$). This result supported previous research where researchers have found that sense of community is related to participation in different settings. Sense of community also had a positive and strong direct relationship with satisfaction ($\gamma = .56$, $t = 6.897$, $p < .000$). Previous research on psychological sense of community in the workplace found that sense of community was significantly related to job satisfaction. The results for this study agreed with existing literature. In addition, the indirect link between sense

of community and future intentions through satisfaction was tested. The results presented that sense of community had a weak indirect relationship (.56 x .04 = .02) with future intentions through satisfaction. The total effect of sense of community on future intentions was .65, the sum of direct (γ = .63) and indirect (.02) relationships between them.

There was a result that was unexpected. The link between satisfaction and future intentions was not supported. There was no statistically significant relationship between satisfaction and future intentions (β = .04, t = .538, p = .590). It is a surprising outcome due to the fact that there are so many studies in hospitality and tourism that presented satisfaction as a reliable predictor of future intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Patterson, 1993; Tam, 2000). In the meeting industry, Severt et al. (2007) found that respondents with a stronger satisfaction with the conference were more likely to return and to tell others to attend.

The results of SEM showed that the sense of community model can be applied to the meeting industry, more specifically association members attending their annual conferences. Sense of community measurement scales have been applied to different situations or communities but not to the meeting industry. Although the model had acceptable fit, there were items from the initially proposed sense of community scale that did not support the data or situation. According to Hill (1996), sense of community is unique to each setting. It can be said that many of the items that might apply to more territorial/geographical communities might not relate to an annual meeting setting or being a member of an association.

Lastly, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was performed to explore the strength of the relationship between sense of community and individual and conference-related characteristics.

Of the individual characteristics, age by generations was used. Of the conference-related characteristics, the numbers of times participants have attended the same annual conference including this year and how long they have been a member of the association were used. First, the relationship between age groups by generations and sense of community was weak and negative (r = -.117, N = 302, p = .042) which means the youngest generation showed a lower level of sense of community. Next, the relationship between the number of years the participant has been a member of the association and sense of community was explored. There was a small and positive correlation between the two variables (r = .207, N = 302, p <.000). This means that the longer the respondent has been a member, the higher the level of sense of community. Lastly, the relationship between the number of times the respondent attended the annual conference and sense of community was small but almost moderate and positive between the two variables (r = .273, N = 214, p < .000) which means that the longer the respondent has been attending the conference, the higher the level of sense of community.

Implications

Managerial Implications

It is a constant challenge for associations to build attendance at their annual meetings. This is critical because over 30% of the income is generated by these annual conferences. There have been studies related to what motivates and/or inhibits people when they attend a conference. However, this study suggested that there could be an underlying reason as to why people attend

their annual meetings. There are no studies that look deep into the psychological reason as to why members attend an annual meeting and how it impacts satisfaction levels and future intentions.

This study adopted the sense of community model and found that sense of community is a better predictor of future intentions than satisfaction with the conference. It can be implied that association members are seeking sense of community at annual meetings which has been suggested in anecdotal evidence and trade articles. This is the first time this has been explored empirically. Most of the post-convention surveys used by associations have questions related to attendees' satisfaction and intentions to return. Based on this study, sense of community of the members can provide a better sense of whether members will re-attend the conference, renew membership, and recommend membership to others. Therefore, convention organizers should consider measuring attendees' sense of community. Also, rather than paying too much attention on specific elements of the conference, such as food or accommodations, convention organizers should focus more on creating an experience for attendees through providing an environment that will make attendees feel a sense of community.

Of the originally proposed six constructs, the "Membership" construct had a couple of issues. The construct was highly correlating with other constructs, the items measuring the construct had low factor loadings, and the modification indices between error terms were very high. Consequently, the construct was removed from the measurement model. The items explaining the construct include, "I can recognize most of the people who are at this annual conference (M = 3.07, SD = 1.077).", "I feel comfortable at this annual conference (M = 4.24, SD

= 0.813).", and "Many of the attendees know me (M = 3.05, SD = 1.173)." The means of two of the items were low, meaning the attendees did not feel that they were familiar with other attendees. This could be explained by examining the conference-related characteristics. Less than 30% of the respondents are first time attendees and almost half of the respondents (43%) have only been to the same conference twice to five times (including the current year). Also, 29.5% have been a member of the association for less than three years. In addition to looking at the characteristics, the Spearman's correlation showed that the longer the respondent has been a member, the higher the level of sense of community and the longer the respondent has been attending the conference, the higher the level of sense of community. Therefore, it can be said that even though the membership construct has been a major factor in other sense of community research, it was not a strong indicator for sense of community in this study. Association meeting organizers could enhance the sense of community among first timers and new members by offering more networking opportunities with more experienced members. This activity could help them feel welcome and a part of the community.

According to the Spearman's correlation between age and sense of community, there was a relationship between generational groups and sense of community. It was found that the younger the generation, the lower the sense of community. The above suggestions about creating more programs for networking should work in this situation as well. The organizer should find what motivates the younger generation of the membership to encourage them come back. It is not simple to make an assumption that they will come back.

Theoretical Implications

The major contribution of this study is adopting the sense of community model to gain a better understanding of the behavior of meeting attendees and create a measurement instrument that can be used in the future. Most of the sense of community research has been on territorial/geographical communities rather than relational and organizational settings. An annual meeting is different from a residential community or a workplace. To date, there has not been a measurement instrument that would reflect the needs and concerns of association members. In that sense, this study contributed to the existing body of knowledge in the meeting and convention industry by providing a measurement scale and a theoretical foundation. In addition, this study contributed to the current sense of community research in the psychology field by applying it to a different setting. Although several items were removed, the sense of community model was tested and statistically significant for the data collected.

Of the eliminated two constructs of sense of community, the "Sense of Belonging" construct was highly correlating with other constructs and the individual items correlated with each other. The *t*-value was almost insignificant and the construct had a negative variance. Based on these results, the construct was removed. The sense of belonging construct represents a deeper commitment of the member to the association. This construct was derived from a sense of community study at a workplace. The issue with the sense of belonging construct when applied to a conference setting could be attributed to the fact that association members have limited face-to-face interaction with others, for many, just once a year. It is challenging to expect a deeper commitment from members when they do not see each other often but only for a concentrated

amount of time a year. This construct did not fit the model of this study well. It showed that there are sense of community constructs that do not apply to different settings. To validate the sense of community model, it has to be applied to various settings.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There has been research on motivators that predict future intentions and studies on satisfaction leading to future intentions. However, there has not been a study that looks deep into the psychological reason as to why members attend an annual meeting and how it impacts satisfaction levels and future intentions. This is the first study that looks beyond the checklist of reasons as to why association members attend an annual meeting. It was an attempt to understand the psychological behavior of meeting attendees.

The direct relationship between sense of community and future intentions were tested but also the indirect relationship between the two constructs through satisfaction was tested. Based on previous literature, satisfaction was chosen as the mediating factor. However, the relationship between satisfaction and future intentions was not statistically significant. A number of studies found positive relationships between customer satisfaction and future intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cole & Illum, 2006; Cole & Scott, 2004; Haahti & Yavas, 2005; Lee, Lee, & Yoo, 2000; Oliver, 1980; Woodside, Frey, & Daly, 1989; Yuan & Jang, 2007; Yuan, Morrison, Cai, & Linton, 2008) and that higher levels of customer satisfaction tend to result in repeat visits in hospitality and tourism sectors (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Bowen & Chen, 2001; Kozak & Remington, 2000). However, this direct link was not proven in

this study. There might be other constructs that were not examined in this study. Future research should add different factors (e.g., motivation) that could provide a better explanation of the relationships. Motivational factors have been used in previous meeting attendee participation studies to predict future intentions; however, these factors are simply a list of motivator items to participate in a meeting. A more psychological theory-based approach to motivation should be explored in addition to sense of community. Psychologists/social psychologists agree that "a motive is an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person's behavior" (Murray, 1964, p. 7). This internal factor can be considered as "an awareness of potential satisfaction" in a future situation (Deci, 1975). Similarly, Dann (1981) suggested that motivation is an unconscious process which should be studied along with satisfaction. It has been found that motivation leads to satisfaction (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Future research in the meeting industry should include motivation from psychological theory to understand attendee behavior.

The data appeared to be skewed in terms of ethnicity and age. For ethnicity, the overwhelming majority was non-Hispanic whites (75.8%) and for age by generations, the majority was baby boomers (45.4%) and the X generation (31.5%). This could be attributed to the type of conferences where the data was collected. The data for this study is a good representation of the demographic profile of the studied conferences; however, limits the generalizability of the findings to other types of conferences.

The size of conference in terms of attendance numbers should have an impact on the results of the study. This study was conducted on conferences that had less than 500 attendees. It

will be interesting to see if there is a difference in the results depending on the size of the conference.

The type of association could present different results as well. This study focused more on professional associations with educational components rather than trade associations. Different types of associations and their meetings hold different characteristics. It will be interesting to see if the results differ when the study is applied to more business oriented trade shows.

There might be other respondent characteristics that could have impacted the results of this study. For example, information regarding the respondents' respective work environment, tenure at work, origin, who they came with, and the need to attend could provide a better understanding of the results.

For future studies, when the originally proposed sense of community scale is applied to other association meeting attendees, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) should be employed first to analyze the model structure and to clean the model before moving on to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Perhaps adding this step in the process will lead to different results.

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the methods and results, implications and directions for future research, and limitations of this study. The major finding of the study is that sense of community is a strong predictor of future intentions than satisfaction. The link between satisfaction and future intentions was not statistically significant. This suggests that convention

organizers should focus on creating an experience that can enhance the sense of community of members at the meeting. It is the members' sense of community that drives them to the annual meeting whether or not they are satisfied with the meeting. In addition, this study was able to apply the sense of community model to an untested setting, an annual conference, and confirmed previous studies on its influence on future intentions.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Jeeyeon Hahm**

Date: **May 02, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 5/2/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title:	The influence of an annual meeting on the sense of community of association members, their satisfaction, and future intentions
Investigator:	Jeeyeon Hahm
IRB Number:	SBE-12-08433
Funding Agency:	None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 05/02/2012 05:03:39 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: The influence of an annual meeting on the sense of community of association members, their satisfaction, and future intentions

Principal Investigator: Jeeyeon Hahm

Faculty Supervisor: Deborah Breiter, Ph.D.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The purpose of this study is to understand the sense of community of association members and whether the annual meeting enhances the sense of community that further leads to returning to the next annual meeting, membership renewal, and recommending membership.

- This research involves a questionnaire. You will be sent a link to the questionnaire. It will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

- You will be asked to answer questions regarding your sense of community at the annual meeting and with the association, motivations to attend the meeting, satisfaction with the meeting, and future intentions. There will also be general questions to understand the profile of respondents. Information from your response will be combined with other responses. Results from this study will be used in the researcher's dissertation and submitted to scholarly research journals for publication in the future.

- There will be no personal information collected or used from you. Your name will not be collected. This is an anonymous survey. Only questions related to your perception and experience will be asked. The questions will focus on your experience with the most recent annual meeting. There are no right or wrong, desirable or undesirable answers. Feel free to express your opinions whether they are positive or negative. There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. After the research is completed, all data will be stored on a password protected computer and a secure server. Your responses will be kept confidential and no one will know who said what as your name is not included in the survey. You may choose not to respond to any or all of the questions without an explanation. You may decline to participate in this study without any consequences.

- There is no compensation or other direct benefits to you for participating in this research. If you have any questions about participants' rights, you can direct those to the UCF-IRB Office. The contact information is provided below.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints talk to Jeeyeon Hahm, Graduate Student, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, (407) 903-8197 or by email at Jeeyeon.Hahm@ucf.edu or Dr. Deborah Breiter, Faculty Supervisor, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, (407) 903-8021 or by email at Deborah.Breiter@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

ID# _____

UCF
Stands For Opportunity

Sense of Community of Meeting Attendees Survey

Sense of Community (Annual Conference)

This section is about your feelings toward the ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	1 = Strongly Disagree				*5 = Strongly Agree*
I can recognize most of the people who are at this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable at this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
Very few of the attendees know me.	1	2	3	4	5
It is very important to me to be at this particular annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
People at this annual conference generally don't get along with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
I expect to attend this annual conference of this association for many years to come.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel connected to this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good bond with others in this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
I have good friends at this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel at ease with the people at this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5
People are sociable here.	1	2	3	4	5
It is difficult for me to form bonds with the people at this annual conference.	1	2	3	4	5

Sense of Community (Association)

This section is about your feelings toward the ASSOCIATION. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	1 = Strongly Disagree				*5 = Strongly Agree*
If I were in trouble, I could count on people at the association to help.	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the leadership of the association to do what is best for me.	1	2	3	4	5
People in the association have no say in what goes on in the association.	1	2	3	4	5
My goals for the association are pretty much the same as everybody else's.	1	2	3	4	5
No one in the association responds to what I think is important.	1	2	3	4	5
Membership in this association is meaningful and valuable to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I really care about the fate of this association.	1	2	3	4	5
If given the opportunity, I would invest in this association.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel loyal to the people in this association.	1	2	3	4	5
There is a friendly atmosphere in this association.	1	2	3	4	5
I benefit from the skills or knowledge of my fellow members.	1	2	3	4	5
The friendships and associations I have with other people in this association mean a lot to me.	1	2	3	4	5
This association feels like a community.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to think of myself as similar to the people who are a member in this association.	1	2	3	4	5
I think I agree with most people in this association about what is important in life.	1	2	3	4	5
If the people in this association were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing.	1	2	3	4	5
Each person is equally responsible and takes ownership for the success of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

Motivation

This section is related to your MOTIVATION to attend the annual conference. Please indicate to what extent each of the following items is IMPORTANT in deciding to attend the conference.

	1 = Not at all Important				*5 = Extremely Important*
Professional networking opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Peer recognition	1	2	3	4	5
Personal interaction with colleagues or friends	1	2	3	4	5
Seeking career opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Seeing people I know in my field	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to visit the conference destination	1	2	3	4	5
Attractive image of the conference destination	1	2	3	4	5
Extra conference opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of travel to the conference destination	1	2	3	4	5
My out of pocket expenses	1	2	3	4	5
Travel funding from my organization	1	2	3	4	5
Learning new skills and/or knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Keeping up with changes in my field	1	2	3	4	5

Satisfaction with Conference

This section is about your SATISFACTION with the annual conference. Please indicate to what extent you are SATISFIED with each of the following items.

	1 = Very Dissatisfied				*5 = Very Satisfied*
General session(s)	1	2	3	4	5
Educational sessions	1	2	3	4	5
Networking opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership enhancement	1	2	3	4	5
Career enhancement	1	2	3	4	5
Self-esteem enhancement	1	2	3	4	5
Conference destination	1	2	3	4	5
Management of the conference	1	2	3	4	5
Conference venue – Convention Center	1	2	3	4	5
Conference venue – Hotel	1	2	3	4	5
Overall conference experience	1	2	3	4	5

Future Intentions

This section is about your FUTURE INTENTIONS. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following items.

	1 = Strongly Disagree				*5 = Strongly Agree*
I will attend the same annual conference next year.	1	2	3	4	5
I will renew my membership to this association.	1	2	3	4	5
I will recommend membership in this association to others.	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

This section contains some general questions about you. Please answer to the best of your ability. This information will be kept strictly confidential and used for statistical purposes only.

Are you a member of the association that is hosting this conference?

a) Yes b) No

Is this your first time attending this annual conference?

a) Yes
b) No (**Please answer the following question**)

If "**No**", how many times have you attended this annual conference (including this year)?

a) 2-5 times b) 6-9 times c) 10-13 times d) 14-17 times e) 18+ times

Do you hold a leadership position with the association?

a) Yes (**Please answer the following question**)
b) No

If "**Yes**", what type of position do you hold within the association?

a) Serve on Board of Directors b) Serve as a Committee Chair c) Serve on Chapter Board

Who is paying for your conference related fees?

a) Self b) Employer c) Combination

How long have you been a member of this association?

a) Less than 3 years b) 4-7 years c) 8-11 years
d) 12-15 years e) 16-19 years f) 20+ years

What is your gender? a) Male b) Female

When were you born?

a) Before 1946 b) Between 1946 and 1964
c) Between 1965 and 1979 d) After 1979

What best describes your ethnic background?

a) Non-Hispanic White b) Hispanic or Latino
c) African American or Black d) American Indian or Alaska Native
e) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander f) Asian or Asian American

***** Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. *****

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