Sense of community and perceptions of festival social impacts

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the relation between psychological sense of community (SOC) and perceived social impacts of festival events.

Design/methodology/approach – SOC was measured using the four-dimensional Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS) and the Festival Social Impact Attitudes Scale (FSIAS) was used to measure perceived impacts. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires provided to residents of Caldwell, Texas following the annual Kolache Festival.

Findings – Results revealed a relation between two dimensions of the BSCS, needs fulfillment and influence, and the way in which impacts are perceived. Specifically, needs fulfillment was positively related to social benefits and individual benefits. Needs fulfillment was negatively related to social costs. Influence related to impacts in the same manner.

Research limitations/implications – This research provides support for a four-dimensional conceptualization of SOC and highlights the importance of examining the relation between psycho-social variables and perceptions of impact. Further research in additional settings is recommended.

Practical implications – Results suggest that individuals with greater SOC are better able to perceive festival impacts and could be mobilized by festival administrators to address festival issues. Further research in additional settings is recommended.

Originality/value – Empirical explorations of psychological SOC have been common in a range of community settings but have not received much attention within the festival literature. Exploring how SOC is related to festival experiences can enhance theory development within this field of study as well as provide needed insight for festival administrators.

Keywords Sense of community, Festival, Festival impacts

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Sense of community (SOC) describes people’s perception of their experience within the community. Sarason (1974) maintained that psychological SOC was a central concept to understanding the psychology of community and since Sarason’s declaration more than 30 year ago, the number of studies in the academic literature exploring the role of SOC has swelled (Tartaglia, 2006). SOC has been discussed in the academic literature from various perspectives resulting in diverse definitions of the concept; however, the varying definitions often include common elements, such as: empowerment, the existence of mutual interdependence among members, having a sense of belonging, connectedness, spirit, faith and trust, possessing common expectations, shared values and goals (Beeton, 2006). In addition, SOC has been examined in both geographic (physical neighborhoods) and relational (physically dispersed yet socially connected) communities (Gusfield, 1975; McMillan and Chavis, 1986) and has been explored in a range of settings, cross-culturally and within specific socio-cultural segments of
society (Aref et al., 2009; Glynn, 1981; Mannarini and Fedi, 2009; Proescholdbell et al., 2006).

SOC is an important construct when exploring issues in community life. Throughout the world, festivals are integrated into community life as a form of expressive culture that allows mass participation at a shared cultural event. Festivals bring communities together to celebrate a common theme (Getz, 2007). The community celebrating a festival may be geographical, as in a neighborhood festival, or the community may be based on a shared interest or belief, such as when a community of artists share their works with one another or parishioners celebrate together at a religious festival. Derrett declared that festivals contribute to SOC because these events allow community members to share a purpose (Derrett, 2003).

After conducting a case study, Schwarz and Tait (2007) asserted that festivals contribute to SOC because results showed a connection between recreation, arts and cultural events and SOC. This work highlighted the role of festivals in fostering SOC. Derrett claimed that festivals contribute to SOC because they provide opportunities for a sense of belonging, support, empowerment, participation and safety. The work by Derrett (2003) and Schwarz and Tait (2007) did not explicitly set out to examine the relation between festivals and SOC; however, the authors noted a connection between these concepts. Given that many festivals are produced as community celebrations, research is needed that explicitly sets out to better understand the relation between festival experiences and SOC to enable festival producers to find ways to maximize benefits and minimize the costs for the host community. Furthermore, research needs to look at theories that are useful in explaining the relation between SOC and festival experiences.

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the relation between SOC and festival experiences and perceptions. Festival impacts, as perceived by residents and visitors, have been an important aspect of the festival research because of the range of ways in which festivals benefit and cost the communities in which they exist (Getz, 2010; Robertson et al., 2009). The research presented in this paper will examine the relation between SOC and perception of festival impacts. Social exchange theory (SET) will be used to understand the relation between SOC and perception of festival impacts to provide a stronger understanding of the theoretical and practical implications.

**Literature review**

*Psychological SOC*

McMillan and Chavis (1986) observed that one major limitation of the early SOC research was a lack of a detailed theoretical description of SOC and limited discussion of how the concept is related to other relevant concepts. To address this shortcoming, McMillan and Chavis undertook a detailed review of the existing SOC literature that led to a clear conceptualization of SOC and a detailed description of the four dimensions of the construct: membership, influence, integration and needs fulfillment and shared emotional connection. These four dimensions were intended to make the definition of SOC explicit, clear, concrete and indicative of the “warmth and intimacy implicit in the term” (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p. 9). McMillan and Chavis described membership as a sense of identification and belonging to the community and that boundaries differentiate members from non-members. Influence included both the individuals’ influence on the group and vice-versa. Integration and needs fulfillment described the experience of people who are able to meet their own needs and the needs
of others. Shared emotional connection was considered the identification with a shared history.

Since the first published description of McMillan and Chavis’s four-dimension conceptualization of SOC, McMillan has provided a revised description of the dimensions of SOC. In 1996, McMillan rearranged and renamed the dimensions. Spirit replaced membership, trust took the place of influence, trade replaced integration and needs fulfillment and art supplanted shared emotional connection. McMillan has described each of these expanded dimensions in detail and while some elements of each dimension were altered, the core meanings remained unchanged (McMillan, 1996) and existing scales continue to be based on the original 1986 description of the dimensions.

The four-dimensional structure and theoretical description of SOC provided by McMillan and Chavis (1986) has been the most commonly used conceptualization of SOC; however, this interpretation of SOC as a multi-dimensional construct has been contested. Early attempts to empirically confirm the model repeatedly failed. As a result, Mannarini and Fedi (2009) further explored the meanings of SOC based on the perceptions of those outside of the academic community, as opposed to the perceptions of scholars. Their findings were consistent with the theoretical model presented by McMillan and Chavis (1986) but they noted that dimensions appeared to overlap with one another.

Peterson, Speer and McMillan examined the four-dimensional structure of SOC by developing the Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS) to reflect the multi-dimensional conceptualization of the construct. The scale created was proven valid and reliable and confirmed the four dimensions of SOC proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986). These results were later confirmed by Van Winkle et al. (2013). Peterson et al. concluded that previous studies had failed to confirm the multi-dimensional conceptualization of SOC because of issues with measurement rather than problems with the theoretical conceptualization.

SOC is often a key variable in studies exploring diverse aspects of community life and the relation between SOC and a range of variables has been explored over the past 35 years. SOC has been shown to be related to neighborhood attachment (Riger and Lavrakas, 1981), preference for interactions with neighbors (Doolittle and MacDonald, 1978), commitment to a neighborhood (Ahlbrant and Cunningham, 1979), satisfaction with one's neighborhood, perceptions of safety and security (Perkins and Taylor, 1996), neighborhood image (Mannarini et al., 2006), perceptions of the environment, neighboring relations and social and political participation (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990).

In addition, SOC has been shown to result in problem-focussed coping behaviors (Bachrach and Zautra, 1985), meaning residents with high SOC are more likely to do something about a community problem rather than simply change the way they feel about the problem. Chavis and Wandersman (1990) explored the relation between SOC and local action and explored a range of paths through which this relation is established and found that SOC was related to level of participation (neighborhood) block satisfaction, neighbor relations, evaluation of the block and importance of the block.

Mannarini and Fedi (2009) found that the relation between SOC and participation in aspects of community life were more complex than had been previously demonstrated. Mannarini and Fedi’s research revealed that low levels of SOC can still lead to participation in community and that the “main frame underlying their representation of community” (p. 224) affects whether or not a citizen is active. Despite the evidenced
link between SOC and numerous psycho-social measures in the literature, little research has been dedicated to examining the role SOC plays in individuals’ perceptions of festivals in particular, which were in many instances founded to celebrate community and various aspects of culture. This research is needed to help festival administrators understand how people with varying levels of SOC can be empowered to help enhance the benefits of festivals and mitigate the drawbacks.

Residents’ perceived social and cultural impacts of festivals
One only needs to attend a festival of any magnitude for a short period to see the profound impact such an event can have on the attendees and the geographical community in which it is hosted. As Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) and others have contested, an emphasis seems to be placed on examining the economic impact (by way of focussing on economic development); thereby downplaying the social or cultural implications festivals have on individuals and the communities at large (Delamere et al., 2001; Fredline et al., 2003; Hede, 2008; Small et al., 2005). As we consider a more holistic, “triple-bottom line” of festivals (Hede, 2008), a greater focus should be placed on these latter forms of impacts.

While research focussing on the social and cultural impacts of festivals is relatively new (having gained momentum over the last decade), similar research in the fields of travel and tourism has existed longer – born of the work of Mathieson and Wall (1982) – and is likely the impetus for impacts research in festivals. Two tourism impact scales (TIS) that are credited with contributing to socio-cultural impacts research in festivals (see Rollins and Delamere, 2007) are the tourism impact attitude scale (TIAS) created by Lankford and Howard (1994) and the TIS put forth by Ap and Crompton (1998). The 27-item TIAS (with slight modifications) has been shown most recently through the work of Wang and Pfister (2008) and Woosnam (2012) to result in two unique dimensions or factors: “support or concern for local tourism development” and “personal and community benefits.” Slightly longer, the 35-item TIS yielded a seven-factor structure (Ap and Crompton, 1998). Each of these scales shows the multi-dimensionality of impacts measures and the preponderance (and arguably importance) of socio-cultural items used to assess individuals’ perceptions of tourism.

To date, a host of impact scales have been developed in the festival and events literature to assess residents’ perceptions of these community gatherings (Delamere, 2001; Delamere et al., 2001; Fredline et al., 2003; Small, 2008). Developed in an extremely rigorous and thorough manner, the 25-item Festival Social Impact Attitude Scale (FSIAS) was first developed by Delamere et al. Through numerous studies (see Delamere, 2001; Rollins and Delamere, 2007), the FSIAS has continued to yield very high reliability and validity coefficients across the resulting three-factor structure: community benefits, individual benefits and social costs. Despite this, Rollins and Delamere (2007) call for further examination of the scale in novel contexts in a continued effort to validate the measure.

Mirroring the TIS, Fredline et al. (2003) developed a second scale referred to as “a generic scale to measure the social impacts of events.” While the authors intent was to “develop a more parsimonious measure that can be simply employed to gauge the relative impacts on quality of life of different types of events” (p. 24), the 42-item scale was not reduced in size, which does not reduce participants’ burden of time in responding to the scale. The “generic scale” resulted in six factors ranging from social and economic development benefits to concerns about justice and inconvenience as well as long-term impact on community (Fredline et al., 2003).
A nearly identical factor structure resulted from the third socio-cultural impacts scale developed by Small (2008), called the social impact perception (SIP) scale. The 35-item scale resulted in six factors: inconvenience, community identity and cohesion, personal frustration, entertainment and socialization opportunities, community growth and development and behavioral consequences (Small and Edwards, 2003; Small, 2008). The SIP scale is arguably the most comprehensive in assessing social impacts of festivals; however, its length is somewhat problematic especially when collecting data on-site where the burden of time is something researchers must be mindful of. The validity of the SIP is unclear from either work utilizing the measure. In reviewing these works, Delamere’s (2001) FSIAS was selected to measure socio-cultural impacts of festivals for various reasons. Not only has the FSIAS been vetted through repeated sound psychometric properties, but the scale has high usability potential having been employed in various contexts, it is comprehensive (as shown through its high degree of variance explained through the three-factor structure) yet parsimonious and finally, it was the first to be created and employed repeatedly – indicating it has stood the “test of time.”

Research concerning socio-cultural impacts of festivals is scant with few works explaining a significant degree of variance in such impacts. In fact, none of the festival impact studies discussed above examine how indicators such as socio-demographic and socio-economic variables explain any degree of variance in perceived impacts. Just as in the tourism impacts literature, rarely do variables such as household income, gender, education level, race, age, etc. serve to be significant predictors of residents’ perceptions of impacts (Hao et al., 2011). However, some exceptions do exist within the festival and special events literature. Kim and Petrick (2005) found that residents’ attitudes concerning the social impact of FIFA 2002 World Cup were significantly different across gender, occupation group and age categories. Waitt (2003) found something similar when discussing residents’ perceived social impacts of the 2000 Sydney Olympics; that “generally, older respondents were least enthusiastic and those with young dependents were generally most positive” (p. 205).

Lacking from the festival impacts research is the consideration of potential key community (i.e. community identity and SOC) variables that may help to explain perception of impact. While multiple authors (e.g. Deery and Jago, 2010; Gursoy et al., 2004; Wood, 2006) have tangentially mentioned the connection between community measures and perceived impacts of festivals or special events, focussing on this connection is less common and the use of theory to understand the relation between community variables and perceived impacts is even more rare.

Community attachment and related measures (such as length of residency) are aspects of community that have been explored in relation to perceived impacts (Brougham and Butler, 1981; Davis et al., 1988; McCool and Martin, 1994). While some of this work has demonstrated this relation, lack of consistent measures has limited our understanding of the reasons for connections between community measures and impact perception. The work of Fredline and Faulkner (2002a, b) demonstrated a relation between event attendees who identify with the theme of an event and positive perceptions of impacts (Fredline and Faulkner, 2002a, b), where those who participated in the event were more likely to have positive perceptions. The study by Fredline and Faulkner was guided by social representation theory but SET was used in discussing the relation between identifying with the theme of the event and positive perceptions; they noted that “offsetting benefits are derived through being entertained” (Fredline and Faulkner, 2002b, p. 123).
SET first appeared in the academic literature in the late 1950s and has been used to explain human behavior in a range of fields (Homans, 1958). This social psychology theory has frequently been used in tourism studies to understand how people perceive impacts (Ap, 1992; Getz, 1994; Harill, 2004; Jurowski et al., 1997; Madrigal, 1993; Perdue et al., 1990). The main idea behind SET is that social behavior is a process of exchanges. Harrill (2004) notes that “attitudes toward the impacts of tourism development are partially based on the social, economic, and environmental trade-offs – realized or expected – of this development.” (p. 12). The role of reciprocity, where costs and benefits must be balanced, is the key to understanding how tourism and event impacts are perceived from a SET perspective (Harrill, 2004). Specifically, research has often revealed that if a person experiences greater benefits than costs resulting from tourism, they will perceive tourism more positively (Ap, 1992). Ap (1992) describes how SET applies to residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts and notes that when the exchange between tourism and the community is balanced or high for the residents then tourism impacts will be viewed positively, but when the exchange is low then tourism impacts will be viewed negatively. Madrigal (1993) used this same theory to explain the finding that community residents who perceived positive implications of tourism felt they could influence tourism decision.

While SET has not previously been used guide research into perception of festival or event impacts, Fredline and Faulkner (2002b) found that this theory provided insight when interpreting the results of their study that examined how event impacts, rather than tourism impacts, were perceived. The study described here will examine the relation between SOC and perceived festival impacts. As previously stated, SOC is a psychological construct that describes an individual’s relation to a community. In light of the tourism-based SET research, it seems reasonable to expect that an individual who has a positive relation to a community (of SOC) and they feels they receive benefits from this relationship will perceive more benefits from community activities (such as festival and events).

**Study purpose**

As noted above, little research has explicitly examined SOC in festival contexts. Recently, Van Winkle et al. (2013) found that the shared emotional connection dimension of SOC was related to festival attendance and the authors indicated that the festival literature should further examine the ways in which SOC may impact festival experiences and perceptions. SOC has been shown to affect the way in which people perceive their environment, which suggests that SOC may impact the way residents perceive the social implications of festivals within their community. This study examines the relationship between SOC and residents’ attitudes toward the social impacts of a festival to contribute to our understanding of how community variables relate to perceptions of events. SET will be used to understand relations between key variables. Past research within the community psychology literature suggests that greater SOC should results in more favorable perceptions of the community environment; therefore, it was anticipated that SOC would be related to more favorable perceptions of the social and cultural impacts of a festival (i.e. community and individual benefits) than those unfavorable perceptions (i.e. social costs). Specifically, SOC (membership, needs fulfillment, emotional connection and influence) was expected to be significantly and positively related to community benefits and individual benefits, while SOC (membership, needs fulfillment, emotional
connection and influence) was expected to be significantly and negatively related to social costs.

Research methods

Study site, sampling and data collection

Caldwell, Texas, located approximately 80 miles from Austin (state capital) and 100 miles from Houston (the fourth largest city in the USA), is home to one of the largest Czech populations in the state. For the last 26 years, during the second weekend in September, the Kolache Festival has celebrated Czech culture, its delicacies, and the influence that the culture has on the area. As a representation of the Czech culture throughout Central Texas, the kolache is a breakfast yeast pastry served either with a jelly-like filling on top or with a sausage (and cheese or cheese and jalapeno peppers) baked inside, and can be found at nearly every bakery throughout the region. Some of the festival activities include: polka dancing and live music, artisan demonstrations, kolache eating contests, antique machinery and tractor show, Miss Kolache Festival coronation, and areas set up to purchase local area bakeries’ kolaches and locally produced crafts (Burleson County Chamber of Commerce, 2011). It should be noted that nearly all of the festival activities occur in the downtown area of the town.

Caldwell, with its 4,104 residents (US Census Bureau, 2012a) are largely of Czech lineage, however, concern has been voiced by some residents in the recent past claiming that community life is disrupted during the festival. According to the Burleson County Chamber of Commerce, the festival welcomes nearly 20,000 visitors each year, and that such perspectives are not held by many, citing “such thoughts may only be held by a few (who are negative in general) who may be opposed to celebrating culture” (personal communication, April 15, 2010).

Permanent residents of Caldwell comprised the sample population for this study. As such, the geographic community of Caldwell forms the community examined here. Over a period of five weeks following the Kolache Festival in September and October, a research team comprised of six individuals visited households and asked heads of household or their spouse to participate. Visits to households were conducted on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. as well as Friday evenings until 8:00 p.m. In an effort to minimize systematic bias of respondent selection, six separate visits were made on a Monday, Tuesday and Thursday during the five-week period between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. This approach was undertaken to gain access to as many residents who work non-traditional hours as possible. Following a multi-stage cluster sampling strategy and the US Census Bureau’s designations, Caldwell was reduced from census tracts (i.e. geographic homogenous clusters of residents based on similar socio-demographic and socio-economic variables) to block groups (i.e. a further refined geographic clustering based on same variables as census tracts) and finally to households – at each stage, elements (i.e. households) were randomly selected.

According to the 2010 US Census, Caldwell was comprised of 1,452 households (US Census Bureau, 2012b). Overall, 986 households were visited. In some instances, where the block group contained few homes, every household was contacted; every other household was visited in block groups with more homes. At approximately 51.6 percent of those homes (n=509), there was no answer. To alleviate non-response bias for “no answer” households, researchers went to the next immediate household to distribute the survey instrument. At the remaining 477 homes, the head of household (or spouse) was contacted, asked if they lived in the area permanently (no one indicated
they were seasonal homeowners or renters), and asked to participate, of which 61 declined (an 87.2 percent acceptance rate). Of the 416 surveys that were distributed, 348 were completed by residents (an 83.7 percent completion rate). The overall response rate (i.e. 348 completed surveys from the 477 individuals that were contacted) was 73.0 percent. Those individuals that did not answer their door were excluded from the overall response rate given they were neither afforded the opportunity to hear the script asking them to participate in the study nor decline to participate.

**Survey instrument, data analysis and data screening**
The questionnaire instrument utilized for this study included six sections of questions. For the purpose of this paper, the first two sections pertaining to SOC and FSIAS are considered for analysis and are appropriate for addressing the research questions under examination. SOC was measured using the eight-item BSCS developed by Peterson et al. (2008). The eight items span the four-factor structure (with two items per factor) of integration and needs fulfillment, membership, influence and emotional connection (see Table I for each item). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each item on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Perceived socio-cultural impacts of the festival were measured using the 25-item FSIAS as formulated by Delamere (2001). The FSIAS contains three factors: community benefits (eight items); individual benefits (eight items); social costs (nine items) (see Table II for each FSIAS item). The same seven-point scale of agreement as used for the BSCS was utilized for the FSIAS.

In keeping with the purpose of this study, multiple linear regression analyses were utilized in IBM SPSS v21.0 to determine whether the SOC, measured using the BSCS, significantly predict the three factors of the FSIAS. Prior to analysis, composite means for the seven factors (four SOC factors and three FSIAS factors) were calculated and were examined for outliers. Both univariate and multivariate data screening was utilized following recommendations made by Tabachnick and Fidell (2012). Concerning univariate screening, raw data were standardized to examine corresponding z scores. All z scores that exceeded the absolute value of 3.29 were transformed to one unit lower (or higher depending on whether it was negative or positive) than the next most extreme raw score. Data were transformed in 29 occurrences across 14 cases. Following this, Mahalanobis’s distance was requested to examine multivariate outliers. Six of the 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors and corresponding items</th>
<th>Mean^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration and needs fulfillment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This community helps me to fulfill my needs</td>
<td>5.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get what I need in this community</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a member of this community</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I belong in this neighborhood</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in this community are good at influencing each other</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a say about what goes on in my neighborhood</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good bond with others in this community</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to this community</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** ^aItems were rated on a seven-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree

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Table I.

Perceptions of festival social impacts

29

BSCS items
cases that were initially transformed were found to be further problematic as the observed $\chi^2$ value exceeded the critical $\chi^2$ value of 24.32 (df=7, $p < 0.001$) and excluded from subsequent data analysis.

**Results**

**Description of participants**

The majority of the 348 people who completed the questionnaire were over 40 years old (60.5 percent) and were female (59.8 percent). Most respondents had some post-secondary education (68.4 percent) and had a household income over $50,000 (62 percent). A preponderance of participants were Caucasian (66.0 percent), with Latino alone (18.4 percent) and African-American alone (11.8 percent) comprising most of the remainder. Such percentages are comparable to the actual percentages for Caucasian (56.8 percent), Latino alone (29.1 percent) and African-American alone (13.1 percent) currently living in Caldwell according to the US Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey (US Census Bureau, 2011). Most respondents had attended the festival for ten years or more (50.9 percent) and 53.6 percent had lived in the community for fewer than 20 years.
**Relation between SOC and FSIAS**

Multiple simple regression analyses were used to examine the relation between SOC and the FSIAS. The composite means for SOC ($M = 5.59$) and each of the four dimensions of the SOC construct were included as independent variables and the three dimensions of the FSIAS were treated as dependent variables (integration and needs fulfillment, $M = 5.39$, influence, $M = 5.42$; membership, $M = 5.83$; emotional connection, $M = 5.74$). Regression results indicate that SOC was significantly related to the dependent variables. Of the four SOC dimensions only two significantly predicted the dependent variables. Specifically, the “integration and needs fulfillment” and “influence” dimensions of SOC were significantly related to all three of the FSIAS dimensions, while membership and emotional connection were not significantly related to any of the FSIAS dimensions.

The overall model for the FSIAS individual benefits factor revealed $R^2 = 0.300$, $R_{adj}^2 = 0.292$, $F(4, 337) = 36.121$, $p < 0.001$. This model accounted for 30 percent of variance in the individual benefits factor of the FSAIS (see Table III). The overall model for the FSIAS community benefits factor revealed $R^2 = 0.214$, $R_{adj}^2 = 0.204$, $F(4, 337) = 22.899$, $p < 0.001$. This model accounted for 21 percent of variance in the community benefits factor of the FSAIS (see Table IV). The overall model for the FSIAS social costs revealed $R^2 = 0.157$, $R_{adj}^2 = 0.147$, $F(4, 337) = 15.739$, $p < 0.001$. This model accounted for 15.7 percent of the variance in the social costs factor of the FSAIS (see Table V).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOC</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOC needs fulfillment</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>5.926</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC membership</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>-0.881</td>
<td>0.379</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC influence</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>4.517</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC emotional connection</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
<td>-1.333</td>
<td>0.183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: $R^2 = 0.300$ ($p's < 0.000$)*

<table>
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<th>SE B</th>
<th>B</th>
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<th>Sig</th>
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<tr>
<td>SOC needs fulfillment</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>2.838</td>
<td>0.005</td>
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<td>SOC membership</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.393</td>
<td>0.695</td>
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<td>SOC influence</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>3.693</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<td>SOC emotional connection</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.992</td>
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</table>

*Note: $R^2 = 0.214$ ($p's < 0.000$)*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SOC</th>
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<th>SE B</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOC needs fulfillment</td>
<td>-0.124</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>-0.150</td>
<td>-2.123</td>
<td>0.034</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC membership</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>-0.539</td>
<td>0.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC influence</td>
<td>-0.252</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>-0.277</td>
<td>-3.488</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC emotional connection</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: $R^2 = 0.157$ ($p's < 0.000$)*
Discussion and conclusion

Past research has shown that SOC relates to how people perceive the environment. Chavis and Wandersman (1990) found that SOC mediated the perception of block problems resulting in a more positive impression of the neighborhood by those who had a higher SOC. This led the researchers who undertook the present study to hypothesize that SOC dimensions would positively relate to festival benefits and would negatively relate to festival costs. The results revealed that not all of the SOC dimensions related to FSIAS dimensions but the two that did, “integration and needs fulfillment” and “influence,” related in the expected manner.

Membership (a person’s sense of identification with the community and feeling of belonging) and emotional connection (identification with a shared history) did not relate to the impact factors. These dimensions are key components of SOC and the authors were surprised that they did not relate to the way in which impacts were perceived. It is possible that the relation between these two variables is more complex than a simple linear relation could explain or it may be that such SOC factors simply do not influence impact perceptions. Future research should examine this further and could consider curvilinear relations or mediating and moderating relations. For instance, psychological or sociological measures or even socio-demographic and socio-economic indicators may affect the relationship between SOC and perceived impacts of festivals. Diverse methods of measuring both SOC and perceived impacts have been presented in the literature and examining the relations presented here using different methods could produce different results.

The “integration and needs fulfillment” dimension was described by McMillan and Chavis (1986) as encompassing social integration, status, resilience and shared values. This element of the SOC construct, simply called needs fulfillment in the BSCS, reflects the importance of the relationship between the community group and its members and suggests that being a part of the community must be rewarding for the relationship to continue to exist. In the present study, “integration and needs fulfillment” was positively related to perceiving benefits of the event and negatively related to perceiving negative event implications. “Influence” refers to the reciprocal influence between the individual and the community where, the individual feels that they can influence the community and that the community influences them. The individual members’ willingness to conform to the group is an important part of the groups influence on the individual “Thus, conformity serves as a force for closeness as well as an indicator of cohesiveness” (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p. 12). This dimension was also found to significantly and positively affect both perceived social benefits and individual benefits.

The results of the relations between “integration and needs fulfillment” and “influence” and impact perceptions can be better understood by considering these
relations in light of SET. The needs fulfillment dimension of SOC is based on the premise that individuals have needs met (receive benefits) from the community and that this contributes to SOC. Those Caldwell community members who feel more strongly that their community meets their needs are more likely to recognize the benefits of various community opportunities including festivals. A community festival such as the Kolache Festival is typically developed and implemented with the goal of meeting community members’ needs. The Kolache Festival was created to celebrate the Czech heritage of the community assumedly responding to a community need. The results reveal that those who feel that the community meets their needs (because of their greater sense of needs fulfillment) also recognize the benefits of the festival and perceive fewer social costs of the event. The past tourism-based SET research has repeatedly demonstrated that when individuals receive social (or other) benefits from tourism they are more likely to see the positive implications of tourism and support its development. Similarly, as the results presented here demonstrate, individuals who receive benefits from the community (needs fulfillment) are more likely to perceive the benefits of a community event such as the Kolache Festival.

Respondents with high “influence” feel that they simultaneously influence the group and are influenced by the group. Those who experience this strong sense of conformity and cohesiveness that is part of the influence dimension seem likely to more readily recognize the benefits and dismiss the drawbacks of community event because if they feel they are influencing community events it seems likely that it is within their best interest to note the benefits. This is also supported by past tourism-based SET research that has shown that involvement in the tourism industry contributes to more positive perceptions of tourism.

As noted earlier, people with a greater SOC are more likely than others to take action when a problem is perceived (Bachrach and Zautra, 1985). However, if people with greater SOC perceive fewer costs they likely will not take action to ameliorate these costs because they do not recognize the costs associated with the event. This suggests that festival organizers who are committed to minimizing the costs of the event and maximizing the benefits should make an effort to engage with community members with a lower SOC to understand the ways in which the festival is negatively impacting community life. This is likely going to present a challenge to festival organizers who may have difficulty identifying and engaging with community members with lower SOC. One solution is festival administrators to regularly consult more than just festival attendees when making decisions about the festival. This could be done through broad community consultation in the form of town hall meetings, resident surveys or other less formal opportunities. Engaging broadly with residents (including those who are and are not involved in the event) on an ongoing basis is important to ensure a balanced understanding of impacts is gained. More recent research by Mannarini and Fedi (2009) found that low SOC does not always lead to less political activism but that some community members with low SOC may be active in contributing to change. This suggests that festival organizers may want to consult with groups that are politically active within the community even if they are not directly connected with the festival in an effort develop relationships with change makers and consulting with them to better understand festival costs and benefits perceived throughout the community. Festival administrators should consider engaging in municipal or other community committees not directly related to the festival to build relationships with individuals who may have diverse perceptions of the festival and may not receive any
benefits from the festival. Consulting these individuals may provide insight into costs associated with the Festival.

Research to date has not examined the specific circumstances in which someone with low SOC will engage in community action. This line of research would be valuable to event organizers who, with this knowledge, could identify community members with low SOC who are more likely to perceive the costs associated with an event. The low SOC community members may be interested and willing to take action and work with the festival to reduce the costs of hosting an event to the benefit of the entire community.

Overall, SOC was significantly related to each impact factor; however, each of the four dimensions of SOC did not all relate to the perception of impact. This provides support for continuing to consider SOC as a four-dimensional, rather than singular, construct. Each SOC dimension represents a distinct aspect of one's relation to community and it is important to understand the complexity of the relation between SOC dimensions and other perceptions of the community life (e.g. festival impact) in order to make appropriate decisions regarding the community.

Examining social factors that relate to perceived impacts has not been common in the tourism nor festival impact literature. This limits our ability to understand why some individuals recognize the impacts of events while others do not. SOC appears to contribute to community members' ability to see the implications of hosting events. Greater needs fulfillment and influence resulted in a stronger perception of impacts likely because of a heightened awareness of the goings-on with in the community. This is important for the long-term success of an event. If benefits and costs are recognized then action can be taken by festival and event managers and planning agency officials to enhance the positive and reduce the negative aspects of hosting events. Event managers must be sure to listen to the concerns of community members with both low and high SOC to be sure all perspectives are considered, because these groups appear to perceive impacts differently. Once managers understand the way the community at large perceives impacts, then managers must address these issues to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs. As noted above, some past research suggests that community members with greater SOC can be mobilized into social action more readily than those who experience low SOC and this can be useful in directly managing the impacts of community festivals (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). Hosting a festival typically requires many individuals and community groups to become directly involved with the event on many levels including volunteering, working in shops, serving on communities and participating in festivities. Engaging high SOC community members to become involved in the diverse aspects of the festival could help festival administrators to manage the full range of festival drawbacks. These festival stakeholders and members of the community should be informed of the costs perceived by others and could be enlisted to assist in addressing the impacts during their involvement with the festival.

Future research should examine how neighborhood community members (residents) with varying levels of SOC engage with a festival and contribute (or not) to enhancing the positive and reducing the negative implications. Such research could also serve to segment such residents to help aid practitioners in utilizing key individuals to mitigate negative impacts. Additional research is needed that examines the variable discussed here in a range of festival and community contexts to ensure the findings are not simply a function of the unique attributes of the community in which the research took place. This research used existing SOC and impact perception
measures. These measures represent specific conceptualization of these constructs and other ways of understanding these constructs exists. Future research could examine the role of the varying conceptualizations of SOC on perception of impacts. This research was limited to examining perceived social impacts and did not examine all types of impact. A triple-bottom line approach to measuring impact perception, where social, physical and economic impacts are considered simultaneously, could reveal a great deal about how SOC relates to impact perception. All things considered, this work will undoubtedly contribute to the discourse on the role social indicators of community play in the way individuals perceive the impacts of festivals or events where they reside.

References


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