



College of Business

Maximizing the Value of Career Events in Higher Education:

An Analysis of Student Experiences Using SmartPLS

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Presented by:

Melissa Diegnau, MBA

Assistant Professor of Management & Entrepreneurship

College of Business | Minnesota State University, Mankato

Agenda

- Why this topic and importance
- Study insight
- Theory/model insight
 - Definitions
- Findings
- Future adjustments
- Questions

Why this topic

- Successful networking event for 600 students annually
 - 15-35+ industry partners
- Knew it was a “hit”
 - Class survey (students)
 - Student email, “thank you...”
 - Industry partner praise
 - Administration/faculty praise
- Other faculty/areas see & want to duplicate it

Why this topic cont.

Despite knowing it was impactful...

- How could we measure the CE success?
- How could we inspire other institutions to try this for their students?
 - Student praise
 - Industry partner growth
 - Workplace readiness & perceived student value
- What could the data and previous research tell us to make this already “good thing” better?
- How could what we learned from our data help others wanting to add this, or improve what they are doing be better?

Topic importance

- Institutions spend money on CEs
- “They are essential for a student to connect with potential employers, learn about different career paths, and gain valuable industry insights (Amoroso & Burke, 2018).”
- Hones soft-skills, graduate area of weakness per industry

Topic importance cont.

- CEs can support retention as they help build students community
 - Classmates with similar majors
 - Infield professional contacts
- Many students are still exploring career paths and often funding is tied to “on-time” graduation

Topic importance cont.

Because CEs cost money, institutions already provide them, and research says there are benefits to the student and institution if done well...

- It is important to understand the holistic student experience:
 - How individual and communal experiences shape the overall student experience as group attendees
 - The decision-making process of attending these participatory events in a group setting
 - The overall experience as group attendees
 - How individual and communal experiences are shaped

Current research has yet to comprehend the elements of a CE experience

Study insight

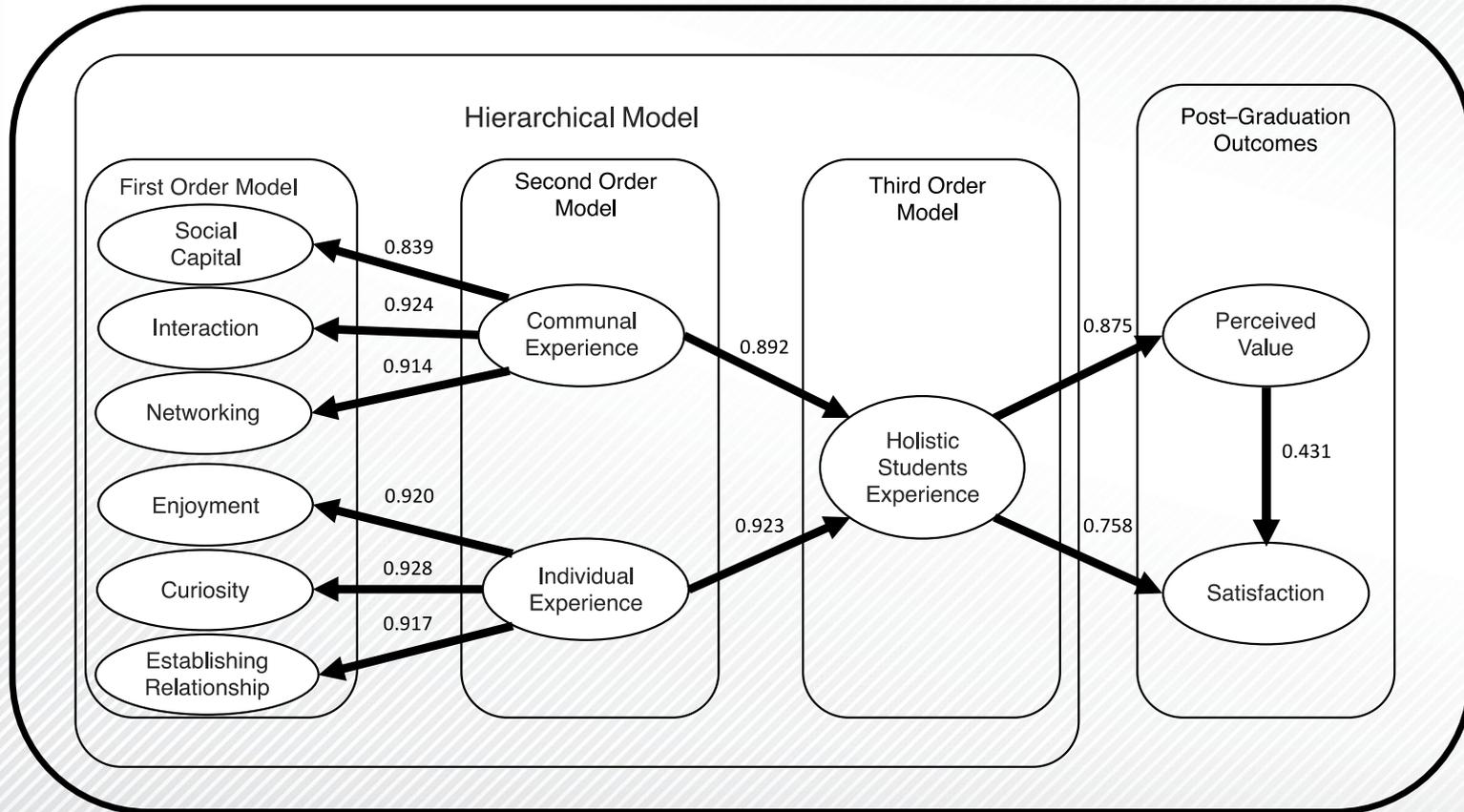
- 634 respondents that had a “significant experience”
 - About 230 current students
 - About 400 previous students (spring 2019-spring 2022)
 - Impactful enough they replied
- Non-required web-based survey
- Activity Theory framework
 - Individual and social constructs from previous literature (Engestrom, Piyathasanan, Daniels)
- SmartPLS to analyze

Theory insight

Activity theory contends that any activity results from an individual's mutual interaction with their surroundings during an effort to achieve an intended or unintended outcome and can be used to explain an individual's experience in a service setting, i.e. networking CE.

It has been used to frame studies and produce insights involving human interactions within communities in the study of organizations.

Model insight



Theoretical Framework with Loadings.

Theory definitions

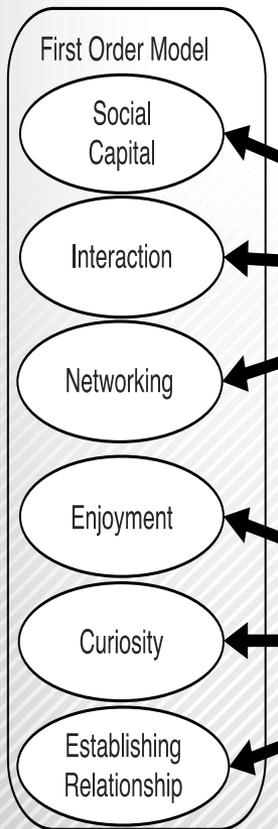
Subject = students

Artefacts = the networking event itself, connections made/industry partner

Object = desired outcome (enjoyment of getting a job or building professional network)

Community = interactions with students, industry partners, event organizers, etc.

Model definitions



Social Capital: Networks built based on trust and associated traits (Putnam)

Interaction: Communication between object and artefacts

Networking: Building connections with others for the purpose of mutual gain in one's work or career & supports social capital development

Enjoyment: Difference within an emotion tied to well-being, satisfaction of completion (i.e. assignment)

Curiosity: Trait and mood that can be a motivator for learning (Silvia)

Establishing Relationship: Mentor (IP) supportive & objective

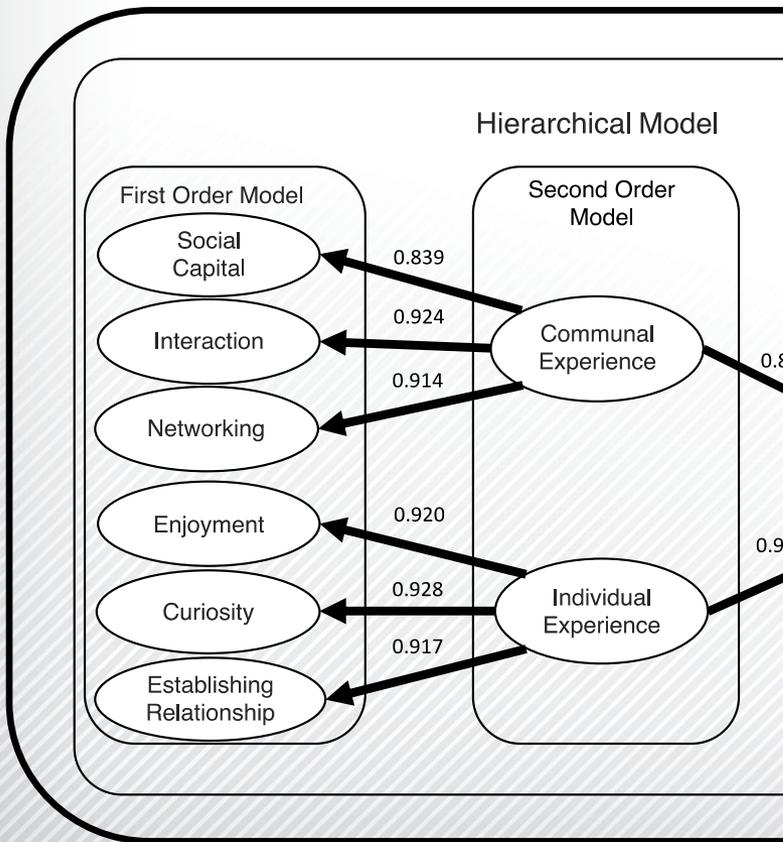
Model definitions

Perceived Value: Perceived value of cost verses benefit associated with attending the CE

- time or money spent getting to event worth return
 - i.e. relationships made, jobs learned about

Satisfaction: Customer perceived “value for the money”

Model insight



Note findings indicate:

Communal experience comprised of:

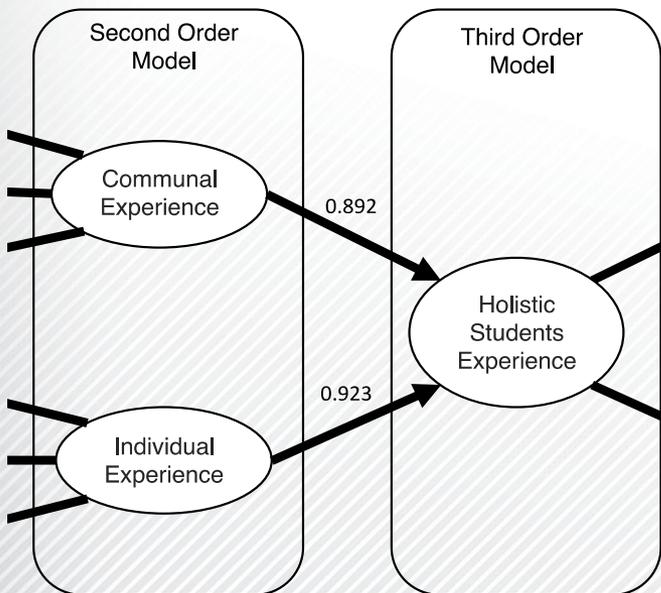
Social Capital
Interaction
Networking

An individual's experience:

Enjoyment
Curiosity
Establishing Relationship

Model insight cont.

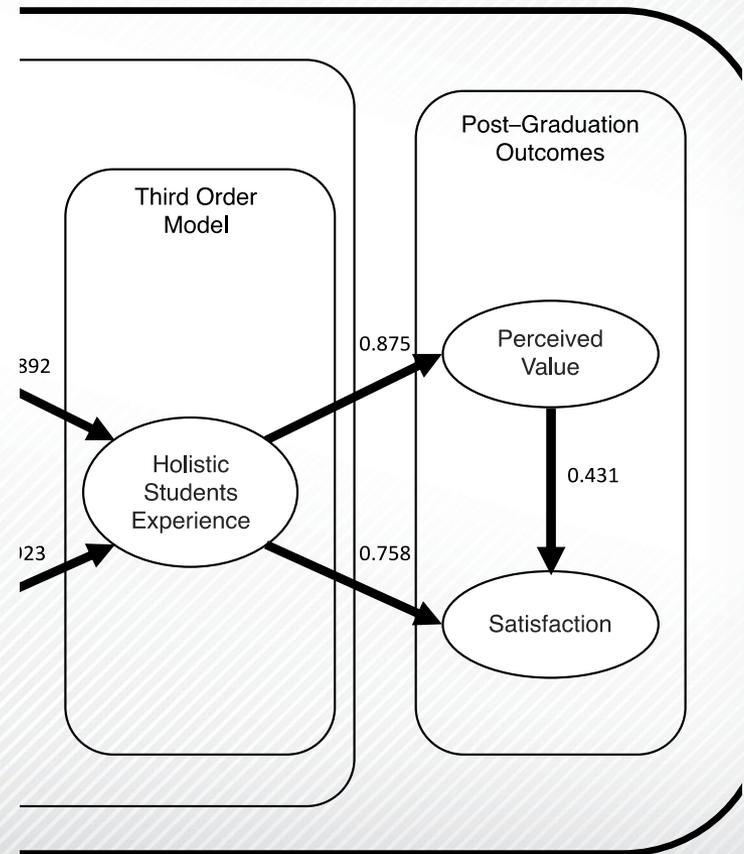
Hierarchical Model



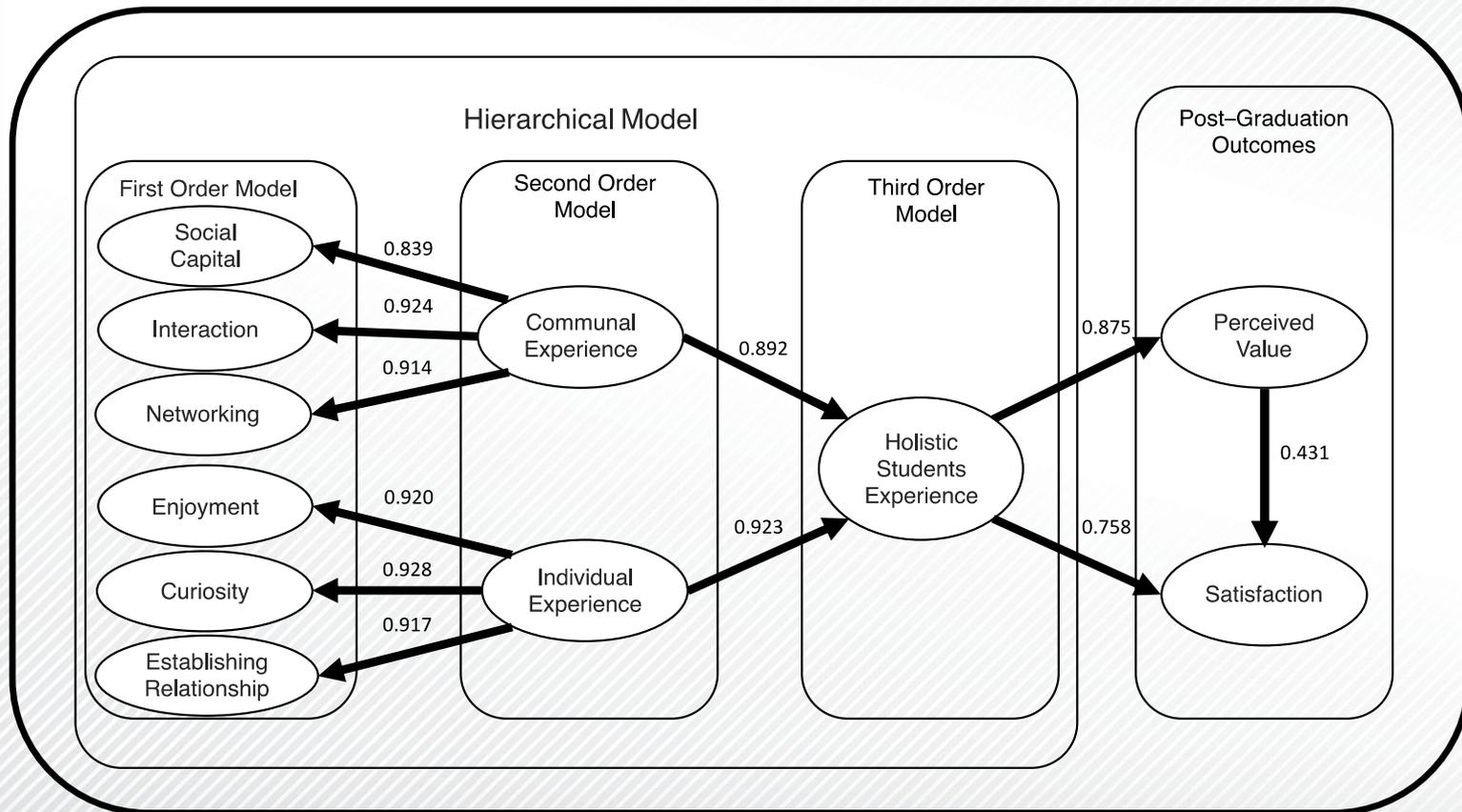
Note findings indicate:
Communal experience AND an individual's experience make up the student's holistic CE experience

Model insight cont.

Note findings indicate:
That by evaluating the student's
holistic CE experience you can
gain insight to their
perceived value
AND
satisfaction



Findings



Findings are significant and support the model.

Future event adjustments

Data indicated all areas significant. Only area that could be improved is communal experience.

- Currently students complete individual assignment reporting on networking conversations

Based on findings, to increase value and satisfaction I will try:

- Pairing students in small groups by major
- Strengthen their communal experience
 - Submit small group/partner assignment, verses individual