

2019

Membership matters! Expressed attitudes of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants regarding their state OT association: a survey

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SARGENT COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Doctoral Project

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!
EXPRESSED ATTITUDES OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS
AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANTS REGARDING
THEIR STATE OT ASSOCIATION: A SURVEY

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Occupational Therapy

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my husband, family, friends, co-workers, cheerleaders, and dogs that have supported me throughout this journey and pushed me to keep going. I have wanted to be a Boston University graduate for a very long time.

I did it!

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ABSTRACT

Career-specific associations are an integral part of professional life (Walston & Khaliq, 2012). In 1998, state occupational therapy (OT) associations reported that their membership rates reflected 25–50% of all registered OTs for their state (Breedon et al., 2000). Since then, membership rates have been declining throughout all state associations nationwide. This doctoral project is comprised of two nation-wide surveys distributed to OTs, occupational therapy assistants (OTAs), and board members of state associations in an effort to decipher and decode why OTs and OTAs do or do not join their state associations. Surveys inquired about the personal saliency of commonly referenced member benefits often provided by professional associations, and how respondents felt their state association provided for the effective implementation of these benefits. Open ended questions asked why and why not respondents are/are not association members and what their associations can do to change for the future. Significant results include the following: both OT and OTAs found the establishment of professional standards as most salient; board members rated implementation of benefits higher than current association

members; and implementation of additional continuing education opportunities was the most popular change that respondents want to see from their association. Associations can most effectively begin to “modernize” their recruitment practices by creating more effective social media and Internet-based practices to disseminate pertinent information to stakeholders.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOTA.....	American Occupational Therapy Association
CEU	Continuing Education Unit
OT	Occupational Therapy/Occupational Therapist
OTA	Occupational Therapy Assistant

CHAPTER ONE

Career-specific associations are an integral part of professional life. As of 2012, there were more than 23,000 national and 64,000 state, local, and regional professional associations representing a majority of industries, occupations, and interests (Walston & Khaliq, 2012). Gruen, Summers and Acito (2000) found that roughly seven in ten Americans are a member of a professional association. In the realm of health care, the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) is the largest professional association, with over 30,000 members worldwide (Walston & Khaliq, 2012). Other popular professional associations in healthcare include the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) with over 95,000 members (Membership Matters, 2017), the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) with over 191,500 communicative disorder professions (ASHA membership, 2017), and the American Nurses Association (ANA), which represents over 3.6 million nurses in conjunction with respective state organizations, affiliate nursing associations, and specialty nursing associations (Members and affiliates, 2017). These associations provide members with professional trainings, publications, conferences, networking opportunities, and policy advocacy (Walston & Khaliq, 2012). For the profession of occupational therapy, the national association is the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). AOTA currently serves 63,249 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and occupational therapy students as of August 2017 (Report of executive director, 2017). AOTA provides its members with advocacy, networking, and continuing education opportunities. On a smaller scale, every state in the United States has their own

professional occupational therapy association,. The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) addresses the common interests and needs of occupational therapists around the world (History, 2016).

Nationally, there are an estimated 118,070 occupational therapists and 38,170 occupational therapy assistants working in the United States (Employment and Wages Occupational Therapist & Employment, 2016; Wages Occupational Therapist Assistant, 2016). As of 2014, there were 18,500 students registered in either Master's or Doctorate occupational therapy programs (Annual Report, 2015). Based on this information, the 63,249 AOTA members represent approximately 36.2% of all OTs, OTAs, and OT students in the United States. In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, AOTA practitioner membership has been down roughly 460 memberships, and any increase in memberships throughout the year has been due to students (Report of the executive director, 2017). In comparison, there are an estimated 216,920 physical therapists in the United States and 85,580 physical therapy assistants (Employment and Wages Physical Therapists, 2016, Employment and Wages Physical Therapy Assistants, 2016). In 2014 there were a reported 8,806 physical therapist graduates and 6,987 physical therapy assistant graduates as of 2016 (Aggregate Program Data Physical Therapy, 2017; Physical Therapy Assistants, 2017). Based on these numbers, the APTA current membership serves roughly 29.9% of all physical therapists, physical therapy assistants, and students in the United States. Although all numbers provided are estimates, both organizations' statistics show that the membership participation in AOTA and APTA are low relative to the estimates of therapists, assistants, and students in each discipline.

The Florida Occupational Therapy Association (FOTA) is currently experiencing a low point in membership. Incorporated on October 7, 1977, FOTA celebrates 40 years of advocacy, networking, and community for occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and occupational therapy students in the state of Florida (FOTA history, 2017). As of April 08, 2019, FOTA claims 973 members throughout the entire state of Florida: 359 members are occupational therapists (OTs), 84 members are occupational therapy assistants (OTAs), 8 members are retired, and 507 members are students (J. Silvaroli, personal communication, April 09, 2019). Statistics for 2019 dictate there are 10,060 OTs and 6,501 OT assistants licensed in the state of Florida. Based off of this data, only 2.7% of OTs and OTAs choose to associate with the Florida Occupational Therapy Association. This doctoral project strives to explain the determinants to association membership among occupational therapists around the United States. Specifically:

- What are the generational differences affecting professional membership trends?
- How can health-care related professional associations best recruit and retain members?
- What member benefits do current, former and never members in a professional association value?
- What are predictors of membership affiliation?
- Are there any discrepancies in opinion between members and elected officers within an association regarding the association operation?

- What are effective strategies for professional associations to modernize their appeal to all stakeholders?

Students, as they represent a large bulk of state association membership often due to coursework requirements, will not be considered for this project. Hughes, Book, and Lewis (2016) researched why or why not physical therapy students in Texas chose to associate with the APTA. When joining APTA, one also joins their respective state association. This study cites that association membership was required and/or “strongly encouraged” by university programs as one of the main reasons students associated (Hughes, Book, & Lewis, 2016). This trend is seen within the occupational students as well, as many programs make national and/or association mandatory. In Florida, FOTA membership reflects this trend, with students as nearly 50% of all FOTA members.

According to the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), there are many factors that influence professionals’ decision to associate (Dalton & Dignam, 2012). There is limited research overall as to why health care professionals associate. Research about occupational therapists associating is extremely limited and dated overall. One article examined the relationship between demographics, professionalism, and levels of involvement within the Indiana OT Association (Breedon et al., 2000). According to this article, in 1998, state OT association presidents reported that their membership rates reflected between 25-50% of all registered OTs for their state (Breedon et al., 2000). For the Florida OT Association, this is not currently the case, as only 3.2% of all registered OTs and OTAs in the state are members of the association.

Cherr, Moelen, Dayton, James, Sutherland, and Hassett (2009) detail personality traits between various generations when surveying young surgeon's attitudes towards professional membership. Baby Boomers (born 1943 to 1960), are characterized as "self-sacrificing, driven to succeed, loyal (including to employer), respectful of authority, and optimistic of the future (Cherr et al., 2009)". Individuals belonging to Generation X (born 1961 to 1981) have been characterized as "self-absorbed and self-oriented, valuing autonomy and flexible schedules, placing more emphasis on friends and family than material success and known to harbor cynicism about large organizations (Cherr et al.)". Generation X members are slow to commit to long-term relationships, cynical, pessimistic, and practical. They also are skeptical of authority and institutions.

Members of Generation Y, (born 1982-2002), are "thought to be positive-thinking, technically savvy, team-based, collaborative, goal-oriented multi-taskers (Cherr et al., 2009)." Millennials, our newer generation, overlap Generation Y. The Millennial generation includes people born between 1981-1996 (Dimock, 2018). Despite generational characteristics, the common denominator remains that Americans of all ages and generations are decreasing their participation in professional organizations.

There are many external factors that contribute to a national trend in declining professional association membership. Starting in the year 2000, the economy that was rapidly booming started to rapidly decline (Sladek, 2011). From March 2000 to October 2000, the NASDAQ took a large downturn of 90%, leading to hiring freezes, layoffs, and industry consolidations. On October 6, 2008, the Great Recession led to a nation wide financial crisis, leading to the collapse of many large financial institutions and the bailing

out of banks, as well as rapid downturns in the stock markets around the world (Sladek, 2011). The Great Recession brought about widespread unemployment, declining home values, a federal debt crisis, inflation, and rising gas prices (Sladek, 2011). The year 2011 would bring about the beginning of the retirement wave of Baby Boomers, the nation's largest workforce generation (Sladek, 2011). Between the years 2011 and 2030, 78 million Baby Boomers will retire, forever changing the American workforce and primary makeup of the American professional association (Sladek, 2011). Socially, Sladek confirms that over the last 20 years, social changes in younger generations are responsible for declining memberships in professional associations. Younger individuals value their work-life balance and individuality, differently than Baby Boomers, who join associations as it is "the right thing to do (Sladek, 2011)." For the purpose of this study, retired association members will be taken into consideration when generating data. This data, as available, will provide further insight into generational differences between association members.

Why Does This Matter?

The author believes that membership and associations fall under the "self-advocacy" role of the OT Practice Framework under "types of interventions" in table 6 (AOTA, 2014 p.S30). Advocacy, as defined in the OT Framework, is "Efforts directed toward promoting occupational justice and empowering clients to seek and obtain resources to fully participate in daily life occupations. The outcomes of advocacy and self-advocacy support health, well-being, and occupational participation at the individual or systems level (AOTA, 2014 p. S30)". The framework cites many ways in which OTs

can partake in advocacy roles, such as collaborating with, and becoming a member of organizations that benefit various populations the OT serves. Joining an organization, like a state or national professional organization that provides for protecting a profession's rights for the common interest of the people the professional serves, is one way the authors believe to implement self-advocacy.

In recent months, the current health care system under President Trump has been faced with the repeal of Obama-Era healthcare policies. In May of 2017, President Trump proposed a health care bill, designed to repeal and replace Obamacare (Kodjak & Stein, 2017). This bill, condemned by many scientists and health professionals, sought to make large cuts to Medicaid funding, with specific cuts relating to occupational therapy services, elderly services, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and work support for individuals with disabilities (Kodjak & Stein, 2017). Although the bill did not pass through Congress, with the last attempt in summer of 2017, a healthcare battle could still be imminent in America's near future.

Without sufficient lobbying efforts, occupational therapists are voiceless at both the national and state levels when legislation threatens therapy services. Educational opportunities to promote the importance of occupational therapy to lawmakers cease to exist without sufficient lobbying efforts from a profession's national organization. On the national level, the AOTA Political Action Committee (or AOTPAC), fights for the importance of occupational therapy services (AOTPAC, 2017); however, membership dues do not fund the AOTPAC, as it is a separate donation made primarily by AOTA members (AOTPAC, 2017). Joining a professional organization protects OT as

profession for current and future generations of OT practitioners and the clients that they serve.

Project Overview

To address the problem, two surveys have been created to reach out to OTs and OTAs around the country. The first survey, intended for OTs and OTAs, inquires about the importance OTs and OTAs place on popular membership benefits and how they feel their state association delivers on these membership benefits. The survey includes open-ended questions regarding membership status. The survey poses basic demographic questions, particularly practice setting, age, years of experience, and degree earned.

A second survey targets board members of each State OT Association. This survey is identical to the OT and OTA survey. The difference is that the board members are responsible for answering about how they feel their state association delivers on providing member benefits, and how they feel the association implements the importance of each member benefit. The open-ended questions for this survey asks respondents to reflect on why the association feels members join and stay, why members do not join, and what the association personally feels they can do to increase membership.

CHAPTER TWO

The Problem: Why Are OTs/OTAs Joining/Not Joining State Associations?

State OT associations are currently experiencing low membership numbers across the nation. This doctoral project serves as a pilot study in deciphering why OTs and OTAs do or do not join their state associations. Initial membership literature searches were inconclusive in providing information specifically regarding OT/OTA membership trends. The literature identifies common themes regarding general membership trends, including age, saliency of membership benefits, and reasons for/barriers to membership. The following evidence highlights significant findings in preparation for doctoral project implementation.

The Generational Influence on Membership

One's age and generational upbringing can be a predictor of membership affiliation. Generational differences were a prominent theme throughout the membership literature search. Although age and generational status is not specifically represented in the membership model, one's generational status exerts potentially significant influence on each of the themes represented in the model.

Historically, older generations, namely Baby Boomers, are the largest membership cohort in professional associations. This generation was groomed to believe that one should, and must, join their association in support (Sladek, 2011, p. 59–77). Older generations were taught to always value professional associations as their generation historically thrived on the concept of unions (Sladek, 2011, p. 59-77). Older generations prefer that their association align to meet their professional needs, including

trainings and professional development (Dalton & Dignam, 2012). Examples of professional benefits include the establishment of a code of ethics (or professional standards), professional communication, and influencing legislation that affects the field (Ki, 2016).

Younger generations, specifically Millennials, Generation X, and Generation Y, value a return on investment (ROI). The perceived return exerts significant influence concerning their decision to join an association (Sladek, 2011, p. 1-19). Dalton & Dignam (2012) found that younger generations needed to be personally driven in order to join. They also found that aging was a factor in determining the most important member benefits and that benefits must outweigh cost. Appealing organizational advertising is also a deciding factor for younger generations (Walsh & Daddario, 2015). Younger generations were shown to eventually join an association, but only after ageing out of an entry-level status, when professional identity is more salient. An association can influence mid-career professionals, those in-between generations, to join an association if it can assist in career advancement and an improved professional reputation for the professional (Walsh & Daddario, 2015).

What Do Members (and Non-Members) Want?

The survey cited financial constraints as the number one reason as to why a professional has not joined an association or has left an association. Many potential members consider association fees to be too high. Employers do not always cover the cost. Regardless of the specific professional association studied, the survey cited commonly valued membership benefits including continuing education, attending

conference, overall career development, organizational action (lobbying and legislation) and networking/mentoring opportunities (Bauman, 2008; Hughes, Book, & Lewis 2016; Reyes & Brown, 2018; Taylor et al., 2017; Walsh & Daddario, 2015; Waltman, 2008). More importantly, the literature review identified that important benefits for former and never members, could serve as a helpful tool to use when recruiting new association members:

- **Former Members:** The researchers found that most former members, in findings congruent with the aforementioned researchers, leave associations due to financial constraints. Financial constraints resulted from either annual dues being too expensive, or their employer stopped paying for dues as an employee benefit. Digging deeper, Dalton & Dignam (2012, p. 17-33) also found that former members left the association for personal reasons, citing that they “did not feel they belonged to the group” and that the group was not satisfying them on a personal level; otherwise referred to as not satisfying one’s personal salience. Alotaibi (2007) found similar results when studying affiliation trends of nurses in Kuwait. The study cited former members as valuing association benefits pertaining to professionalism, self-improvement, education, and overall support. Deleskey (2003) cites that former members often leave the association because they simply do not have the time to dedicate to it. These findings are congruent with the proposed membership model, citing that the association must satisfy one personally in order to influence membership affiliation.

- Never Members: Dalton & Dignam (2012, p. 22) identified Never Members as having their own set of characteristics. Never members indicated less concern with the recognition of the profession in the larger society, a challenging regulatory environment and with issues regarding pending legislation. Never members are also more likely to be concerned with affiliating with an organization with an inadequate supply of capable professionals, implying that the association will not be fulfilling professionally. Never members also fear not receiving high quality outcomes as a member.

It is important to consider the wants and needs of former and never members, as these individuals are potential professional association members. Adjusting one's association practices, whether it is keeping up with changing technologies, conference trends, networking demands, and/or providing for a diverse membership base is crucial in order to appeal to all potential members (Neill, Wooley, Stork, & Luttrell-Denis, 2004; Waltham, 2008).

When discussing predictors of membership affiliation, individuals who possess a positive attitude of the association will most likely join or be current members (Ki, 2016; Markova, Ford, Dickson, & Bohn, 2013; Phillips & Leahy, 2012; Yeager, Rabin & Vocino, 1985). Ki (2016) and Phillips & Leahy (2012) also found that personal benefits (relating to personal salience) are also strong predictors, as well as individuals having the belief that they should be a part of their professional association (which also follows the findings of Yeager, Rabin, & Vocino, 1985). Examples of personal benefits include career development, educational training, networking opportunities, and professional

certification (Ki, 2016). Yeager, Rabin, & Vocino (1985) stated long before Sladek (2011) and Dalton & Dignam (2012) that individuals in their first job had a negative connection with association membership, which is consistent with the generalized notion that entry-level, younger professionals are not association members.

Healthcare Specific Professional Associations

As literature regarding membership trends of OTs and OTAs is scarce, the project considered membership literature for other healthcare professions and healthcare specific professional associations. Hughes, Book & Lewis (2016) and Taylor et al (2017) both found that the number one reason for healthcare professionals to not join their association was the cost of dues. This reason corresponds with the findings of non-healthcare related studies. Coe & Best (2014) found that dental professionals were more likely to renew their membership if their employer paid for dues. Within healthcare specific professional associations, one of the most valued member benefits is quality continuing education (Bauer, Szeinbach, Griffith, & Siegel, 2002; Hughes, Book, & Lewis, 2016; Taylor et al, 2017). A prominent component of articles concerning the future of healthcare specific association recruitment is the recurring theme of mentorship, specifically for potential student members and entry-level members (Cherr, Moalem, Dayton, James, Sutherlans, & Hasset, 2009; Hughes, Book, & Lewis, 2016; Vioral; 2011; Yeager, Rabin, & Vocino, 1985). Although these studies have a large gap between the oldest (Yeager, Rabin, & Vocino, 1985) and the most recent (Hughes, Book, & Lewis, 2016), the literature indicates a consistent theme that early student recruitment, mentorship, and association leadership and/or volunteer opportunities remain relevant in improving an association's

membership rates. These opportunities can improve a potential member's overall attitude towards the association and contribute to one's personal and professional saliency when deciding whether to join an association.

Theoretical Constructs

The two theoretical frameworks that help decipher the science of membership are the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Social Identity Theory (SIT). SET was created in the late 1950s-early 1960s by sociologists George Homans and Peter Blau, and social psychologists John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family, 2003). This theory foundation is overarching principle that human interaction and exchange is a cost/benefit analysis. SET assumes social behavior pertains to the pursuit of rewards and avoidance of punishment (Encyclopedia, 2001).

When linking SET to membership association, the Comparison Level (CL), a component within SET, originated by Thibaut and Kelley, is the most applicable. The CL is a cost-benefit analysis, stating that people utilize past experience to dictate the level of satisfaction in a relationship (Social Exchange Theory-Major Contemporary Concepts, 2018). The CL expresses simply as $\text{outcome} = \text{reward} - \text{cost}$ (Social exchange theory, 2011). Comparison Level of Alternatives (CLAlt), the counter balance to CL, defines the "lowest level of outcome a person will accept from a relationship in light of available alternatives, to explain an individuals' decision to remain in or leave a relationship (Social Exchange Theory-Major Contemporary Concepts, 2018)." When an individual perceives the CLAlt more positively than the current situation, the individual is more likely to leave that relationship. Conversely, an individual is less likely to leave

their current situation if the alternative is not viewed as positively as the current situation (Social exchange theory, 2011). In terms of membership, individuals are more likely to join if they view the relationship the association brings (CLAlt) more positively (via membership benefits, Etc.) than *not* being in the current relationship of the association (CL). If a member decides that being a member of an association (CLAlt) is *not* as beneficial (due to cost, requirements, etc) as their current status as a non-member (CL), then the individual will most likely not join the association.

The Social Identity Theory states that people fuel their need for positive self-esteem by joining social groups that they believe will boost self-esteem (Bauman, 2008). In terms of associations, professionals will join associations if they feel that it will boost self-esteem (Bauman, 2008). Phillips and Leahy (2012) stated that professions provide for a strong sense of self-definition, and the norms and values of the profession have the ability to influence the beliefs and behaviors of the individuals within the profession. SIT can be highly likened to one's personal (networking, career development, educational training) and professional (ethics, legislation influencing) beliefs and the benefits that one perceives to gain as an association member. Members will most often choose to align themselves with an association if they believe that the association can satisfy their personal and professional standards.

Membership Model

This extensive literature review about membership trends, characteristics, and predictors of membership affiliation yields a visual model. The visual model

conceptualized for this doctoral project is cyclical in nature, as conditions of satisfying the model are constantly repeating. The model consists of three cyclical models: one for current members, one for former members, and one for never members. The arrows in the model connecting the three individual cycles depict how professionals can move within the various phases of the model. The components within each model address the following: overall attitude towards association, salient member benefits, cost versus benefit, personal beliefs of association, and professional benefits of association. Fulfilling each component's characteristics within each cyclical model heavily predicts membership affiliation. See Appendix A for complete visual model.

Addressing the Problem

The next step in the creation of the doctoral project was creating the intervention. This project employs a survey to address the intervention phase. This survey has two components- one survey for all occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants (members and non-members) in the United States, and a second survey that targets only voting executive board members of each state association. The bulk of the survey asks for opinions regarding how much the individual values most popularly cited member benefits, and how well they believe the association delivers on these member benefits.

Effective Survey Design

Knowing how to word survey questions ensures improved accuracy of the data collected (Charbonneau, 2007). Minimizing the amount of cognitive effort necessary for the respondent to understand the question is critical in generating accurate and “thoughtful” data (Lenzner, 2012). The language of each question, regardless of its format, should be very precise. Precision ensures that the respondent understands the questions intent (Charbonneau, 2007). When creating a survey, Charbonneau (2007) cites that no more than 10% of the survey should be open-ended questions, as they demand more time and can deter respondents from completing the survey. Survey questions should use positive language and avoid the use of the word “not”. Charbonneau (2007) also recommends piloting the survey to ensure that the survey is easy to understand by intended respondents. Survey testing included multiple review cycles by a circle of advisors.

The next component of the survey required a decision concerning the most appropriate Likert-type scale to measure importance and satisfaction of association member benefits. When creating Likert-type scales, there is often an interchanging between verbal responses (not satisfied to satisfied, or happy versus unhappy, for example) and numerical ratings by the researcher. The conversions of numerical and verbal ratings (and vice versa) are not always equal (DeJonge, Veenhoven, & Arends, 2015; Schaeffer & Presser, 2003). Most individuals assume that the various number rankings are equal in value, meaning they represent a uniform distribution. Interpretation of scale ratings can skew respondents towards a more negative or more positive response

(DeJonge, Veenhoven, & Arends, 2015).

The solution to a potentially skewed Likert scale is the use of a midpoint, implying that the scale should be an odd number (Schaeffer & Presser, 2003). The general consensus is that five to seven-point Likert scales are the most accurate and should be the most widely used (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson & Hankinson, 2017; Chen, Yu, & Yu, 2015; Wakita, Ueshima, & Noguchi, 2012). Chen, Yu and Yu (2015) suggest that five-point Likert scales are optimal, as they require the least amount of cognitive effort and yield the least amount of reaction time by the respondent. A seven-point scale was a close second place. The consensus among all articles reviewed is that the number of anchors (responses) put into a Likert-type scale is greatly dependent on the research project at hand and the quality of survey data desired.

Lastly, the literature presents interesting results regarding the use of open-ended questions. Research regarding the use of open-ended questions offers considerable discussion concerning the effects of box sizing (i.e.-text window) on responses and response quality. Larger box sizes lead to responses that produce more words, hence, generating more themes to code by the researcher. The use of importance statements prefacing each open-ended question (such as “your response is important...”) proved vital in not only ensuring a response, but also in producing a higher quality response by the respondent (Chaudhary & Isreal, 2016; Smyth, Dillman, Christian & McBride, 2009).

Best Survey Practices

When deciding to do a survey, the author concluded that distributing the survey online was the most cost effective and efficient means possible. The literature regarding survey distribution methods was not harmonious in the recommendation of mail versus e-mail/web-based surveys. Although there were articles denoting that web-based surveys are generally more effective (Kiernen, Kiernen, Oyler & Gilles, 2005), there was another article recommending the use of mix-mode distribution (web and mail) as the most effective (Millar & Dillman, 2011). Some of the literature reviewed was dated to the early 2000s, when web-based surveys may not have been as popular as they are today. When using an Internet-based survey method, effective communication is key when attempting to generate high response rates. Specifically, the literature recommends pre-survey letters and follow-up reminders (Bennett & Sid Nair, 2010; Sheehan & McMillian, 1999). Advertising to like-minded respondents (Sheehan & McMillian, 1999) and having a strong research identity and research supporter (Pan, Woodside, & Meng, 2013) are important in generating higher response rates. The use of incentives also greatly improves response rates of online surveys (Deutskens, De Reyter, Wetzels & Oosterveld, 2004; Millar & Dillman, 2011). This project did not employ incentives as no research budget was available.

Conclusion

This extensive research provided assistance in the development of the survey for this doctoral project. For example, the survey in the doctoral project has included 5-point Likert-type scales in the body of the survey. The survey incorporated importance

statements and the use of text boxes..The survey utilized Internet distributions, not only for its cost effectiveness, but also for access to a mass audience via social media. All potential respondents received introduction and reminder emails. The intention of the survey is to provide guidance for state OT associations to improve membership rates. Without strong membership, our nation's various occupational therapy (OT) professional organizations are incapable of widespread implementation of standards, professionalism, and activism. With more prosperous state OT associations, OTs and OTAs around the United States will benefit from improved political, social, and professional support that will last throughout generations.

CHAPTER THREE

When thinking about professional associations, some individuals liken joining a professional association with investing in job insurance. Professional associations, whether on a local, state, or national scale, serve as the leading authority for one's profession in the respective geographical area. These associations also coordinate the lobbying efforts necessary to combat threats to their profession within their geographical region.

Project Vision

In 1998, State OT Association presidents reported to AOTA that their membership rates reflected between 25-50% of all registered OTs for their state (Breden et al., 2000). Currently, membership rates for State OT Associations are on the decline. Low state association membership is becoming a growing problem for the OT profession, as State OT Association memberships are vital to support local OT advocacy, state licensure protection and overall lobbying efforts when state law threatens the OT practice.

To address the problem, two surveys have been created to reach out to OTs and OTAs around the country. The author of this doctoral project aims to explore the factors which promote membership in state associations, including prominent (or salient) membership benefits, and the implementation of these benefits by the association. The expected survey results will provide state associations around the nation with general feedback as to why OTs are members, why they are not, and suggestions as to how to improve the association to boost membership rates. The first survey, for OTs and OTAs,

primarily inquires about how important they rank popular membership benefits of associations, including conferences, lobbying efforts, networking, leadership, and volunteer opportunities, and how they feel their state association *delivers* on these membership benefits. The survey includes open-ended questions regarding why current members choose to be members, why non-members continue to not be members, and what the OT or OTA believes the association can do to improve in the future. Basic demographic questions, particularly practice setting, age, years of experience, and degree earned, are also asked of respondents.

The second survey is for Board members of each State OT Association. This survey is nearly identical to the OT and OTA survey. The difference is that the survey asks board members how they feel the *association delivers* on providing members with the aforementioned member benefits, and how they feel the *association ranks* the importance of each member benefit. The open-ended questions for this survey ask respondents to reflect on why the association feels members join and stay, why members do not join, and what the association believes it can do to increase membership.

Evaluability Assessment (EA)

Development of project surveys requires collaboration and decision-making among stakeholders. The survey development and refinement process required a series of live and virtual meetings. The process considered current peer reviewed published journal articles, the construction of questions, appropriate use of Likert-Scale versus open-ended items, visual aesthetic, and congruence of recommendations of web-based survey practices. These meetings took place between the author and faculty advisor. The

author shared preliminary survey questions with the Florida OT Association Board Members for feedback to further solidify approval of all stakeholders. Since survey quality has a direct impact on the quality of short term and intermediate exploratory data, EA was an essential step to ensure that stakeholders were in agreement regarding readiness of the surveys for distribution. EA was also essential in planning a nationwide program of State OT Association policies and logistic procedure updating in response to the knowledge gained. Please see Appendix A for OT/OTA survey questions and Appendix B for Board Member survey questions.

Evaluation Questions

These questions aimed at identifying key factors affecting OTs/OTAs from joining and/or not joining their State OT Association. Evaluation questions also sought to address differing perceptions regarding the OT Association between Board members and OTs/OTAs. The survey considered the following evaluation questions:

- What are the most important reasons why OTs/OTAs join their State OT Association?
- What reasons depict why OTs/OTAs do not join their State OT Association?
- Which member benefits do OTs/OTAs and State Board members share the largest discrepancy in service delivery? For which benefits do both parties feel they deliver well?

Type of Research Design and Methods

This intended program evaluation is primarily exploratory and formative, though in the long term there is a summative element. The author has three primary areas of

interest. In the short-term the State OT Association Boards require information as to why OTs and OTAs do not associate. The intermediate objective is to determine how the State OT Associations should begin to “modernize,” or adjust their delivery of member benefits, social events, conferences, social media presence, recruitment tactics, or other policies to attract more members. In the long-term objective will require at least a year following launch of the survey and after short- and intermediate-term data have been fully analyzed and the OT Association program of changes has been put in place. This final objective seeks to measure whether the changes resulted in positive trends in OT and OTA membership and feelings about State OT Association performance nationally. Thus, comparison of data over successive time periods comprises the repeat measurement summative or outcomes aspect.

Therefore, the most applicable research design method for this project during long-term dissemination efforts (see chapter 6) is an interrupted time-series design. This design allows for a longitudinal design method. The author will use this method to examine State OT Associations during the initial survey period and at least one year after qualitative and quantitative survey data have been collected and analyzed by all State OT Associations (Hatry, Newcomer, & Wholey, 2015).

Gathering Qualitative and Quantitative Data

The survey employed the Qualtrics online survey platform. The survey encompassed a combination of 20, 5-point Likert scale questions and three open-ended questions, not including demographic questions for participants to answer. Likert scale questions possess answers ranging from “extremely important” to “not at all important” when

asking members about how they value common professional association membership benefits, and from “extremely well” to “not at all well” when discussing how they feel the associations implement the membership benefits. Open-ended questions contain an importance statement before each of the questions to improve compliance in answering the question. A large text box allows participants to write narrative responses.

Implementation of Survey

The survey for this doctoral project was distributed via email and social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit) between November 12, 2018 and December 17, 2018. The total amount of usable (largely completed) surveys received was 700. 600 of the 700 respondents were current occupational therapists (OTs), 11 were retired OTs, and 87 were current occupational therapy assistants (OTAs). Survey results, despite the wide range of geographical locations around the United States responding, should not be taken as an absolute representation of all opinions expressed by OTs and OTAs.

Demographics of Respondents

Of the 700 total usable surveys, 693 respondents answered in which state they were licensed. Respondents to the survey represented in every geographical region of the United States, with the highest number of respondents licensed in the southeast United States, at 355, or 51.2% of respondents. The northeast region accounted for 194 respondents, or 28% of sample; Midwest yielded 52 respondents, or 7.5% of sample, southwest yielded 29 respondents, or 4.2% of sample, and the western region of the United States accounted for 54 respondents, or 7.8% of sample. Of the 693 respondents, six individuals did not respond to the question appropriately (put another demographic

answer in its place or nothing at all); one individual was from Puerto Rico, one from Canada, and one from Australia. The state with the largest number of respondents was Florida, producing 313 responses, followed by Massachusetts with 76 responses, and Connecticut with 57 responses. Females accounted for 94.78% of respondents for this survey.

A more thorough demographic breakdown of reported members and non-members indicates that of the respondents who identified themselves as members, 274 were females and 19 were males. One respondent did not indicate gender. The majority of member respondents (35.05%) were 54 years old and older. The majority of members hold Masters degrees (41.85%), and the most popular work setting was Academia (23.81%). Of the respondents who were non-members, 362 were female, 14 male, and one preferred not to answer. The majority of non-members are between the ages of 39-53 (37.40%). The majority of non-members also hold Masters degrees (54.11%), and the most popular work setting was school-based (29.18%). Tables C1-C3 in appendix C depict a full breakdown of member and non-member ages, education level, and primate work setting. Percentages may not equal to 100 for each column, as not all respondents appropriately answered each demographic question.

Outcomes

Based on data gathered from survey results, the author was able to make important comparisons that can help shape the future of improving membership rates of state associations. Comparisons generated include age effect of member benefit saliency, age effect on implementation of member benefits, OT and OTA member benefit saliency,

association member versus non-member member benefit saliency, member versus non-member member benefit implementation, board-member member benefit saliency, and board-member member benefit implementation. Although 700 total surveys were deemed “usable”, or primarily completed, each set of comparisons revealed differing sample sizes due to varying levels of completeness of respondents per question. Chapter 4 provides a further breakdown of results.

Limitations

This study has several limitations upon which future research can improve. The first shortcoming is incomplete data. Many respondents omitted seemingly random answers throughout the survey. Either respondents simply “forgot” to answer, or believed they answered the close-ended questions when they, in fact, had not. To limit the exclusion criteria to 100% of questions answered, as originally intended, would greatly reduce the number of usable surveys to analyze.

Further, within the survey format is room for improvement. Aside from the three open-ended questions at the end of the survey, a few demographic questions were also open-ended, such as age and state of licensure. This open-ended structure of these questions invited some respondents to not answer the question either appropriately (as some individuals had inappropriate answers for either question) or at all. Future studies may change the three open-ended questions to close-ended with an open-ended “other” component to ensure the answering of these questions. In addition, making each question its own webpage on the survey will also improve response rate, as respondents will have less of an opportunity to overlook questions.

Future testing will also call for improved statistical calculations, as the numerical data given in this project is basic in nature. Further significance testing will be imperative for further dissemination of these results to prove or disprove the legitimacy of the data collected. Use of a statistician will be imperative when performing these calculations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction to Logic Model

Figure 4.1 depicts the proposed logic model created for this program. The nature of the problem begins with low membership rates of OTs and OTAs in their state associations. Program clients include OTs, and OTAs, whether they are association members or not. Further stakeholders include state association board members and other large professional organizations (both healthcare and non-healthcare related) that are experiencing similar membership troubles. Program resources include an online survey platform (SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics, Google Survey, etc.), SPSS software, partnerships with state associations as well as with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), and additional funding to provide for dissemination efforts. The primary intervention is the survey via the Qualtrics survey platform. Program output, qualitative and quantitative data, help inspire short term and long-term goals for the project. Short term goals including properly decoding why OTs and OTAs do and do not associate with their state association, and associations learn of any discrepancies in state association performance by board members, and other stakeholders (members and non members). Long-term outcome includes improved membership for all state associations. Figure 4.1 provides for a full logic model depiction.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The Qualtrics online survey platform served as the primary data source for the survey. The Qualtrics platform calculates a basic statistical analysis of data, including minimum and maximum values, mean, variance, standard deviation, and total number of

responses for each question. Qualtrics also possesses the capability to visually represent the basic data through charts and graphs if necessary. Coded Likert scale responses represent a numerical value for quantitative statistical data calculations.

Significant statistical calculations unavailable on the Qualtrics platform, including correlations, percentages, and t-tests require online SPSS-type software, such as IBM SPSS, and Microsoft Excel. These calculations were completed immediately after the initial survey period has ended. If future dissemination efforts are successful, future calculations will require comparison with the initial survey's data.

Data Management Plan

The data stored on the Qualtrics survey platform is password protected by the author's Boston University student account. The author exported the data to Excel spreadsheets. The data remained password protected on the author's personal computer. The data was also saved on a thumb drive that will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. There is minimal risk to confidentiality or the possibility of a personal information breach, as participants did not provide identifying details in the completed survey.

Results

The following results provide for quantitative and qualitative data generated from survey respondents:

How Age Affects Member Benefit Saliency

The author calculated correlations between age and how salient each of the ten member benefits presented on the survey were to respondents. Saliency, a recurring theme of the project data, refers to the respondent's feeling of prominence or importance of a particular area; in this case, relating to member benefits. This section included 679 of the 700 respondents, as they completed all survey questions, including providing their age as specified in question two of the survey. Likert anchors for all saliency questions consisted of the following: Not important (score of 1), slightly important (2), moderately important (3), very important (4) and extremely important (5). Sample sizes mildly fluctuated for each benefit, as respondents were not completely consistent when responding about each member benefit.

All correlation values found are in the lower third of the distribution of correlation coefficients (Hemphill, 2003). Falling into this lower third dictates that the overall effect, or magnitude, of this data is small. Given that correlations are low, all correlation and significance results require caution when interpreting. Eighty percent of the correlations found were negative correlation trends, dictating that the majority of member benefits were found more salient with younger survey respondents. An online coefficient calculator (Math Cracker, 2019) served to calculate the significance levels. The most significant member benefits (at 99% significance) valued by younger respondents are mentoring opportunities (0.213), followed by job postings (-0.139), and leadership (-0.135). No correlations were significant between older age ranges. Table D1 provides for a full correlation table.

In addition to saliency, it was important for the author to analyze how age affected the respondents' opinions concerning how state associations effectively implemented member benefits. Analyzing if age impacted these responses is valuable information, as it will afford state associations the ability to alter the implementation of these member benefits to target various age groups. Likert anchors for this question, and for all implementation questions in this survey included the following: not well at all (score of 1), slight well (2), moderately well (3), very well (4) and extremely well (5).

These sets of correlations serve to determine if age has any association with how respondents believe the association implements each member benefit. The major difference between these two tables is that all correlation coefficients are in a positive direction, indicating that older age ranges find the implementation of these member benefits more successful than younger generations. These findings are important, as younger respondents significantly valued more member benefits than older respondents, yet they do not believe the association implements them well. The member benefits with the highest correlation are job postings (0.193), followed by lobbying (0.145), and networking (0.134). These results show that younger age ranges are not satisfied with their association's implementation of the member benefits most important to them. Again, these correlations are low in coefficient values falling in the lower third range, so interpretation of these findings requires caution. Table D2 in appendix D provides for a full correlation table.

OT and OTA Member Benefit Saliency

Aside from age, job classification can also impact what one values in a state association. The author compared results on member benefit saliency between OTs and OTAs to determine if job title swayed saliency, or if OTs and OTAs value the same member benefits. Descriptive statistics, specifically percentages, averages, and standard deviations served as a basic comparison between groups. Sample sizes for this question ranged from 605–610 respondents, and OTA sample sizes ranged from 86–87 respondents. Tables D3 and D4 depict full OT and OTA member benefit saliency.

OTAs reported the highest level of saliency with the following member benefits: professional standards ($\bar{x}=4.08\pm[0.83]$), other CEU opportunities ($\bar{x}=3.95\pm[0.96]$) and discounts ($\bar{x}=3.60\pm[1.13]$). OTs reported the highest level of saliency with professional standards ($\bar{x}=3.89\pm[1.03]$), lobbying ($\bar{x}=3.71\pm[1.19]$), and other CEU opportunities ($\bar{x}=3.54\pm[1.14]$), based on the highest averages calculated for each response. OTAs valued many member benefits over OTs, including job postings, state conference, and mentoring; whereas OTs did not value any member benefit more than OTAs. Between both groups, the most salient member benefit is professional standards, and the least important benefit is social events. Tables D3 and D4 detail all saliency data for OTs and OTAs.

Member Versus Non-Member Member Benefit Saliency and Implementation

In analyzing professional associations, current, former, and never members have different views on their profession's association and what benefits are more important based on membership status. For this study, the author analyzed member benefit saliency

of current State OT Association members and non-members. Analysis of the data employed descriptive statistics, including overall percentage of responses, averages, and standard deviations of each answer. Member sample size ranges from 374-377 respondents, and non-member sample size ranges from 301-305 respondents.

Both members and non-members expressed the highest level of saliency for the following member benefits: lobbying ($\bar{x}=3.72\pm[1.05]$ for members, $\bar{x}=3.35\pm[1.19]$ for non-members), other CEU opportunities ($\bar{x}=3.73\pm[1.02]$ for members, $\bar{x}=3.49\pm[1.13]$ for non-members), and the establishment of professional standards ($\bar{x}=4.12\pm[0.96]$ for members, $\bar{x}=3.76\pm[1.02]$ for non-members). Social events serve as the member benefit with the lowest level of saliency between the two groups ($\bar{x}=2.57\pm[1.10]$ for members, $\bar{x}=2.17\pm[1.13]$ for non-members). Significant differences are found in the area of networking, as members value this member benefit more than non-members ($\bar{x}=3.69\pm[1.02]$ for members versus $\bar{x}=2.96\pm[1.09]$ for non-members). Tables D5 and D6 provide for a full breakdown of member and non-member member benefit saliency.

Members ranked the implementation of member benefits by their state association higher than non-members. Specifically, members ranked state conference ($\bar{x}=4.01\pm[0.97]$), lobbying ($\bar{x}=3.72\pm[1.05]$) and establishment of professional standards ($\bar{x}=3.33\pm[1.09]$) as the most successfully implemented member benefits. Similar to non-members, members also ranked social events as the least successfully implemented member benefit ($\bar{x}=2.53\pm[1.01]$ for members, $\bar{x}=2.51\pm[0.97]$ for non-members). This is not surprising, as members also ranked the social events category the lowest in terms of saliency.

Non-members ranked the implementation of member benefits low across the board for all categories. The lowest ranking member benefits are networking ($\bar{x}=2.31\pm[0.94]$), leadership ($\bar{x}=2.37\pm[0.95]$), and job postings ($\bar{x}=2.39\pm[1.02]$). Tables D7 and D8 detail member and non-member implementation of member benefit responses.

Board Member Attitudes Versus Members and Non-Members

Evaluating what board members/elected officers within an association believe is more salient to them is also very important to understand in the scope of this project, as board members are the leading authorities for state associations. Their data is an important component to analyze, as it may detect key inconsistencies between who runs the associations and the populations they serve. Identifying any attitude differences between board members, members, and non-members can be the first step in analyzing true association performance and overall success. For this component of the project, 48 state OT association board members (from 14 states) completed the survey.

Board members did not identify with higher saliency means for the member benefits overall. Most of the means scored on the higher side of moderately important, with the exception of social events, which scored on average as slightly important ($\bar{x}=2.79\pm[1.09]$). This is congruent with all responses for social events between all comparison groups. The member benefits with the highest amount of saliency are lobbying ($\bar{x}=4.19\pm[1.04]$) and state conference ($\bar{x}=4.77\pm[0.47]$).

When comparing the board member responses between general member responses, a few patterns were noticed. For one, both groups identified lobbying as a high valued member benefit, with both groups scoring this category virtually identically (mean

of 4.16 for members and 4.19 for board members). Where they differ is professional standards, as members scored a mean of 4.12, and board members a mean of 3.85. State conference differed by a mean of one full anchor point, as general members had a mean anchor response of 3.72 and board members resulted in a mean response of 4.77.

Non-members as a whole scored member benefits considerably lower than board members did, with the exception of professional standards (mean of 3.76) and other CEU opportunities (mean of 3.49). Non-members and board members scored professional standards very similarly, as board member respondents yielded a mean response of 3.85 compared to non-members' mean response of 3.76. Table D9 details board member saliencies for member benefits.

Board member responses regarding member benefit implementation were wide-ranging and were not ranked as highly as saliency values. The best member benefit implementations were state conferences ($\bar{x}=4.51\pm[0.75]$) and lobbying ($\bar{x}=3.81\pm[1.19]$), which were also the highest scored in saliency by board members. The lowest scoring implementations were social events ($\bar{x}=2.74\pm[1.15]$) and other CEU opportunities ($\bar{x}=2.98\pm[1.14]$). This means that board members do not believe they provide for their stakeholders in these two areas well. These two member benefits, as they reflect low means, require improvements in the future. Table D10 details board member implementation of member benefit responses.

When comparing implementation of member benefits between board members and general members, the same two member benefits, state conference and lobbying, scored highest. Both groups also scored social events as the least well implemented. The

largest differences in responses lie in the areas of mentoring and job postings, as general members responded that their association implements these benefits less successfully than board members do.

Open Ended Questions

Why Are OTs/OTAs Members?

This open-ended question generated 269 responses. The author identified similar terms in each response, and coded these narrative similarities into themes. Table E1 details full member response percentages to this question. Top results include the following:

- The most commonly cited reason for joining was “because it is one’s professional duty as an OT to support their state OT association (29.74% of respondents)”
- Lobbying/political reasons came in second place, generated by 26.39% of respondents
- “Staying connected/in touch” and networking were virtually tied with 11.52% and 11.15% respectively of generated responses

Why are OTs/OTAs NOT Members?

This open-ended question generated 325 responses. Again, the author identified similar terms in each response, and coded these narrative similarities into themes. Table E2 details full member response percentages to this question. Top results include the following

- The most common response was the cost of dues being too high, with 35.28% of respondents citing this as the main reason for not joining. No comment on

increasing/changing costs of association membership were made as a reason for costs being “too high,” nor was the cost of the state association cited to be higher than AOTA dues mentioned in answers

- The second most commonly cited reason was a decreased cost versus benefit analysis thought out by the therapist, generating 16.92% of responses
- The third most commonly reported by 10.15% of respondents is therapist “simply not seeing the benefit overall” by being a member
- The fourth most commonly reported reasons were tied with 7.07% of responses each, including therapist determining that the association was “not worth it” and that they “don’t need it” and therapist being an AOTA member and not wanting to pay for both

How Can Your Association Change?

The third open-ended question and final question to the survey asked respondents to suggest what their association can do to improve membership. This question generated 378 responses from both members and non-members. Table E3 details full percentages of answers. The top answers are the following:

- The most common response, generating 16.4% of responses, was providing for more CEUs outside of conference
- 15.87% (n=60) of responses were simply “I don’t know.” The primary respondents were non-members, who are otherwise not invested in the association and therefore may not present strong opinions on this topic

- Third most commonly reported suggestion was improving networking opportunities, which represented 10.32% of respondents
- The fourth most commonly cited, tied with 8.46% of responses each, are improving social media platforms and website and improving lobbying abilities

Discussion

The following discussion examines the breakdown of findings.

Age/Generational Influences on Membership

Existing literature suggests that younger generations gravitate towards member benefits that will affect them personally, such as networking, mentoring, and tangible discounts (Dalton & Dignam, 2012, p. 33–43). The correlations found from related survey data support all but networking significance, as the correlation coefficients were not significant at either the 95% or 99% confidence levels. Perhaps one reason for this inconsistency reflects the changing values of today's younger generation. When one thinks of networking, one assumes an in-person, social function. With the rise of technology, improved social media-based networking may be more desirable to younger generations in the future. When discussing implementation of member benefits, older age groups reported higher success compared to younger age groups. Low correlation values for saliency and implementation of member benefits dictate the use of caution when interpreting this specific data. Moving forward, associations can use this data as a starting point when deciding which member benefits to focus on when appealing to drawing in younger members. It cannot be the sole marketing technique, however, employed when reaching out to entry-level practitioners.

Members Versus Non-Members: General Trends

Of the 293 member respondents, although the majority of respondents (35.03%) were considered Baby Boomers, the younger generations were close behind in size (33.67% “Generation X” range and 30.3% “Millennials”). This population spread is not necessarily consistent with generational literature suggesting that associations struggle in recruiting members from “Generation X” (generally ages 30-46) and younger (Dalton & Dignam, 2012; Sladek, 2011). Members reported to have a higher level of saliency with member benefits such as lobbying, instilment of professional standards, conference, and other CEU opportunities, which correlates with the top reasons as to why one is a member of their state OT association.

Although more respondents were non-members than members, they also had a similar demographic spread. The majority of respondents were younger generations (37% each of Generation X and Millennials), though Baby Boomers were not insignificant in representation (21.75% of respondents). Like members, non-members also value member benefits such as lobbying, other CEU opportunities, and the instilment of professional standards the most, supporting the findings of Deleskey (2003).

When addressing healthcare specific characteristics of an association, the member benefit saliencies of both OTs and OTAs were analyzed. Both groups reported that the (implementation of) professional standards yielded the highest saliency responses. OTAs valued more member benefits with higher saliency than OTs, including benefits such as networking and job postings. Existing literature cites that when working with healthcare professionals and healthcare associations, the focus should be on mentoring opportunities

to improve membership rates (Cherr et al., 2009; Hughes, Book & Lewis, 2016; Vioral, 2011). Given that neither OTs nor OTAs cited mentorship with high levels of saliency, it does not necessarily support these findings.

Board Member Attitudes

Results indicate that board member attitudes were higher for both member benefit saliency and implementation by the association, with the exception of “other CEU opportunities” and social events, as both groups had similar anchor means. Board members had significantly higher means of member benefit saliency and implementation than non-members. These findings support the works of Dalton & Dignam (2012) and Bauer, Szeinbach, Griffith, and Siegel (2002), as they found that officers and members in state associations often differ in their perception of the quality and value of services provided by the association. Further, it shows an overall disconnect between how board members believe the association is run compared to both members and other stakeholders (non-members). This decreased congruence of member benefit implementation may even be the cause for overall dissatisfaction of non-members towards state OT associations, as evidenced by non-member responses towards member benefit implementation. Board members overall have a large influence on member attitudes towards the association (Bayazit, & Waeter, 2009; Metochi, 2002; Hammer, Wang, Tsui, & Xin, 2011). Given that non-members were the largest respondent “demographic,” board members need to take non-member concerns into consideration if they want to begin the process of improving recruitment and retainment strategies.

It is also important to take primary job setting into consideration when comparing

board member responses. For this survey, the majority of board member respondents worked primarily in academia (13 respondents). Having board members stemming from the same career paths may skew the member benefit implementations demonstrated by the state OT association, especially when trying to accommodate the needs of all OTs and OTAs from different backgrounds. Diversifying board members from all types of job settings (and job titles) can help in improving organizational performance and implementation of member benefits for all stakeholders (Siciliano, 1996).

Moving Forward

The first step in moving forward is for state OT associations to reflect on current practices (Dalton & Dignam, 2012). The survey open-ended question provide the data to allow the state OT associations to begin to align themselves fully with what their members want in order to attract new members (Aubrey, 1997). Survey respondents, whether members or non-members, reported a desire for state associations to include more CEU and networking opportunities as two of the most commonly cited changes. Interestingly enough, neither of these two reasons were the number one member benefit in terms of saliency when evaluated by both members and non-members throughout the survey, although they were high ranking. As the individuals who cited additional CEUs and networking took the time to respond to the last survey question appropriately, these two member benefits seem like a solid starting point for state OT associations transformation. This supports the works of Taylor et al. (2017), Cherr et al. (2009), who cite that education and networking opportunities are imperative for both millennial populations and also for medical professional organizations. It is therefore recommended

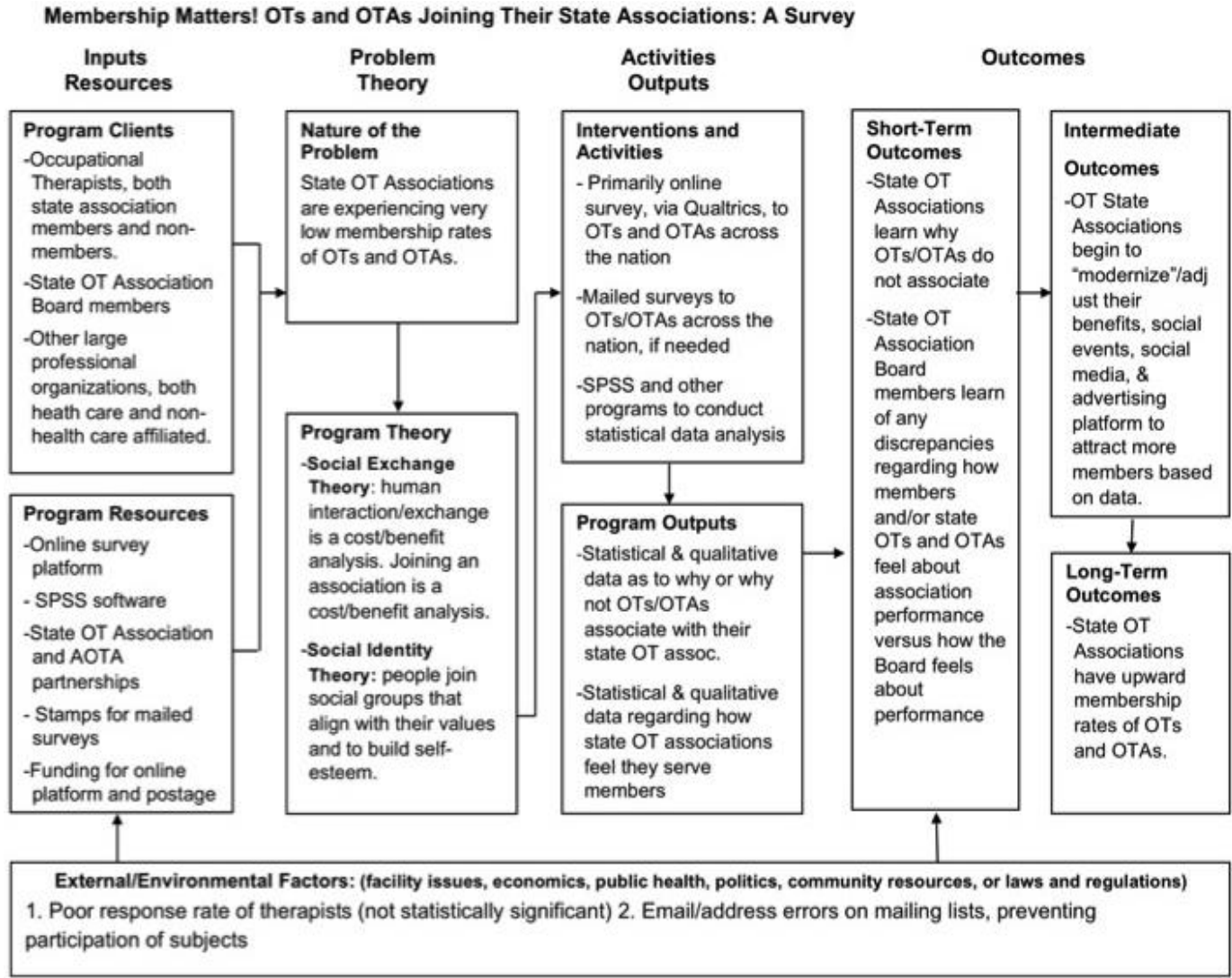
that state associations begin to modernize their provisioning of continuing education opportunities.

Several respondents suggested that state OT associations to improve their internet-based operations, including improving their website (for easier access to resources) and social media presence (for easier dissemination of information). Improving these platforms will call for more effective marketing that can improve retention and participation of members (Gruen, Summer, & Acito, 2000). In particular, state associations may want to prioritize free marketing strategies such as via social media, by which they can spread information to a wide range of stakeholders efficiently.

Another important result in this category involves the issue of cost versus benefit. Although this was a significant reason for OTs and OTAs not joining their state OT association, cost related improvements (ie-lowering cost) was *not* the top response when asked how to improve their state association. Improving member benefits, such as providing for more CEUs topped the list. These results suggest that associations need to work on addressing stakeholder return on investment (ROI) and provide for a transparent breakdown of how the association uses membership dues (Sladek, 2011). Associations need to be mindful of their stakeholders. OTs and OTAs yielded similar saliency patterns of member benefits. Younger ages seem to gravitate more towards personal benefits, such a mentoring opportunities. Non-members (or former members) value CEU opportunities and the establishment of professional standards. Board members have significant discrepancies of member benefit implementation compared to members and non-members. Their opinions should be held at a higher significance simply due to their

position, as they do not constitute majority of the stakeholders involved in the association. Providing for improved CEU opportunities as well as Internet and social-media based marketing is an effective and efficient way to distribute association information.

Figure 4.1. Logic Model



CHAPTER FIVE

This doctoral project serves to discuss the survey results of a nationwide sample of (OTs) and (OTAs) regarding their perceptions of their state (OT) association. This data serves to assist state OT associations in improving membership rates of OTs and OTAs. These results will also serve to assist associations in “modernizing,” or updating their current recruitment and retention practices..Throughout this intervention process, the survey offers valuable data that further supports previous membership-based studies. It also brings new membership concepts to life. This doctoral project also serves as a pioneer in detailing membership trends of OTs and OTAs, a lesser documented area of research to date. The future of this project entails not only a thorough ongoing dissemination of results, but warrants further research in this area of occupational therapy. This chapter will discuss the funding of this project over the next four years (2019-2022) in the areas of implementation, marketing, and overall dissemination.

Needed Resources: Budget

Additional research will require the author to use similar resources to the ones already used to complete this doctoral project. The main source of funding will be dedicated to the research platform and all statistical analysis software. The research platform should afford for a variety of user-friendly question types (open-ended, multiple choice, Likert-type, etc.), basic SPSS data generating abilities, and the ability to disseminate to social media and e-mail platforms. When analysis requirements exceeds the basic SPSS capabilities, a formal SPSS software subscription or contracting the services of a a professional statistician may be necessary. In addition, a formal

workspace and/or meeting space will be vital when producing valuable data. The space will provide a location for meetings with stakeholders and potential research collaborators. Table 5.1 lists are the expenses from 2019–2022.

Table 5.1. Implementation Costs 2019–2022

Budgeted Item	Year 1: 2019 Expenses	Year 2: 2020 Expenses	Year 3: 2021 Expenses	Year 4: 2022 Expenses
Survey Platform: Survey Monkey	\$1,188/year	\$1,188/year	\$1,188/year	\$1,188/year
SPSS Software: IBM	\$100/month x12 months= \$1,200/year	\$100/month x12 months= \$1,200/year	\$100/month x12 months= \$1,200/year	\$100/month x12 months= \$1,200/year
Statistician	\$500/project	\$500/project	\$500/project	\$500/project
Microsoft Office	\$100/year	\$100/year	\$100/year	\$100/year
E-mail platform: G-Mail	Free	Free	Free	Free
Computer (MacBook Pro)	\$1,799.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Work Space Rental: Quest Workspaces Coral Gables- Meeting Room	\$25/hour x 5 hours/month= \$1,500/year	\$25/hour x 5 hours/month= \$1,500/year	\$25/hour x 5 hours/month= \$1,500/year	\$25/hour x 5 hours/month= \$1,500/year
Time Invested	3hours/week average x 52 weeks= 156 hours/year	3hours/week average x 52 weeks= 156 hours/year	3hours/week average x 52 weeks= 156 hours/year	3hours/week average x 52 weeks= 156 hours/year
Total:	\$6,287	\$4,488	\$4,488	\$4,488

Marketing

The Internet is a highly valuable resource. It can diffuse information quickly and to a large quantity of people at no to low cost. Further efforts will use social media to promote survey participation, collaboration efforts, scholarly contributions, and conference events attended by the author. The Internet is also imperative when promoting state OT associations and their respective events for the purpose of membership recruitment.

For the immediate dissemination of this project, the author is focusing on Florida's OT association (FOTA) as the pilot. During this undertaking, the Internet serves as a platform for a substantial website, membership support software, social media marketing, and a webinar platform for online member events. Tale 5.2 includes the Internet Outreach and Marketing Costs for the FOTA (2019-2022).

Table 5.2. Internet Outreach and Marketing Costs for FOTA Years 2019–2022

Budgeted Item	Year 1: 2019 Expenses	Year 2: 2020 Expenses	Year 3: 2021 Expenses	Year 4: 2022 Expenses
Website Domain-Wix	\$60/year	\$60/year	\$60/year	\$60/year
Member Clicks Online Membership Management	\$8,100/year	\$8,100/year	\$8,100/year	\$8,100/year
Social Media Platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)	Free	Free	Free	Free
Zoom Webinar Platform	\$480/year	\$480/year	\$480/year	\$480/year
Total	\$8,640	\$8,640	\$8,640	\$8,640

Overall Dissemination

The dissemination of this project relies heavily on the attendance at local, state, and national conferences and events. Other scholarly activities, including poster making and research article writing and publishing are also critical. The next chapter offers details concerning these events. Table 5.3 lists the overall total required funding for dissemination.

Table 5.3 Overall Dissemination Costs 2019-2022

Budgeted Item	2019	2020	2021	2022
Local/State Conference Expenses	\$823.10	\$823.10	\$823.10	\$823.10
AOTA Conference Expenses	N/A- as conference will have passed before doctoral work is done	AOTA Boston: \$2,201.00	AOTA San Diego: \$2,551.00	AOTA San Antonio: \$2,300.00
Scholarly Contribution Expenses (posters/articles)	\$580.00	\$550.00	\$550.00	\$550.00
Electronic Media Expenses	\$1,540.00	\$1,540.00	\$1,540.00	\$1,540.00
Total	\$2943.10	\$5,014.10	\$5,364.10	\$5,113.10

Potential Funding Sources

Table 5.4 lists the potential grant opportunities for dissemination expenses.

Table 5.4 Potential Funding Sources

Institution	Title of Grant	Explanation	Application to Project
(NIH)	Academic Career Development Awards (K)	The NIH Academic Career Development Awards (K Series) “support mentored or independent investigators to develop or enhance curricula, foster academic career development of promising young teacher-investigators, and to strengthen existing teaching programs.”	This grant can be applied when developing new internship guidelines for either Level I or Level II fieldwork opportunities with FOTA. Grant can also be applied to implementing State OT Association participation into current graduate OT programs.
NIH	Mentored Research Scientist Career Development Award (K Series)	This award supports “postdoctoral or early career research scientists committed to research in need of both advanced research training and additional experience.”	This grant will allow the author to further her research skills so she can continue to further her membership research.
NIH	Mentored Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award (K Series)	This award is appropriate for “promising clinician scientists working to develop into independent investigators” and/or “faculty members to pursue research, and aid in filling the academic faculty gap in health profession’s institutions.”	This will help further the author’s research possibilities and assisting on her mission to become a more competent, independent researcher. This grant is also applicable to the author if she works for a university in the future.
The Awesome Foundation	Awesome Micro-Grant	The Awesome Foundation gives micro-grants of \$1,000 at a time to worthy projects targeting various initiatives. These projects are “novel or experimental, and evoke surprise and delight.”	This micro-grant will be a great way to boost funding to spread the word of occupational therapy associations to current and future OTs and OTAs. What could be more awesome?
American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF)	Mary J. Bridle First Research Award	This \$750 grant is awarded to first-time researchers who are either currently enrolled in OT coursework or have been recently graduated from an OT academic program.	This grant will be a substantial contribution to not only assist in funding, but as a first step in gaining recognition among the OT community by receiving an OT-exclusive grant.

Conclusion

Funding the research of membership trends among OTs and OTAs is a relatively unexplored, yet vital area of research in the realm of occupational therapy. State OT associations serve as the leading subject matter authority in each state. In addition, they are the forefront of local occupational therapy advocacy, leadership, and a community resource for all current, future, and former occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants. Funding for this research will aid in increasing membership rates of state OT associations for years to come. Continued research will create more successful and prosperous associations to protect and promote occupational therapy throughout the nation.

CHAPTER SIX

Membership Matters! Expressed Attitudes of Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants Regarding Their State OT Association is an introductory study with the intent of using the results to improve state OT association membership around the nation. The study surveyed occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) across the United States for feedback regarding what commonly referenced membership benefits are important to them and how they believe their state association currently implements these benefits. Open-ended survey questions provided a platform for respondents to explicitly state concerns and dislikes within their organization and what they would like to see from their organization in the future.

Dissemination Goals

- *Long Term Goal:* The dissemination of survey results to both primary and secondary target audiences will lead to 20% increase in State OT Association membership rates in 25 states by 2025.
- *Short Term Goal 1:* The dissemination of survey results to both primary and secondary target audiences will lead to a 25% increase in membership rates in the author's current state of Florida by 2022.
- *Short Term Goal 2:* The dissemination of survey results to primary target audience will lead to the implementation of two new marketing strategies documented by at least 10 state OT associations by 2022.

Primary and Secondary Target Audiences

The primary target audience for the dissemination efforts is the board members/officers of all state OT associations. Dissemination of survey information to this audience will serve to inform this group about preferred member benefits and how members feel overall regarding the implementation of these benefits. Although results are not specific by state, the overall message, as presented to board members, will enable them to make any necessary changes to association recruitment efforts currently in place.

The secondary target audience for the dissemination efforts will be licensed OTs and OTAs across the United States. Although some OTs and OTAs are current state OT association members, the majority are not. Providing survey results to this audience will not only allow for the validation of shared opinion among respondents, but may encourage non-members to become members upon learning about planned modernization efforts that will take place within state associations as a result of this project.

Key Messages for Primary Target Audience:

- Although this study is a pilot study, it offers valuable insight into how OTs and OTAs *really* feel about how their respective state OT association operates. The overall premise of these dissemination efforts is for state OT associations to utilize this information to adjust recruitment methods for more successful, sustainable membership
- Self-reflection is the first step to using these results to begin modernizing one's state OT association (Dalton & Dignam, 2012; Sladek, 2011). This can be done by evaluating composition of current membership base,

effectiveness of current internet-based marketing practices and informal state-specific survey of stakeholders

- Regardless of who the association chooses to appeal to, adjusting one's association practices, whether it is keeping up with changing technologies, conference trends, networking demands, and/or providing for a diverse membership base is crucial in order to appeal to all potential members (Neill, Wooley, Stork, & Luttrell-Denis, 2004; Waltham, 2008)

Key Messages for Secondary Target Audience:

- Allowing for the dissemination of heartfelt, thoughtful survey responses by a neutral subject (the author), will call for improved opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration efforts between OTs/OTAs and state association
- OTs/OTAs must consider the vital role associations play within their profession regardless of professional's decision to participate in the association. State associations serve as the leading authority of occupational therapy in that geographical location. Its purpose is to establish professional and ethical standards of practice, provide for governmental protection, and provide for continuing education opportunities
- Joining one's state OT association will afford OTs/OTAs an invaluable form of "professional insurance" by strengthening their association's ability to engage in lobbying and activist efforts within their own state

Primary Influential Spokespeople

- **Primary Audience:** Debra Misrahi, DrOT, OTR/L, serves as the current vice president of FOTA. She is very passionate about not only her role in FOTA, but also her role as an OT department chairperson with Miami-Dade County Public Schools and as an active member within AOTA. Debra understands the membership recruitment struggle and does not shy away from her own association's membership woes. She was the reason the author has decided to focus her doctoral project on membership and serves as a mentor to the author
- **Secondary Audience:** Nadya Ramos, COTA, OTD/S, is a doctoral student at Nova Southeastern University, Tampa, and currently serves as the FOTA Leadership Ad-Hoc Co-Chair. Nadya's role as the Ad-Hoc Co-Chair is the creation and implementation of the 2019 FOTA Leadership Cohort continuing education course, to take place at Keiser University in Jacksonville in June 2019. This continuing education course is open to OTs and OTAs who have been nominated by their peers and/or managers to partake in leadership discussions and self-reflection activities to unleash their leadership potential. Nadya's progression of involvement in FOTA is a great example for other OTs/OTAs who need additional guidance and direction when deciding to join their state OT association

Activities

Dissemination efforts targeting both primary and secondary audiences will be the same. Both series of dissemination efforts will require the use of person-to-person contact in the form of attending local and national conferences, written information in the form of articles and professional posters, and electronic media in the form of social media, email, and website creation. The following is a breakdown of dissemination activities planned for 2019–2022.

Person-to-Person Contact

The author plans to attend Florida OT Association’s (FOTA) 2019 annual conference and host a one-credit continuing education round table discussion (“Conversations That Matter”) regarding the project’s results and its implications. This round table discussion will target both audiences, as board members, general members, and non-members of FOTA will all be welcome to share their valuable opinions regarding membership. The author will also submit an abstract to host a “Conversation That Matters” and podium presentation for AOTA’s 2020 National Conference. If selected, this forum will target both audiences. Table 6.1 lists a projected budget for conference and travel expenses from 2019–2022.

Table 6.1. Person-to-Person Expenses 2019–2022

Budgeted Item	Year 1: 2019 Expenses	Year 2: 2020 Expenses	Year 3: 2021 Expenses	Year 4: 2022 Expenses
FOTA Annual Conference Registration Fee	\$325	\$325	\$325	\$325
Driving Expenses (Gas)	~3 tanks of gas at ~\$2.18/galx15 gal tank= ~\$98.10	~3 tanks of gas at ~\$2.18/galx15 gal tank= ~\$98.10*	~3 tanks of gas at ~\$2.18/galx15 gal tank= ~\$98.10*	~3 tanks of gas at ~\$2.18/galx15 gal tank= ~\$98.10*
Hotel Expenses	~\$150.00/night x 2 nights= ~\$300.00	~\$150.00/night x 2 nights= ~\$300.00	~\$150.00/night x 2 nights= ~\$300.00	~\$150.00/night x 2 nights= ~\$300.00
Food Expenses	\$100 total	\$100 total	\$100 total	\$100 total
AOTA Annual Conference Registration Fee	N/A- Conference will have passed before doctoral work is finished	\$451 Early Registration Rate	\$451 Early Registration Rate	\$451 Early Registration Rate
Round-Trip Airfare	N/A- Conference will have passed before doctoral work is finished	Boston: ~\$250.00	San Diego: ~\$400.00	San Antonio: ~\$450.00
Hotel Expenses	N/A- Conference will have passed before doctoral work is finished	Boston: ~\$300/night x 4 nights= \$1,200.00	San Diego: ~\$350/night x 4 nights= \$1,400.00	San Antonio ~\$275/night x4 nights= \$1,100.00
Food Expenses	N/A- Conference will have passed before doctoral work is finished	\$200.00 total over 4 days	\$200.00 total over 4 days	\$200.00 total over 4 days
Other Transportation Expenses (Taxi, Uber, local transit)	N/A	\$100 total	\$100 total	\$100 total
Total:	\$823.10	~\$3,024.10	~\$3,374.10	~\$3,124.10

*- gas prices are not expected to be similar per year

Written Information

The author will complete scholarly contributions to disseminate the findings of this doctoral project to target both audiences. The author assumes that posters will be updated with new information regarding improved membership strategies and success stories throughout the dissemination process. Professional paper development may require hiring a professional statistician to ensure accurate data representation. The author will collaborate with faculty members, researchers and professionals to write conference abstracts and scholarly articles for journal submission. Table 6.2 lists the written information expenses from 2019-2022.

Table 6.2. Written Information Expenses 2019–2022

Budgeted Item	Year 1: 2019 Expenses	Year 2: 2020 Expenses	Year 3: 2021 Expenses	Year 4: 2022 Expenses
Poster Printing	\$50 for 48”x60” poster from Uprinting.com	\$50 for 48”x60” poster from Uprinting.com	\$50 for 48”x60” poster from Uprinting.com	\$50 for 48”x60” poster from Uprinting.com
Poster Carrying Case	\$30- Amazon.com	N/A	N/A	N/A
Statistician	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Publish- AOTA	Free	Free	Free	Free
Allocated Time Dedicated to Tasks	~3 hours/week	~3 hours/week	~3 hours/week	~3 hours/week
Total	\$580	\$550	\$550	\$550

Electronic Media

The Internet serves to be the most valuable resource, as it can diffuse information quickly and to a large quantity of people at no to low cost. The use of social media will be heavily utilized to promote collaboration efforts, scholarly contributions, and conference events attended by the author. The Internet is also key when promoting State OT Associations and their respective events. The author is focusing on Florida's OT Association (FOTA) first. During this undertaking, the Internet will provide for a substantial website, social media marketing, and a webinar platform for online member events.

One idea for the dissemination plan is to assimilate current OT and OTA students into the routine operations of FOTA. By recruiting students to be Social Media Ambassadors, they will be responsible for posting about OT and about FOTA on official FOTA social media pages, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. They will also have the opportunity to assist in the creation of promotional items, such as brochures and merchandise. In return, students can receive coursework credit, Level I, Level II, or doctoral project capstone required internship credit, and/or volunteer hours. Although this is not necessarily a consistent and sustainable implementation of dissemination activities, it is a breakthrough way to afford for further assimilation of otherwise inactive association members into a more active, positive role within the association. Table 6.3 lists electronic media expenses from 2019–2022.

Table 6.3. Electronic Media Expenses 2019-2022

Budgeted Item	Year 1: 2019 Expenses	Year 2: 2020 Expenses	Year 3: 2021 Expenses	Year 4: 2022 Expenses
Website Domain-Wix	\$60	\$60	\$60	\$60
Social Media Platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	Free	Free	Free	Free
Zoom Webinar Platform	\$480	\$480	\$480	\$480
Internet Expenses	\$1,000/year via Comcast	\$1,000/year via Comcast	\$1,000/year via Comcast	\$1,000/year via Comcast
Total	\$1,540.00	\$1,540.00	\$1,540.00	\$1,540.00

Evaluation

The success of the dissemination efforts comes from one method: membership rates. The author will survey all state OT associations twice per year to inquire about how their membership rates have improved throughout each survey period for the next five years. Qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered serves as a one-step method in evaluating the dissemination efforts of both the primary and secondary target audiences. Results from these survey periods over the next five years can potentially influence the need for future membership research. Success of this dissemination effort can also influence other professional associations to follow suit with state OT associations to improve membership rates.

Conclusion

The dissemination of *Membership Matters! Expressed Attitudes of Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants Regarding Their State OT Association* will target two audiences: state OT association board members/officers and OTs/OTAs

around the nation. The overall long-term goal of the dissemination is to improve membership rates of all state associations by 20% collectively (an average of all membership rates recorded) by the year 2025. Dissemination activities involve a combination of person-to-person contact, written information and electronic media. The overall cost of dissemination activities for the years 2019–2022 ranges from \$2,943.10-\$5,464.10.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Membership Matters! was a pilot study aimed at exploring reasons as to why OTs and OTAs around the nation do or do not choose to join their state associations.

Professional associations are vital organizations aimed at serving professionals within a specific discipline. They aim to serve their stakeholders via continuing educations, seminars, conferences, lobbying efforts, and establishing professional standards and ethics. For occupational therapists, state associations serve as the leading authority of occupational therapy for that particular state/geographical region. They serve to represent occupational therapy in state legislation and provide guidelines for appropriate licensure for that state. Without strong membership, strong leadership, particularly in the areas of governmental presence, cannot prevail.

This project utilizes two theoretical frameworks to help decipher membership association: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT). SET relays the idea that human interaction and exchange is a cost/benefit analysis. Social behavior pertains to the pursuit of rewards and avoidance of punishment (Encyclopedia, 2001). The SET incorporates a Comparison Level (CL) and Comparison Level of Alternatives (CLAlt) as a mathematical interpretation of one's internal cost/benefit analysis. SIT states that people fuel their need for positive self-esteem by joining social groups that they believe will boost self-esteem (Bauman, 2008). When linking this to associations, professionals will join associations if they feel it will boost self-esteem (Bauman, 2008).

The intervention for this project is the creation of two surveys. Survey creation involved extensive literature reviews regarding existing membership trends and

characteristics of effective surveys. The first survey, for OTs and OTAs, utilized Likert-type scales to inquire about the respondent's level of saliency with popular member benefits of an association. Member benefits included networking, leadership, mentoring, (establishment of) professional standards, discounts, conference, lobbying, social events, job postings, and other CEU opportunities. Respondents were also asked how they believe their state association provided for/implemented these member benefits. Three open-ended questions regarding why and/or why not the respondent was/was not a member and what the respondent would like the association to improve upon were asked at the end of the survey.

The second survey was intended for board members to assess discrepancies in board member versus stakeholder opinions of the association. Board members were asked to identify their level of saliency with the same popular member benefits and assess how they feel their association provides for these aforementioned member benefits. Open-ended questions asked why they believe OTs and OTAs are/are not members, and what they think their association can do to improve for the future.

Key results for close-ended questions indicate the following: 1.) Younger generations of professionals overall valued more personal-driven member benefits, such as mentorship, leadership, and networking, 2.) OTs and OTAs both value the member benefit of (establishment of) professional standards the most, 3.) Members and non-members both express higher levels of saliency with lobbying, other CEU opportunities, and (establishment of) professional standards, 4.) Board members overall believe that they implement member benefits well.

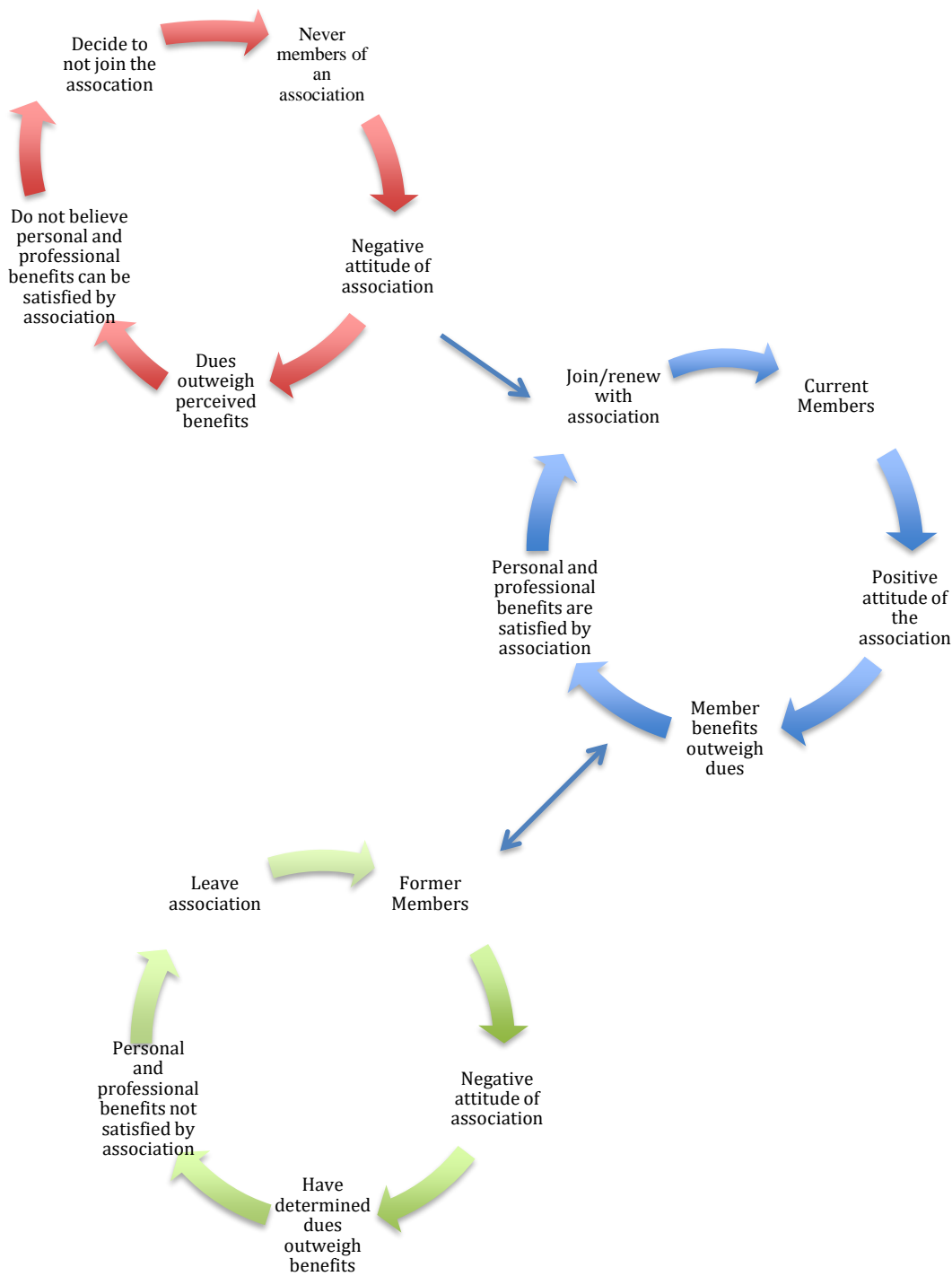
Key results for open-ended questions yield the following: 1.) Number one reason for joining the state association is because it is one's professional duty, 2.) OTs/OTAs are not members largely due to the high cost of dues, and 3.) Respondents would mainly like their association to change by offering more CEUs outside of state conference.

Funding project efforts and dissemination activities will require moderate funding. Funding components include expenses for survey platforms (Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, Etc.), SPSS software, workspace rentals, Internet fees, the creation of scholarly works (posters), and the hiring of a statistician. Dissemination fees include travel expenses to and from state and national conferences and webinar platforms (Zoom, Adobe Connect, Etc.).

This project's true purpose is to use this survey information to inspire state associations around the country to modernize and update their current recruiting and retaining strategies of stakeholders. Associations can begin their modernization process by improving social media and Internet based marketing and communication, providing for more effective and informative CEU opportunities, and by varying their board members by age and practice setting, showing improved inclusivity. State associations, and professional associations in general, are vital and critical components of professional life. Robust and healthy state associations can enhance the OT profession as a viable resource and service throughout the nation, which can continue to grow as a united powerhouse that serves people in need.

APPENDIX A

Membership Model



APPENDIX B

OT/OTA Survey Questions

- 1.) Please indicate your gender:
Male _____ Female _____ Prefer Not To Answer _____
- 2.) Please state your age:
- 3.) In which state(s) do you hold an OT or OTA license?
- 4.) What is your highest degree in earned?
Associate's _____ Bachelor's _____ Master's _____
Entry-level Doctorate _____
Post Professional Doctorate _____ PhD/ScD/EdD _____
- 5.) What is your primary work setting?
 - a. Pediatrics (outpatient)
 - b. Pediatrics (inpatient)
 - c. Inpatient adult rehab
 - d. Outpatient adult rehab
 - e. Acute Care
 - f. Hands/ortho
 - g. Skilled Nursing
 - h. School System
 - i. Home Health (either adult or pediatrics)
 - j. Mental Health
 - k. Self-Employed
 - l. Academia
 - m. Other
- 6.) Are you a(n) OT _____ OTA _____ Retired OT _____ Retired
OTA _____

The next 10 items are professional association membership benefits that are commonly referenced when citing reasons to join a professional association. How important do you, the OT/OTA rate these member benefits? This question can be answered whether or not you are a member of your State OT Association. Choices range from Not at all important (1) to Extremely important (5).

- 1.) Networking opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.) Job Postings 1 2 3 4 5
- 3.) State conference 1 2 3 4 5

- 4.) Political lobbying 1 2 3 4 5
- 5.) Leadership opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 6.) Mentoring opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 7.) Other continuing education opportunities (besides conference) 1 2 3 4 5
- 8.) Professional standards 1 2 3 4 5
- 9.) Membership discounts 1 2 3 4 5
- 10.) Social Events 1 2 3 4 5

How do you feel your association provides for the implementation for the aforementioned membership benefits? This question can be answered whether or not you are a member of your State OT Association. Scores range from not very well (1) to very well (5)

- 1.) Networking opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.) Job Postings 1 2 3 4 5
- 3.) State conference 1 2 3 4 5
- 4.) Political lobbying 1 2 3 4 5
- 5.) Leadership opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 6.) Mentoring opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 7.) Other continuing education opportunities (besides conference) 1 2 3 4 5
- 8.) Professional standards 1 2 3 4 5
- 9.) Membership discounts 1 2 3 4 5
- 10.) Social Events 1 2 3 4 5

Are you currently a member of your state association? Yes _____ No _____

For which state(s) are you a member of the State OT Association?

How much is are the yearly dues for your state association membership?

1. Between \$0.00-\$29.99/year
2. Between \$30.00-\$59.99/year
3. Between \$60.00-\$89.99/year
4. Between \$90.00-\$119.99/year
5. Over \$120.00/year

Are you a current member of AOTA? Yes _____ No _____

Your input is important. Please indicate the reasons why you ARE a member of your association. If you are NOT a member, please write "N/A"

Your input is important. If you are NOT a member, please list the factors as to why you are not a member. If you ARE a member of your association, please write "N/A".

Your input is important. Regardless if you are a member of your state association or not, what areas can be improved upon within your state association?

Survey for Board Members

Please rate how your association prioritizes the following association benefits on a scale of not important (1) to very important (5)

- 11.) Networking opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 12.) Job Postings 1 2 3 4 5
- 13.) State conference 1 2 3 4 5
- 14.) Political lobbying 1 2 3 4 5
- 15.) Leadership opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 16.) Mentoring opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 17.) Other continuing education opportunities (besides conference) 1 2 3 4 5
- 18.) Professional standards 1 2 3 4 5
- 19.) Membership discounts 1 2 3 4 5
- 20.) Social Events 1 2 3 4 5

Please rate the next 10 questions on a scale of not very well (1) to very well (5) with a score of (3) being neutral and/or indifferent

How do you feel your State OT Association provides for the implementation of the aforementioned member benefits? Scores range from Not well at all (1) to Extremely well (5)

- 11.) Networking opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 12.) Job Postings 1 2 3 4 5
- 13.) State conference 1 2 3 4 5
- 14.) Political lobbying 1 2 3 4 5
- 15.) Leadership opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 16.) Mentoring opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- 17.) Other continuing education opportunities (besides conference) 1 2 3 4 5
- 18.) Professional standards 1 2 3 4 5
- 19.) Membership discounts 1 2 3 4 5
- 20.) Social Events 1 2 3 4 5

How much is are the yearly dues for your state association membership?

1. Between \$0.00-\$29.99/year
2. Between \$30.00-\$59.99/year
3. Between \$60.00-\$89.99/year
4. Between \$90.00-\$119.99/year
5. Over \$120.00/year

Approximately what percent of licensed OTs/OTAs in your state are members of your State OT Association?

Your input is important. Please indicate the main reasons as to why you believe OTs/OTAs in your state choose to join the State OT Association.

Your input is important. Please indicate why the association believes OTs in your state choose NOT to join the state association.

Your input is important. What areas can be improved upon within your state association?

Are at least 50% of board members in the association also current AOTA members?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you a current member of AOTA?

Yes _____ No _____

As this individual filling out this survey, what position do you hold in your State OT Association?

How long have you held a position within your State OT Association?

As the individual filling out this survey, what is your primary work setting?

- a. Pediatrics (inpatient)
- b. Inpatient adult rehab
- c. Outpatient adult rehab
- d. Acute Care
- e. Hands/ortho
- f. Skilled Nursing
- g. School System
- h. Home Health (either adult or pediatrics)
- i. Mental Health
- j. Self-Employed
- k. Academia
- l. Other

Finally, for which State OT Association do you hold a board position?

APPENDIX C

Respondent Demographics**Table C1***Member and Non-Member Ages, Percentages*

Age	Members	Non-Members
54+	35.03	21.75
39-53	33.76	37.40
29-38	23.50	11.94
23-28	6.8	11.94

Table C2*Member and Non-Member Education Levels, Percentages*

Education Level	Percentage, Members	Percentage, Non-Members
Associate's	6.8	7.43
Bachelor's	21.42	33.69
Masters	41.85	54.11
Entry-Level OTD	2.72	.80
Post Professional OTD	14.28	3.44
PhD/ScD/EdD	11.90	.53

Table C3*Member and Non-Member Primary Work Setting, Percentages*

Work Setting	Percentage Members	Percentage Non-Members
Academia	23.81	2.39
School-System	22.79	29.18
Pediatrics	11.90	14.32
Adults	9.18	9.81
Skilled Nursing	7.48	13.00
Home Health	6.80	5.83
Acute Care	4.42	10.10
Mental Health	2.38	1.33
Hands/Ortho	1.70	5.57
Self-Employed	1.70	2.65
Other	0.00	3.18

APPENDIX D

Survey Data Results

Table D1*Correlations of Age versus Member Benefit Saliency*

Benefit	Sample Size (n)	Correlation
Networking	676	-0.043
Job Postings	673	-0.139**
State Conference	678	-0.032
Lobbying	678	0.033
Leadership	679	-0.135**
Mentoring	678	-0.213**
Other CEU Opportunities	678	-0.101**
Professional Standards	677	0.025
Discounts	678	-0.133**
Social Events	677	-0.112**

- Indicates 95% significance if $|r| > 0.075$

- ** Indicates 99% significance if $|r| > 0.099$

Table D2*Correlation of Age versus Implementation of Member Benefits*

Member Benefit	Sample Size (n)	Correlation Coefficient
Networking	648	0.134**
Job Postings	642	0.193**
State Conference	648	0.107**
Lobbying	642	0.145**
Leadership	642	0.130**
Mentoring	640	0.100*
Other CEU Opportunities	645	0.113**
Professional Standards	645	0.081*
Discounts	644	0.113**
Social Events	642	0.012

- Indicates 95% significance if $|r| > 0.078$

- ** Indicates 99% significance if $|r| > 0.102$

Table D3*OT Member Benefit Saliency, Response Percentages*

	Not Important (1)	Slightly Important (2)	Moderately Important (3)	Very Important (4)	Extremely Important (5)
Networking % $\bar{x}=3.24 \pm(1.12)$	6.09	21.55	28.45	29.23	13.98
Job Posting % $\bar{x}=2.79 \pm(1.20)$	16.86	25.29	28.26	20.99	8.60
State Conference % $\bar{x}=3.17 \pm(1.13)$	7.21	20.82	34.26	23.11	14.59
Lobbying % $\bar{x}=3.71 \pm(1.19)$	5.74	10.82	22.62	28.20	32.62
Leadership % $\bar{x}=2.81 \pm(1.20)$	17.02	22.75	32.40	18.00	9.82
Mentoring % $\bar{x}=2.99 \pm(1.17)$	11.97	22.30	31.31	23.44	10.98
Other CEU Opportunities % $\bar{x}=3.54 \pm(1.14)$	5.57	13.11	25.08	33.93	22.30
Professional Standards % $\bar{x}=3.89 \pm(1.03)$	2.13	9.03	18.72	37.60	32.51
Discounts % $\bar{x}=3.14 \pm(1.23)$	11.31	19.51	29.18	23.77	16.22
Social Events % $\bar{x}=2.28 \pm(1.11)$	30.59	27.30	28.62	10.03	3.45

Table D4*OTA Member Benefit Saliency, Response Percentages*

	Not Important (1)	Slightly Important (2)	Moderately Important (3)	Very Important (4)	Extremely Important (5)
Networking% $\bar{x}=3.54\pm(1.06)$	4.60	6.89	41.38	24.14	22.99
Job Posting% $\bar{x}=3.52\pm(1.20)$	5.75	16.09	24.14	28.73	25.29
State Conference% $\bar{x}=3.41\pm(1.22)$	8.04	13.79	31.03	22.99	24.14
Lobbying% $\bar{x}=3.73\pm(1.09)$	3.53	11.76	20.00	37.65	27.06
Leadership% $\bar{x}=2.94\pm(1.20)$	12.80	25.58	26.74	24.42	10.46
Mentoring% $\bar{x}=3.19\pm(1.14)$	7.06	23.53	24.70	32.94	11.76
Other CEU Opportunities % $\bar{x}=3.95\pm(0.96)$	2.30	4.60	20.69	40.23	32.19
Professional Standards % $\bar{x}=4.08\pm(0.83)$	0	2.32	23.25	38.37	36.05
Discounts% $\bar{x}=3.60\pm(1.13)$	3.49	12.79	31.40	24.42	27.91
Social Event% $\bar{x}=2.76\pm(1.19)$	18.60	22.09	32.56	18.60	8.14

Table D5*Members of State OT Association Member Benefit Saliency, Response Percentages*

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Networking % $\bar{x}=3.69\pm(1.02)$	1.64	12.46	26.23	35.08	24.59
Job Posting % $\bar{x}=2.90\pm(1.19)$	13.95	24.58	28.90	22.92	9.63
State Conference % $\bar{x}=3.72\pm(1.05)$	2.62	9.18	29.84	29.84	28.52
Lobbying% $\bar{x}=4.16\pm(1.00)$	1.97	5.26	15.46	28.95	48.35
Leadership% $\bar{x}=3.24\pm(1.16)$	7.89	17.76	32.89	25.33	16.12
Mentoring% $\bar{x}=3.21\pm(1.13)$	6.91	21.38	28.62	29.60	13.49
Other CEU Opportunities % $\bar{x}=3.73\pm(1.02)$	3.29	11.18	23.35	33.22	28.95
Professional Standards % $\bar{x}=4.12\pm(0.96)$	0.65	7.54	14.10	35.74	41.97
Discounts% $\bar{x}=3.21\pm(1.21)$	9.57	19.14	28.71	25.74	16.83
Social Event% $\bar{x}=2.57\pm(1.10)$	21.05	23.68	36.18	15.13	3.95

Table D6*Non-Members of State OT Association Member Benefit Saliency, Response Percentages*

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Networking% $\bar{x}=2.96\pm(1.09)$	9.36	25.67	32.89	24.06	8.02
Job Posting % $\bar{x}=2.89\pm(1.25)$	16.27	24.00	26.13	21.87	11.73
State Conference % $\bar{x}=2.79\pm(1.05)$	10.90	28.99	36.17	18.08	5.85
Lobbying % $\bar{x}=3.35\pm(1.19)$	8.27	15.73	28.00	28.80	19.20
Leadership % $\bar{x}=2.50\pm(1.13)$	23.08	27.59	30.77	13.53	5.04
Mentoring % $\bar{x}=2.85\pm(1.17)$	14.67	23.47	32.27	20.53	9.07
Other CEU Opportunities % $\bar{x}=3.49\pm(1.13)$	6.63	12.46	25.46	36.07	19.36
Professional Standards % $\bar{x}=3.76\pm(1.02)$	2.94	8.82	23.26	39.30	25.67
Discounts% $\bar{x}=3.18\pm(1.25)$	11.14	18.83	29.18	22.28	18.57
Social Event% $\bar{x}=2.17\pm(1.13)$	35.83	28.07	23.80	8.02	4.28

Table D7*Member Attitudes of Member Benefit Implementation, Response Percentages*

	Not Well At All (1)	Slightly Well (2)	Moderately Well (3)	Very Well (4)	Extremely Well (5)
Networking % \bar{x} = 3.10±(1.05)	7.59	20.13	34.98	29.37	7.92
Job Posting % \bar{x} = 2.99±(1.13)	10.26	23.84	32.12	24.17	9.60
State Conference % \bar{x} = 4.01±(0.97)	1.32	6.60	18.15	37.29	36.63
Lobbying % \bar{x} = 3.72±(1.05)	2.66	11.29	22.59	37.54	25.91
Leadership % \bar{x} = 3.29±(1.07)	5.00	18.67	31.67	31.67	13.00
Mentoring % \bar{x} = 2.68±(1.07)	13.71	31.44	34.11	15.05	5.68
Other CEU Opportunities % \bar{x} = 2.97±(1.15)	12.91	20.53	32.45	25.16	8.94
Professional Standards % \bar{x} = 3.33±(1.09)	5.61	17.16	30.36	32.34	14.52
Discounts % \bar{x} = 2.75±(1.10)	19.27	28.90	31.23	16.28	4.32
Social Event % \bar{x} = 2.53±(1.01)	17.27	31.23	35.88	12.62	2.99

Table D8*Non-Member Attitudes of Member Benefit Implementation, Response Percentages*

	Not Well At All (1)	Slightly Well (2)	Moderately Well (3)	Very Well (4)	Extremely Well (5)
Networking % \bar{x} = 2.31±(0.94)	16.95	30.51	38.13	12.99	1.41
Job Posting % \bar{x} = 2.39±(1.02)	17.14	31.43	36.28	13.14	2.00
State Conference % \bar{x} = 3.03±(1.07)	7.60	18.31	37.46	27.32	9.29
Lobbying % \bar{x} = 2.64±(1.07)	12.00	19.14	40.57	24.00	4.28
Leadership % \bar{x} = 2.37±(0.95)	12.82	26.21	44.44	14.24	2.28
Mentoring % \bar{x} = 2.67±(0.95)	20.28	34.86	33.14	11.14	0.57
Other CEU Opportunities % \bar{x} = 2.98±(1.04)	17.04	26.99	34.09	18.46	3.41
Professional Standards % \bar{x} = 3.12±(1.06)	11.08	15.62	39.49	26.70	7.10
Discounts % \bar{x} = 2.51±(0.99)	23.58	28.69	34.37	11.65	1.70
Social Event % \bar{x} = 2.51±(0.97)	23.14	32.86	34.57	8.85	0.57

Table D9*Board Member Benefit Saliency, Response Percentages*

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Networking % $\bar{x}=3.96\pm(0.92)$	0	8.33	18.75	41.67	4.92
Job Posting % $\bar{x}=3.08\pm(0.94)$	4.17	22.92	37.50	31.25	0.66
State Conference % $\bar{x}=4.77\pm(0.47)$	0	0	2.08	18.75	12.46
Lobbying % $\bar{x}=4.19\pm(1.04)$	2.08	8.33	14.58	18.75	8.88
Leadership % $\bar{x}=3.90\pm(0.93)$	0	6.25	29.17	33.33	4.93
Mentoring % $\bar{x}=3.37\pm(1.12)$	6.25	16.67	25.00	37.50	2.30
Other CEU Opportunities % $\bar{x}=3.48\pm(0.99)$	2.08	14.58	31.25	37.50	2.30
Professional Standards % $\bar{x}=3.85\pm(1.09)$	4.17	8.33	16.67	39.58	4.92
Discounts % $\bar{x}=3.02\pm(1.21)$	16.67	12.50	31.25	31.25	1.32
Social Event % $\bar{x}=2.79\pm(1.09)$	10.41	31.25	35.41	14.58	1.31

Table D10*Board Member Benefit Implementation, Response Percentages*

	Not Well At All (1)	Slightly Well (2)	Moderately Well (3)	Very Well (4)	Extremely Well (5)
Networking % $\bar{x}=3.28\pm(1.08)$	6.38	14.89	36.17	29.79	12.76
Job Posting % $\bar{x}=3.30\pm(1.14)$	6.38	17.02	34.04	25.53	17.02
State Conference % $\bar{x}=4.51\pm(0.75)$	0.00	0.00	14.89	19.15	65.96
Lobbying % $\bar{x}=3.81\pm(1.19)$	6.38	8.51	17.02	34.04	34.04
Leadership % $\bar{x}=3.57\pm(1.15)$	6.38	8.50	31.91	27.66	25.53
Mentoring % $\bar{x}=3.02\pm(1.26)$	17.02	12.76	34.04	23.40	12.76
Other CEU Opportunities % $\bar{x}=2.98\pm(1.14)$	13.04	17.39	36.96	23.91	8.69
Professional Standards % $\bar{x}=3.53\pm(1.30)$	10.64	12.76	14.89	36.17	25.53
Discounts % $\bar{x}=3.00\pm(1.37)$	21.28	10.64	31.91	19.15	17.02
Social Event % $\bar{x}=2.74\pm(1.15)$	17.02	23.40	34.04	19.15	6.38

APPENDIX E

Open-Ended Questions Results

Table E1

Reasons Why OTs/OTAs Joined State Association, Open-Ended Responses

Theme	Response Number	Percentage
“Support the Profession”/professional Duty	80	29.74%
Lobbying/Political	71	26.39%
“Stay Connected/In Touch” with State Happenings	31	11.52%
Networking Opportunities	30	11.15%
Conference	15	5.57%
Required	9	3.34%
Leadership Opportunities	5	1.86%
Professional Growth Opportunities	3	1.11%
“Just Because”	2	.07%
Referred by Friend	2	.07%
Emphasized in School	2	.07%
Job Postings	2	.07%
Boost Resume	1	.03%
Discounts	1	.03%

Table E2*Reasons Why OTs/OTAs Did Not Join State Association, Open-Ended Responses*

Theme	Response Number	Percentage
Dues/Cost Too High	115	35.38%
Decreased Benefit versus Cost	55	16.92%
Do Not See Benefit	33	10.15%
Already an AOTA Member- Do Not Need Both	23	7.07%
“Not Worth It,” “Don’t Need It”	23	7.07%
State Assoc. Poorly Run	19	5.84%
“Haven’t Looked Into It Yet”	17	5.23%
No Time	10	3.08%
Do Not Know Why Assoc. Is Important/ Poor Knowledge of Benefits	9	2.77%
Live Too Far From Events	7	2.15%
Forgot to Renew or Forgot to Join	7	2.15%
Work Does Not Cover Dues	4	1.23%
“Cliques” and unapproachable	2	.62%
Can Get Publicized Benefits Elsewhere	1	.31%

Table E3*Suggestions for Association Changes, Open-Ended Responses*

Theme	Response Number	Percentage
Provide More CEUs Outside of Conference	62	16.40%
“Don’t Know”	60	15.87%
Improve Networking	39	10.31%
Improve Social Media/Website	32	8.46%
Improve Lobbying	32	8.46%
Improve Communication With Members	31	8.20%
Decrease Cost	28	7.40%
Educate Therapists on Benefits	22	5.82%
Improve Inclusion of Others/Be Less “Cliquesy”	21	5.55%
Improve Outreach Across State	13	3.44%
Improve Conference Quality	10	2.64%
Improve Job Postings	7	1.85%
“Everything”	6	2.59%
Provide for More Discounts	2	.53%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Career-specific associations are an integral part of the professional experience. They serve to provide members with professional trainings, publications, conferences, networking opportunities, and policy advocacy (Walston & Khaliq, 2012). For occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs), state associations serve as the leading authority of occupational therapy for the dissemination of information regarding political, ethical, and professional concerns for each state. However, in recent years, state OT associations across the nation have been experiencing low membership rates. The Florida Occupational Therapy Association (FOTA), is an example of an association with low membership rates. As of May 2017, FOTA had a total of 987 members, with over 400 of them being students. Compared to the 8,885-registered OTs and 5,602 OT assistants licensed in the state of Florida as of May 2017, current membership numbers conclude that roughly 3.2% of Florida OTs and OTAs choose to associate with state association (B. Cheyne, personal communication, 2017).

The purpose of this doctoral project is to survey OTs and OTAs across the nation to analyze determinants to state association membership. Specifically, 1) why did OTs and OTAs or did OTs and OTAs not choose to join their state association, 2) what do OTs and OTAs wish they could change regarding their association, 3.) what member benefits do OTs and OTAs find the most salient, and 4) how OTs and OTAs feel their association implements these benefits. Board members from each state OT association were also invited to participate in the survey to discuss the same questions, from an administrative perspective. Analyzing data results and compiling them into this doctoral

project may help associations review current practices and implement strategies to boost membership efforts.

Project Overview

The two theoretical frameworks chosen to help decipher the science of membership are Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT). Social Exchange Theory is built on the principle that human interaction (or exchange) is a cost/benefit analysis (Social Exchange Theory, 2001). A major component of SET is the Comparison Level (CL), a simple equation that expresses one's internal cost-benefit analysis, or $\text{outcome} = \text{reward} - \text{cost}$ (Social Exchange Theory-Major Contemporary Concepts, 2018). The Comparison Level of Alternatives (CLAlt) was developed to counterbalance the CL. When the CLAlt is viewed more positively than one's current situation, the individual will likely leave that relationship. The opposite is true if one would like to pursue, or stay, in the relationship in question.

Social Identity Theory states that people fuel their need for positive self-esteem by joining social groups that they believe will boost self-esteem (Bauman 2008). In terms of associations, professionals will join associations if they feel that it will boost self-esteem (Bauman 2008). Members will most often choose to align themselves with an association if they believe that the association can satisfy their personal and professional standards.

Gathering information regarding previous membership studies aimed at answering the following questions: generational differences of membership, what current members, former members, and never-before members want from a membership, differences in

healthcare-specific professional associations, and any predictors of membership affiliation. In the area of generational differences, older generations, namely Baby Boomers, make up the largest age group of association members (Sladek, 2011, pp. 59–77). Younger generations, as a general trend, require a more prominent and thoughtful return on investment (ROI) when performing their internal cost-benefit analysis before deciding to affiliate (Dalton & Dignam, 2012, Sladek, 2011 pp. 1–18). Although younger generations do eventually join an association, they wait until after ageing out of an entry-level career status (Walsh & Daddario, 2015). In the area of what current, former and never-before members want from a membership, the focus was on former and never members. Former members primarily leave an association due to financial constraints. Never members primarily fear that the association will not be fulfilling professionally (Dalton & Dignam, 2012 p. 22).

Healthcare specific professional associations have their own set of specific membership characteristics, as well as share similar characteristics of other professional associations. The primary reason for healthcare professionals to not join their association was the cost of dues, which is harmonious with the findings of non-healthcare related studies (Hughes, Book & Lewis, 2016, Taylor et al, 2017). The element setting healthcare specific professional associations apart from other professional associations is the idea of mentorship, which is key in attracting more entry-level, younger members (Cherr, Moalem, Dayton, James, Sutherlans, & Hasset, 2009; Hughes, Book, & Lewis, 2016; Vioral; 2011; Yeager, Rabin, & Vocino, 1985). Lastly, when attempting to predict membership affiliation, the most important factor to consider is that individuals who

possess a positive attitude of the association will most likely join or be current members (Ki, 2016; Markova, Ford, Dickson, & Bohn, 2013; Phillips & Leahy, 2012; Yeager, Rabin & Vocino, 1985).

Next, information for the survey, or intervention phase of the project needed to be collected. This literature review needed to address proper survey techniques including survey design, question format, and distribution methods. Effective survey design includes the following elements utilized for the creation of this survey: no more than 10% of questions are open-ended, using precise language, refraining from using negative language, and piloting the survey before making it available for official use (Charbonneau, 2007).

When deciding upon creating the perfect Likert-type scale for the survey, the use of a midpoint should be used to prevent un-intentional skewing of the answers (Schaeffer & Presser, 2003). Five or seven anchors, or choices should be used to create the most effective scale (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson & Hankinson, 2017; Chen, Yu, & Yu, 2015; Wakita, Ueshima, & Noguchi, 2012). For open-ended questions, larger box sizes lead to better responses that produce more words. Using importance statements before every open-ended question better ensures that it will produce a more quality response (Chaudhary & Isreal, 2016; Smyth, Dillman, Christian & McBride, 2009).

When distributing the survey, both web and mail methods are proven effective (Kiernen, Kiernen, Oyler & Gilles, 2005). When using web-based survey distribution, sending pre-survey letters and follow-up reminders is key to ensure completion of surveys (Bennett & Sid Nair, 2010; Sheehan & McMillian, 1999). The survey was

available for a five-week period via Qualtrics Internet survey platform. Distribution methods occurred via e-mail and social media platforms.

Key Findings

A total of 700 usable surveys were received from OTs and OTAs around the nation. Key findings of results include the following: 1.) Younger age ranges have higher levels of saliency with the following member benefits: mentoring opportunities, followed by job postings, leadership, discounts, and social events; 2.) Both OTs and OTAs share the highest level of saliency with the member benefit of (establishing) professional standards; 3.) state association members and non-members ranked lobbying, other CEU opportunities, and the establishment of professional standards with the highest level of saliency. Within the open-ended questions, key findings include the following: 1.) Fulfilling one's "professional duty" was the most common reason for joining one's state association; 2.) Cost/dues and poor cost/benefit analysis were the two most frequent reasons for not joining a state association; 3) Providing for more CEUs aside from conference was the most cited way in which state associations can improve.

Recommendations

In moving forward with this data, the first step is for state association boards to reflect on their current practices (Dalton & Dignam, 2012, pp. 17–32). As lowering dues was not the most commonly cited way to improve one's association, this gives associations the perfect opportunity to re-brand their membership benefits to provide for a more appealing return on investment (ROI) platform for both current members and future members. Providing for a more transparent breakdown of where membership dues

go can be an effective first step for future members to perform their internal cost/benefit analysis when deciding to join (Sladek, 2011, pp. 1–18). Improving Internet based communication with stakeholders, including websites and social media platforms can be helpful in marketing information and new ideas (Gruen, Summer & Acito, 2000).

General Conclusions

This nationwide survey of OTs and OTAs served as a pilot program for a more comprehensive study of membership trends of OTs in the future. The information generated from survey responses serve as the first step in nationwide modernization of state OT associations. Improving marketing techniques, administration practices, and overall association transparency can help generate more interest in state associations for years to come. When more OTs and OTAs join state associations, there are more individuals serving as “watchdogs,” influencers, leaders, and educators disseminating the powerful practice of occupational therapy to stakeholders across the nation. As more individuals join state associations, OT can continue to grow into a more widespread influencing, dynamic movement serving people in need.

FACT SHEET

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS! Expressed Attitudes of Occupational Therapists (OT) and Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) Regarding Their State OT Association: A Survey

Rachel Romero, MOT, OTR/L, OTD Candidate

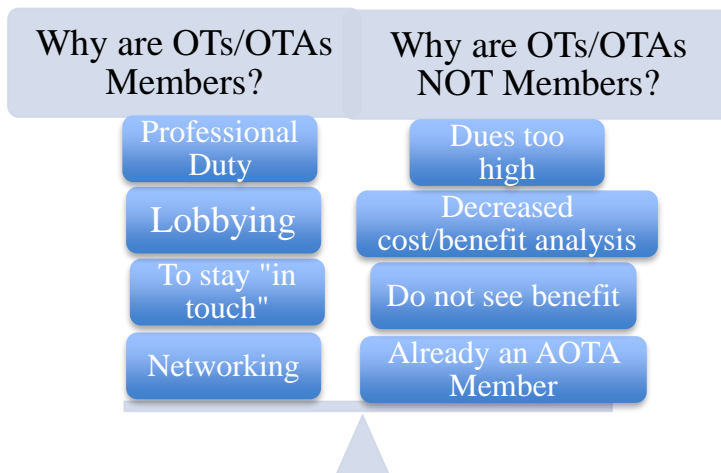
Currently, State OT Associations Experience Low Membership Numbers

- State OT Association's serve as the state's leading authority for the occupational therapy profession. They provide lobbying/legislative support, professional developmental opportunities and establishing professional standards and state licensure requirements.
- In 1998, state OT association presidents reported that their membership rates reflected between 25-50% of all registered OTs in their state. However, since then, membership numbers have declined (Breedon et al, 2000)
- Example: As of May 2017, the Florida Occupational Therapy Association (FOTA) has a total of 987 members, with 491 members being students. This number accounts for 3.2% of all registered OTs and OTAs in the state of Florida

To Join or Not to Join? A Review of Existing Literature

- Historically, older generations (Baby Boomers) are the largest number of members in professional associations (Sladek, 2011, p. 59)
- Younger generations (Millennials, Generation X and Y) value a return on investment (ROI) that largely influences their decision to join an association (Sladek, 2011, p. 1-19)
- Most younger individuals join after aging out of an entry-level status (Walsh & Daddario, 2015)
- Financial constrains are the number one reason why a professional has not joined an association or has left an association
- Mentorship is a key element in recruiting younger generations into healthcare-specific professional associations (Hughes, Book, & Lewis, 2016)

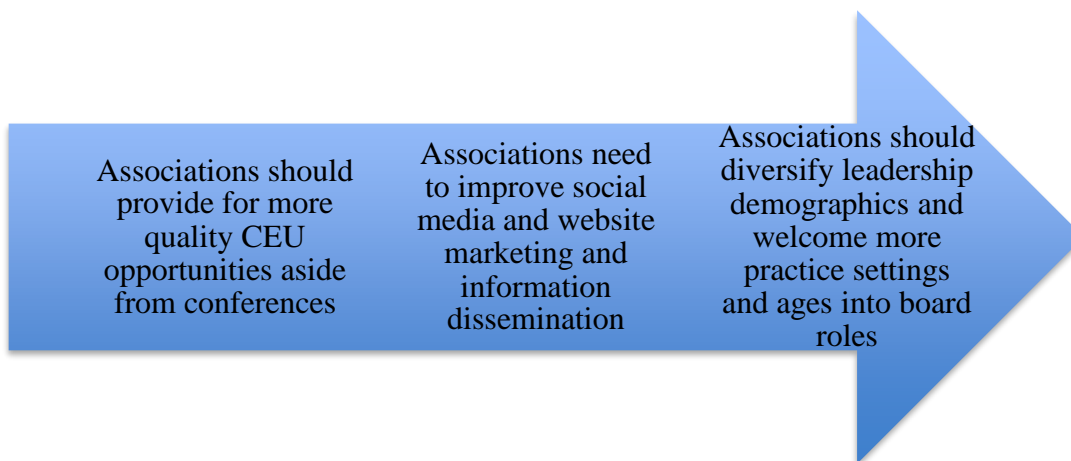
Survey Results



Additionally...

- Mentoring, job postings, discounts, and social events are most salient with younger respondents
- OTs and OTAs report the [establishment of] professional standards as the most salient member benefit
- Members and non-members expressed highest saliency for lobbying, other CEU options, and [establishment of] professional standards
- State association board members report higher member benefit saliency as well as higher success of the implementation of member benefits than members and non-members

Recommendations



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