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Evaluating the intersection between ‘green events’ and sense of community at Liverpool’s Lark Lane Farmers Market

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Abstract: More research needs to evaluate links between community psychology and event impacts. Events are not just entertainment focused economic drivers, but gatherings contributing to society, community and local cultural identity. There is also a need to address ‘green’ philosophies, while visible and widespread, are not just environmentally focused, but also local community focused—concerning elements of social sustainability, belonging and sense of community. This makes the discussion of ‘green events’ relevant to community psychology and local well-being researchers. The aim of this study is to find other possibilities how green events could contribute to local community well-being by investigating how farmers markets unite people to understand how such events reinforce and shape sense of community. This paper is based on participant observations and semi-structured interviews to explore the conceptual notion of sense of community. Three emerged themes are presented: local participation; social atmosphere; and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Green events; local community; sense of community; sense of belonging; well-being; socialization; farmers markets

Introduction

Today, green philosophies are visible and widespread, imbued with the notion of ‘going green’. Arguably, as this paper argues, going green is not just environmentally focused, but local community focused—concerning elements of social sustainability and community well-being. Green events are based on according to Koh and Greene (2015) a sustainable tripartite approach, which refers to “the integration of green economics, green engagement, and green community.” Many refer to or describe green events as events that are planned/managed in a way to promote an environmental agenda, or aim to have a minimal environmental impact (e.g. Ahmad et al., 2013; Mair and Laing, 2013). However, more work is concerned with how ‘green’ as a concept refers also to social sustainability. Within a sustainability framework, a green event is one that seeks to enhance sense of community, belonging and local well-being—using events as an important social lever (see Boström, 2012; Laing & Frost, 2010; Richards et al., 2013; Smith, 2012; Wise, 2016; Ziakas, 2016).

Thus, ‘green events’ today are relevant to community psychology and local community well-being research, embraced by stakeholders who seek local sustainable futures, social and environmental protection (Amendah & Park, 2008; Mair & Laing, 2012; Molitor, Rossi, Branton, & Field, 2011). Scholars have explored the phenomenon of green events by focusing on waste management and principles of sustainability (e.g. Goldblatt, 2012; Jone, 2017; Laing & Frost, 2010; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Wong, Wan & Qi, 2015). Pernecky and Lück (2013) argue linear upward trends to host sustainable events helps mitigate negative impacts on the environment and creates positive impacts for society. Goldblatt (2012) argues that more event operators have realized the future orientation is socially sustainable and this transcends environmental problems and energy crises to nascent foci on social responsibility and sense of

community. Given the direction of this paper, there is limited literature research is related to the nexus between the well-being of the local community and green events.

These impacts on society, specifically a local community, is what this paper seek to explore, as green in this paper refers to social and community suitability, stability and sustainability. Existing literature on green events does not sufficiently evaluate social impacts, so what needs further consideration is attendees' psychological dimensions of green events, surrounding socialization and sense of belonging to realize impacts of social sustainability. Such insight contributes new knowledge for behavioral researchers, social psychologists and social scientists interested in the connections that events contribute to community psychology and social interactions. The aim of this research thus is to find other possibilities how green events could contribute to local community well-being by exploring and discussing findings with conceptual understandings of sense of community. The study will investigate how farmers markets unite people to understand how such events reinforce sense of community and enhance local well-being. Emerged understandings gained in this study are based on participant observations and semi-structured interviews. Getz and Andersson (2008) advocate that events are not just for entertainment purposes that simply benefit the local economy, but gatherings that contribute to society, community and local cultural identity.

The influence of 'green events' and farmers markets on the local community

There is a need to explore how green events influence the local community. Mair and Laing (2012) interviewed festival managers and directors credited with organizing green festivals; they found a clear mission, aspirations to educate, customer satisfaction, image enhancement, marketing advantage and economic benefits were the main motivators for delivering green events. Jones (2017) further argues that event managers must define and adhere to sustainable agendas. Those who organize events have a responsibility to ensure that people gain through social connections and minimize the environmental impact. Similarly, Mair and Jago (2010) noted, even though green elements (as sustainable perspectives) are supported by event managers, nascent green orientations need to fulfill the 'whole green picture'—and this means expanding considerations to social conditions. However, conceptual considerations concerning events need further explored in the community psychology literature.

Building on the above points, Pernecky and Lück (2013) suggest event organizers should pay attention to the meaning of the green events from a social sustainability standpoint beyond the trend to focus on environmental impacts, so consumers would also embrace their importance. This is comparable to Wong, Wan and Qi (2015) who address how attendees can increase green awareness by spending locally to benefit the community. What is more important, the standard for the sustainability is not only focused on the environmental issues, but social-cultural and economic aspects are just as important (Richards, de Brito, & Wilks, 2013). The United Nations (2009), details explanations of sustainable or green events concerning policy agendas—that help provide a framework for managers and communities. With regard to the principles of green events, managers have the capability to deal with environmental problems, but social (intangible) impacts are difficult to measure and manage. All the relevant stakeholders and the local community need to embrace all economic, environmental and social benefits (United Nations, 2009).

Concerning farmers markets, specifically, such green events are widespread in

contemporary society, where consumers can freely browse local produce, products and crafts from exhibitors (who are also local inhabitants, local enterprises and non-profit organizations). In 2017, there were 8,708 farmers markets in the United States, compared to 1,755 in 1994 (USDA, 2017). Farmers markets seek to educate participants about local products at regular gatherings and promote civic engagement (Ball & Wanitshka, 2016). Numerous studies on the farmers market and outdoor markets have shown such events insight positive influence on local communities socially, economically and educationally (Abel, Thomson, & Marezki, 1999; Kovesi & Kern, 2018).

The role of farmers market has also evolved from supplier focused events to events that build relationships between consumers and vendors in the community to enhance (or reinforce) social ties (Alonso, 2010). Relationships forged between consumers and vendors should not be neglected, because real exchanges transcend mere commercial exchanges. The most important reason is the ‘feeling’ based on interactions and forged connections. Hunt (2007) found 62% of vendors believed their interactions with consumers is the primary driving force that helps them sell products. This has led to some initial research aimed at understanding how farmers markets create a sense of community, but focused extensively on place making (e.g. Ball & Wanitshka, 2016). Specifically, it embraces shared connections and integration by providing the experiences for locals (Ball & Wanitshka, 2016) which conceptually links with the literature on sense of community (Dunham, 1986; Farrell, Aubry, & Coulombe, 2004; Mannarini, Rochira, & Talò, 2012; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974; Tinder, 1980; Wise, 2015). From a community psychology focus, Farrell, Aubry and Coulombe (2004, p. 9) found “sense of community mediates the relationship between neighborhood stability and residents’ well-being”. Oberholtzer and Grow (2013) reinforce this link, that farmers markets are special gathering places where people who are bound geographically come to socialize—which reinforces sense of community by connecting (and reconnecting fellow local residents), offering empirical insight to Wise’s (2015) conceptual notion of ‘placing sense of community’.

Such research and events in thus important, especially as society has become increasingly isolated. Brown and Miller (2008) found farmers markets create opportunities to strengthen the local food diversity during different seasons for the local community and promote well-being through socialization. Farmer, Chancellor, Gooding, Shubowitz and Bryant (2011) advocate that farmers markets also make considerable contributions to the local economy in a community because they reinforce local supply chains. Abel, Thomson and Marezki (1999) note economic benefits exist for vendors and residents alike; for example, through sustained local job opportunities and enhanced job prospects, building confidence and enhancing people’s socio-economic well-being.

Regarding sense of community, McMillan and Chavis (1986) indicated four main elements: 1. membership; 2. influence; 3. integration or fulfillment of needs; and 4. shared emotional connections, discussed later in this paper. Prospectively, people unite to share feelings and experiences that reinforce place connections and belonging based on a unique identity (Hummon, 1992; Wise, 2015; Wise & Harris, 2019). Furthermore, Roffey (2013) adds psychological connections influence community well-being, so residents can embrace their mutual dependence. Christakopoulou, Dawson and Gari (2001) explain that social activities to enhance interactions between different stakeholders are necessary for local residents to unite. Thus, common feelings accumulate through shared connections among local residents to

enhance local safety, satisfaction and overall well-being, which are how events can contribute to sense of community (see Schwarz & Tait, 2017), and especially farmers markets because they link the community with different suppliers who people might not regularly interact. Derrett (2003) agrees with this perspective, and concludes cultural festivals enhance sense of belonging, interaction, safety, togetherness and local support. Similarly, Van Winkle, Woosnam, and Mohammed (2013), following McMillan and Chavis' (1986) four basic elements, also found that events help build close communal relationships.

Overall, there are various factors contributing to local well-being. Foremost is satisfaction with surroundings and living conditions (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, & Rootman, 1996). Another is the idea of a social community, where an emotionally forged sense of community among residents based on social activities and connection (Buckner, 1988; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Wise & Harris, 2016), that are aided by social programs to encourage more active participation in a local community (Clark & Wise, 2018; Minas, Ribeiro, & Anglin, 2018). Civic pride (concerning how people identify with their community) aligns with the extent that residents are proud of their place (Sirgy, Widgery, Lee, & Grace, 2010). Each of these factors contribute to local community well-being, and it is noticeable that farmers markets influence aspects each of these, which will be further articulated in this study. Combining factors with local community well-being, farmers markets are arguably socially sustainable (green) events that can enhance local interactions and a sense of community.

A Note on Method

The 'feelings' of participants' is regarded as important factors concerning local community well-being and participation (Clark & Wise, 2018). Participant observations and 30 semi-structured interviews represent the methods of data collection at the Lark Lane Farmers Market in Liverpool between May and July 2018. Participant observations complemented by semi-structured interviews help emerge experiences, interactions, feelings, moods and real attitudes of event attendees whilst confirming insight from different perspectives. Participant observation is appropriate for examining relationships in social settings. Kemp (2001) notes the specifics of the method is intertwined with assessing behaviors of (and among) participants.

Participant observations enable researchers to understand communications between stakeholders (in this case, how vendors and consumers influence each other during the buying-selling process). Subsequent interviews held during the event then helped emerge points concerning 'how' and 'what' (Silverman, 2013) so that participant feelings and experiences further emerge to complement and supplement the participant observations while the event is happening to enhance the data collection in real time. The researcher asked the following questions at different points to help guide the semi-structured approach:

- How often do you go to Lark Lane Farmers Market?
- How many years since you have started to buy food/products in the Farmers Market?
- What is the main factor to make you choose the Farmers Market?
- Except for buying food/products at the Farmers Market, what is the key reason for you to come here?
- What can you learn from the Farmers Market?

Semi-structured interviews typically lasted 10-15 minutes each, with participant observations carried out for the duration of the event (typically 6 hours during the days of the event). During participant observations, note-taking recorded/detailed observations on interactions between vendors and consumers, focusing on places of interaction, people's attitudes, behaviors and social interactions.

Participant observation and interview data was recorded and transcribed. NVivo10 was used sort and code data; but computer-aided qualitative data analysis software such as Nvivo cannot completely assist with the actual assigning of codes nor completely determine ultimate interpretations of findings. However, such software does reduce the time/complexity associated with manual coding. Using Nvivo made it possible to develop coding frames that allowed for the clear identification of prominent themes, and then grouped to allow for any guiding conceptual understandings. All participant details are anonymous, with interviewees referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2 (outlined in Appendix 1) in the analysis. A comprehensive analysis of notes from participant observations and interview transcripts led to the development of themes to outline in the results. Notes from the participant observations helped confirm the interview data—reinforcing meanings associated with interactions and exchanges.

Analysis

Three themes emerged from the data collected at Liverpool's Lark Lane Farmers Market, organized into three analysis subsections: local participation; social atmosphere; and sense of belonging. Each section includes direct quotes from interviewees, and these points are reinforced through participant observations examine emerged meanings of community, participation and well-being. To supplement the analysis, considerations from the academic literature supports insight when necessary to enhance observations and interpretations. A subsequent discussion section then looks at McMillan and Chavis' (1986) conditions of sense of community to reinforce the conceptual focus of such work and present a conceptual model that links foundation theory with the findings from this study on events.

Local Participation

It is difficult (and unrealistic) for most local farmers markets to be open every day. The Lark Lane Farmers Market is open for once per month for members of the community to gather and purchase fresh food here rather than the supermarket. Participant 3 mentioned 'I come here for fresh organic food only because there are no chemicals, [and] I feel safe to buy it in here'. The primary reason most interviewees visit the farmers market was for the local foods, as Participant 1 explains:

'I go to the farmers market every month, the local produce is really good and important for us, because, when you go to the supermarket, well, the foods come from the Africa, come from America, come from all over of the place, and in here, what you take is what they grow.'

The local emphasis is important, and observations of local interaction and participation suggest pride in place—as the event bonds people with the Lark Lane area. Likewise, Participant 5

noted, ‘some of the stuff such as good meat and cheese that you know you can buy in here, only here, you will not buy them in any supermarket.’ Supporting local independent vendors is one of the ways to support the local community economy. It is possible to argue that vendors in the farmers market were just simply seeking economic benefits, as economic benefits here rely on how well they socially engage with local residents and attendees. Intertwined are consumers and vendors; interviewees mentioned that vendors and those working are often members of the community, geographically and socially.

Participant 9 was a newcomer to the community and this participant mentioned they attend the farmers market because they want to support local businesses by spending money here. As someone who just moved to Lark Lane, Participant 9 also saw attending and participating in the event as an opportunity to socialize with neighbors. Participant 23 added emphasis on sense of community and the need ‘to support them [local businesses]. I would take a moment to think, they just come here for a while and if we are not there it will be a shame, I think it is important for them to have the customers locally’. Moreover, this helps the event advance—and provides mutual support, socially and economically. For instance, Participant 28 mentioned, ‘when you talk to the vendors, you see their passion. You always spend more money than you imagine that you going to, but the products are nice, you know your money would help to pay the vendor fee. So, you got more of an emotional investment here.’ With such support for local vendors are encouraged to continue participating in the event. Responses indicate place and community identity is evident, with vendors and consumers showcasing their shared sense of belonging behind purchasing local food and products.

Using insight from McMillan and Chavis (1986), a strong local place identity reinforces local ‘membership’. This is not simply implying relationships among friends; such local interactions demonstrate relationships centered support among and for people based on a shared identity of living in the same community. Participant 30 provided an explanatory answer about how residents sense membership and participation at the Lark Lane Farmers Market:

‘If the money can stay in your own community, then it is better than going to the outside. For example, the plants they sell there, actually, they are more expensive than the plant shops. But as a community, you can get to speak to them and meet them regularly, and they are friendly as well, we would like to support them.’

Necessity as expressed by participants concerns connecting with the people who are living near them, and how they share spaces and attend events in the community together. Except for buying food and supporting the vendors, about a third of the interviewees attend for local socializing and the overall atmosphere that the farmers market provides. Two interviewees highlight:

‘It is nice to walk around, because it brings something nice to the road. The community atmosphere is so lively, it is a community event, every month is different, different things to see’ (Participant 19)

‘I like the market atmosphere, I feel comfortable to come here’ (Participant 4).

The above responses were not about buying, but the comfort of the environment and going to a local event each month, suggesting participants attend the farmers market for the emotional connections it offers—just to enjoy. For those participants who have been living near Lark Lane more than a couple of years, the emotional connection to the event was a compelling motivator. Several mentioned the local social feel of the event, as Participant 29 mentions ‘we love chatting, love to talk with the people, it is social—meeting people is very nice, and it is the chance to talk with my familiar friends in the market’, which lends insight moving into the next theme.

Social atmosphere

Many of the responses above relate to or emphasize ‘community atmosphere’. Such insight helps again reinforce a local sense of community at the Lark Lane Farmers Market. Attending the farmers market meets social needs for sharing emotional connections, and this was explored through participant observations analyzing how people reacted and socialized (which helped inform interview questions). During several occurrences for instance, observations of interactions between strangers shows how people unite based on their love of animals. Such social connections regularly occur at the Lark Lane Farmers Market—to easily meet social needs and create (and enhance) influence. Findings also reinforce the local in this section as well and shows how local residents share social opportunities with their neighbors.

Asking participants, what they learn from the farmers market, over half mentioned they could obtain ‘top tips’ from experienced vendors on cooking and gain new insight on food knowledge. This sort of socialization proved informative and educational to attendees, gained during interviews and participant observations. Common perspectives were:

‘I am a gardener; I like to talk with the plant vendors, so sometimes I can learn new things from them’ (Participant 6).

‘I can find how they make things. Well, you can get better from what they sell. There is a man who sells olives; I would buy olives from him rather than supermarkets because he can explain to you the quality of the olives’ (Participant 7).

‘I am a vegan, they have a quite selection of vegans, and they are helpful with the recipes and the benefits of different ingredients’ (Participant 25).

From the above quotes showcase a social educational atmosphere, something not typically offered at supermarkets. Several interviewees acknowledged this and how vendors increased their awareness of the products they were purchasing (so the event becomes a place for teaching attendees something new while they interact). Participant observations reinforced this, watching attendees learn while interacting with the sellers added to the community atmosphere. For example, a bread vendor explained to someone how to make bread by detailing the process. It was clear to understand the point that most of the interviewees made when they speak about the friendliness of vendors and their passion for their products.

Twenty-two participants indicated they have the chance to meet their neighbours at the farmers market (and see familiar faces) which helps maintain community relationships. This suggests integration based on McMillan and Chavis' (1986), elaborated on below. Others took the opportunity to make new friends and acquaintances at the farmers market. Participant 17 mentions:

'Each time we get to know each other, and I have followed vendors on Instagram. Everyone is so friendly, I could make friends with the other customers as well, and then when you go back, you have already built relationships with people'.

Some interviewees with children added 'it is easy for me to make friends. Having a child helps chat with people of similar age, you find lots of conversation start with "my kids"'. Talking about their children was how many parents start conversations, and this helps them socialize with other parents. During observations, it became noticeable that social interaction often occurred among parents out with their children.

While many reflections and observations (of social interactions) were positively reinforced, some different attitudes however were expressed. Some mention they felt social interactions were superficial. Arguably, despite the type of connection occurring among participants, social interactions were apparent. In the farmers market, social interactions were frequent between consumers and vendors, or among consumers. The event as a platform enables such a social atmosphere where people can meet, share stories and reminisce experiences. Such socialization enhances community bonding and a shared sense of belonging. Moreover, based on social interactions, for most interviewees' togetherness was an emotional investment to encourage them to support the local vendors. Similar to the perspective above, from their perspective, supporting the vendors was one of the ways to support their own community. Given Participant 28 explained (above) that products are oftentimes more expensive, it is the community feeling and opportunity to interact with vendors in a social atmosphere that attracted them. Forgotten were economic (burdens) because social interactions among the people created an atmosphere—experience transcended more contemporary shopping in supermarkets.

Sense of belonging

Several interviewees mentioned their connection with the vendors, noting phrases such as 'community feeling', 'enjoyable feeling in the market', 'be part of here' and 'social connection'. Attendees gained from social connections—resulting in strong emotional connections. Participant 11 mentioned:

'it will be a shame of not have an opportunity to buy local food, it makes people feel like we are living in a community, it encourages people to come out and be sociable, so it makes people appreciate the connection'.

Participant 18 held the similar view, that the farmers market enhances the community, saying 'it is really good to connect with people, I love the market, proud of the market atmosphere, you cannot get that in the city center, is nice to feel a part of something here'. Building on the above section, a social atmosphere creates a sense of belonging. To most participants, that sense

of belonging and emotional connection was what participants sought—wanting to achieve sense of community. The atmosphere of the event was something that also helped reinforce belonging to somewhere as well.

Many participants stressed their feeling for the Lark Lane Farmers Market was not possible to detach from, as they felt they needed the market. Others expressed that sense of belonging would disappear if the farmers market was closed. Interviewees mentioned the community atmosphere is different during weekends when there is no event. Participant 24 reminisced: ‘I like the market because when I was a child, there was no supermarket; my mom brought me to butcher shops and the grocery. She was always chatting with people when we were buying food. I like that kind of feeling, so it’s definitely different’. For her, the farmers market was that unique event that brought back good memories about how she would engage with community members in the past.

When a sense of community belonging exists, it influences people positively (as detailed in this study) for many years until they move from that place. A response provided by a couple (originally from the community) who had moved away were back in Liverpool for two months looking after their grandchildren. Being back at the farmers market brought back memories of their connection with local residents. An important factor of belonging is well-being. Participant 15 accentuates:

‘we like this market and the community, what is really good about it is because it is grown locally—people who are growing and selling. We are proud of the offering you do need it, we need to socialize with people, we love to talk to people in here, it is very important, very healthy, I think it is good for well-being’.

The Lark Lane Farmers Market is a chance for local people to unite—going beyond simply buying and selling. Thus, sense of community and sense of belonging are directly connected. It seems once the impact of belonging emerges it creates a lasting feeling for people. As Tinder (1980) argued decades ago and still holds true today based on the findings in this paper, people strive to gain from their community. What people can gain today through feelings of belonging is local and social well-being, which unites a community through shared emotional connections, which helps further connect people.

Discussion: The Intersection of Green Events and Sense of Community Theory

The above analysis evaluates the relationship between green events and local community well-being offering new insight for the community psychology literature. In the events literature, a conjecture exists between green events and environmental sustainability (Mair & Laing, 2012), this paper explored new avenues surrounding community well-being—which needed explored in-depth through interviews and participant observations to build on some related work on farmers markets (see Alonso, 2010; Ball & Wanitshka, 2016; Farmer et al., 2011). Comparing the influence of farmers markets (as green events) on the local community, conditions of sense of community, including sense of belonging, educational opportunities and social interactions were most apparent from the findings. Each are important contributors to local community well-being and suggest the Lark Lane Farmers Market positively influences sense of community.

Linking this work to the theory on sense of community, Wise (2015, p. 922), borrowing insight from Hummon (1992), argues: “that even despite local conditions, people will strive to achieve a sense of community”. McMillan and Chavis (1986) articulated that empirically validated understandings of sense of community offers a foundation for planners, in this case event planners, to work towards shared goals to strengthen and preserve a community. Bringing McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) four conditions back into focus (1. membership; 2. influence; 3. integration or fulfillment of needs; and 4. shared emotional connections). These conditions conceptually bind the findings that emerged in this study, and thus aids this discussion. The conceptual diagram in Figure 1 links foundational theoretical insight to the directions offered in this study.

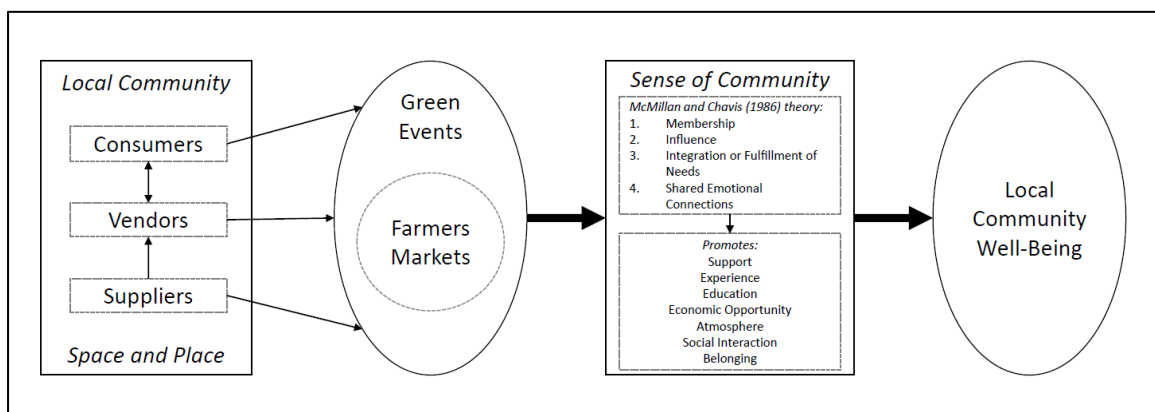


Figure 1. The conceptual relationships between green events, sense of community and local community well-being.

Membership is an essential condition because communities are often defined or bound geographically (in spaces and places), so in this case Lark Lane is the focal point because it is an area of consumerism in the south of Liverpool where the farmers market is then set up and organized once each month. Insight from Dunham (1986), who framed social processes of place, is relevant here given attempts to involve a wider collective group. From an events perspective that addresses social sustainability, where such a community atmosphere is enhanced through socialization. Place identity associated with Lark Lane means that local support helps enhance peoples pride in their place. Influence, as the second condition, involves social capital, which based on local culture and social opportunities in this case. Opportunities to consume locally influence people, and learn more about the products that they buy from expert vendors. When a community united, influence links each of the three themes observed from the data presented in this paper, through a local social atmosphere where bonds to a place help create a sense of belonging.

The third condition, the Lark Lane Farmers Market reflects integration and fulfillment of needs through direct and usual/regular interactions with members of the community. The farmers market as an event is something that locals embrace and look forward to, and fulfilling people’s needs by knowing that they are contributing to the local economy, socializing and learning about food/products gives people a particular appreciation for what is on offer. Moreover, the event allows people to connect and have an experience while purchasing food and products. Some could reminisce about times when there purchased food/products at

independent shops. Others enjoy the nature of interacting directly with expert salespersons who explain what they sell. Consequently, reinforcement acts as a motivator of social behavior and “it is obvious that for any group to maintain a (positive) sense of togetherness the individual-group association must be rewarding for its members” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 12). Conceptual understandings here suggest that integration and fulfillment require a sense of belonging and togetherness to sustain a greater sense of community.

Building on the fulfillment of needs concerning community social psychology, arguably then, depends on shared emotional connections, which is the fourth condition outlined by McMillan and Chavis (1986). Building on Sarason’s (1974) focus on interrelationships, participation, and well-being, these variables are especially important to consider the making of and sense of belonging that emerged from this study. This suggests collective attachments, through a fulfillment and integration of needs promote involvement, which enhances local identity formation through belonging. Collective emotions therefore are supported through contact, interactions, bonds, investments, culture or beliefs. Similar to membership, shared emotional connections are based on local connections where people can unite and discuss shared interests and as observed in this study where parents can unite and discuss kids and parenting in a social atmosphere. The four conditions really link the three emerged themes in the findings of this research.

Concluding Remarks

This study has provided knowledge to bridge the gap between the local community well-being and the green events. Previous work noted the influence of farmers markets and green events on locals, from economic, social and educational impacts and aspects. Notably, this study found that the social interactions and sense of belonging are predominant impacts on the local community—which are important elements of sense of community and local well-being. Therefore, this paper offered insight on sense of community and events by linking to concepts and ideas developed in the community psychology literature. Green events highly resonate with a local community, by positively enhancing local well-being through social interactions, a community atmosphere and reinforcing a sense of belonging, which enhance our understanding of sense of community by presenting the influence of events. Farmers markets represent more than buying foods and products, they are inherent to the fabric of a community by generating an atmosphere for local residents to connect and share experiences. It is the characteristic of connecting people to support emotional and psychological needs of neighbors and residents. Social interactions at the Lark Lane Farmers Market linked people, and interactions helped forge or reinforce emotional connections, which helped promote sense of belonging. While this article focused specifically on local residents, at least through the interviews, it will be useful to conduct research from the perspectives of local vendors to see if similar themes emerge in this case. Nonetheless, research interested in community events, green events and farmers markets, in particular can adapt this approach—so to determine similar or different findings in another case.

Social interactions are different from a business stakeholder perspective, as they are concerned with maintaining a business operation, whilst simultaneously positioning their presence in the community. Further research needs to explore how events promote social interaction, and to what extent this has on increasing community well-being. However, this will

likely need explored quantitatively, but some of the points that emerged from this study is a starting point to guide the development of such research to further link the study of events and community psychology. To conclude, event and community organizers need to pay particular attention to the social interactions that emerge at such local events, to find ways to enhance connections to emphasize sense of community—especially during contemporary times where people are becoming increasingly isolated and interactions and exchanges occur online opposed to presence in physical spaces and places. Thus speaking back to the aim of this study, the themes that emerged in this study around local participation, a social atmosphere and sense of belonging help reinforce how meanings of sense of community and local social well-being offer insight into how we expand our notion of ‘green’ when we consider events and social sustainability.

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Appendix 1. Participant details and how often they attend the Lark Lane Farmers Market.

Participant	Age	Attendance Frequency	Years attending
1	42	Every month	3-4
2	34	Every month	2
3	27	4-5 times	3
4	31	3-4 times	3
5	28	Every month	2
6	42	Every month	5
7	48	Every month	4-5
8	38	Every month	25
9	26	First time	1 month
10	22	Every month	4
11	35	Every month	4
12	50	3-4 times	4
13	55	5-6 times	7
14	33	Every month	2
15	47	2 times	8
16	32	Every month	4
17	23	Every month	2
18	28	3-4 times	5
19	44	Every month	3
20	54	Every month	6
21	32	Every month	4
22	24	3-4 times	4
23	33	Every month	2
24	46	Every month	1½
25	21	5-6 times	3
26	36	Every month	4
27	42	5-6 times	4
28	33	3-4 times	2
29	29	Every month	4
30	42	Every month	7