

**Crisis Response, Recovery and Resilience of Community Events:
The Case of Kitchener and COVID-19**

by

Kelly McManus

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Recreation and Leisure Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2025

© Kelly McManus 2025

Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

External Examiner	Judith Mair Associate Professor School of Business University of Queensland
Supervisor(s)	Troy Glover Professor Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies University of Waterloo
Internal Member	Heather Mair Professor Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies University of Waterloo
Internal-external Member	Mark Seasons Professor Department of Planning University of Waterloo
Other Member(s)	Katie Misener Associate Professor Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies University of Waterloo

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 global health pandemic exacerbated the fragility of festivals and events in communities. In a world where further disruptions to events and communities are inevitable, it is critical to understand what can support the crisis response, recovery and resilience of events, event organizations, and event ecosystems. In contrast to event tourism, this study emphasizes community-focused festivals and events planned for residents for the purposes of placemaking and community development. Drawing on the first-hand experiences of event stakeholders, it describes the evolution of festivals and events throughout the two year crisis response and recovery period. Through a lens of social capital, the study explores interorganizational relationships before, during, and after the pandemic. Event stakeholders with longstanding relationships and stronger organizational capacity were more resilient in the crisis. The scale and shock of the pandemic represented an exogenous pathway of social capital, whereby stakeholders were motivated to support one another in new ways during and emerging from the crisis. The findings inform a multi-dimensional framework of event management practices, event organizations, and event ecosystems. With an emphasis on the leadership role of local government, recommendations are offered for promoting resilience in community event ecosystems. The key contributions of the study are (a) continuing to establish the importance of placemaking festivals and events in post-pandemic communities; (b) adopting a multi-dimensional timeframe and holistic view of events and communities; (c) learning from the lived experiences of event stakeholders; and (d) engaging with social capital theory as a contribution to a theoretically fragmented field.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Over the course of your lifetime, there's going to be so many setbacks and challenges that force you to pause to look inward and listen to the voice that says, ‘You can do it.’ It's your job to keep your feet on the ground in those times of self-doubt, because those moments teach us how to fly, to believe in yourself, and they teach you to recognize opportunity and act on it without fear.”

Serena Williams

With thanks to everyone who supported me along the journey—family, friends, colleagues, and advisors in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. I appreciate the collaboration with the City of Kitchener, and I am grateful to the festival and event leaders who shared their experiences.

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES	X
LIST OF TABLES	XI
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 About This Research.....	1
1.2 COVID-19: An Unprecedented Crisis for Events, Event Stakeholders, and Communities	2
1.3 Community-Focused Festivals and Events as Essential Social Infrastructure	3
1.4 Responding to Gaps in the Literature	5
1.5 The COVID-19 Global Pandemic: A Crisis and a Call to Action for Events and Event Studies	6
1.5.1 The fragility of community events	7
1.5.2 Event scholarship at a crossroads	7
1.6 Crisis Response, Recovery and Resilience	8
1.7 Organization of the Dissertation	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Outline.....	11
2.2 Event Studies at a Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities	12
2.2.1 Pre-pandemic foundations of event studies.....	13
2.2.2 Opportunities for post-pandemic event scholarship.....	14
2.3 Community Festivals and Events.....	15
2.4 Social Capital and Events	16
2.5 Festivals and Events as Community and Policy Strategies	20
2.6 Communities, Events and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic.....	22
2.6.1 Conclusion to section one of the literature review	25
2.7 Event Stakeholders and Stakeholder Relationships.....	26
2.7.1 Event stakeholder relationships.....	26
2.7.2 Stakeholder relationships in a community event ecosystem.....	32
2.8 Theoretical Foundations of Event Stakeholder Relationships	33
2.8.1 Network theory.....	34
2.8.2 Social capital theory	36
2.8.3 Conclusion to section two of the literature review.....	41
2.9 Crisis Response, Recovery and Resilience	41
2.9.1 Resilience	42
2.9.2 System theories and crisis response	44
2.9.3 Social capital and crisis response	45
2.9.4 Crisis response and recovery of events, event organizations, and event ecosystems	46
2.10 Events and Festivals as Tools for Community Recovery and Resilience.....	48
2.10.1 Crisis as a catalyst for transformation	51
2.10.2 Conclusion to section three of the literature review	52
2.11 Summary of the Literature Review.....	53
2.12 Social Capital: A Multi-dimensional Theoretical Framework to Explore Crisis Response and Resilience in Events, Event Organizations, and Community Event Ecosystems	54

2.13	Conclusion	59
3.	METHODOLOGY	60
3.1	Outline.....	60
3.1.1	Research questions	61
3.1.2	Reflexivity	62
3.1.3	Selection of the case	65
3.1.4	Participation criteria	67
3.1.5	Ethics	68
3.1.6	Recruitment	70
3.1.7	Participants	71
3.1.8	Data analysis.....	73
3.2	About the Case.....	75
3.2.1	City of Kitchener resources and staff structure	79
3.2.2	Funding and resources for community-focused events in Kitchener	80
3.2.3	The City’s role in community-led events and markets.....	82
3.2.4	The City’s role with resident-led neighbourhood events	83
3.2.5	The City’s role in longstanding community-led festivals and events	84
4.	FINDINGS.....	88
4.1	Outline.....	89
4.2	Adapting, Pivoting and Surviving: Community-focused Festivals and Events in Kitchener During a Crisis.....	90
4.2.1	Year one	92
4.2.2	Year two	96
4.2.3	Returning to “normal” events (2022, 2023)	102
4.2.4	Enabling community-focused event stakeholders in the face of unprecedented disruption: The role of local government during the pandemic	105
4.3	Factors that Influenced Events and Event Stakeholders During COVID-19.....	110
4.3.1	The changing face of communities: Increased cultural diversity and community-focused festivals and events	111
4.3.2	Social movements, unrest, and a dynamic socio-political landscape.....	112
4.3.3	Not necessarily “back to normal”: Changes in festival and event attendee behaviour and expectations	114
4.3.4	The cost of post-pandemic community events	117
4.3.5	We knew it was coming: How the pandemic exacerbated trends in volunteer engagement.....	120
4.4	Relationships Among Event Stakeholders: Supporting One Another in the Face of Crisis.....	125
4.4.1	Interorganizational relationships among community-focused event stakeholders: How partners worked together before the crisis.....	126
4.4.2	Collaboration during a crisis: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on interorganizational and interpersonal relationships.....	137
4.4.3	Organizational capacity of event stakeholders during the crisis: Consequences for interorganizational collaboration.....	146
4.4.4	Working within and across City departments: Intraorganizational collaboration during the crisis	150

4.4.5	The impact of the crisis on collaboration: The mediating roles of longstanding interorganizational relationships and the shared experience of the crisis	153
4.5	Recovery and Resilience of Events, Event Organizations, and Event Ecosystems: Contributing Factors Following From the Crisis	159
4.5.1	Organizational and community capacity: A foundation for resilience.....	161
4.5.2	Resilient event management practices: Beyond health and safety	162
4.5.3	Resilient event organizations: Strategies, partnerships, and leadership	167
4.5.4	Community-focused event ecosystem strategy: Collaboration, shared vision, and leadership of local government	174
4.6	Designing a Resilient Community Event Ecosystem	185
4.6.1	Establishing strategies that modernize and strengthen the community-focused event ecosystem	186
4.6.2	Defining and mobilizing vital resources and infrastructure to support the community-focused event ecosystem	190
4.6.3	The future of partnerships: Mobilizing in new ways and with new partners to expand and modernize the community-focused event ecosystem	193
4.7	Conclusion	198
5.	DISCUSSION.....	201
5.1	Outline.....	202
5.2	Events and Communities in Crisis: What Did We Learn from the Pandemic Experience?	202
5.2.1	Crisis as an accelerant for positive change in a community event ecosystem	207
5.3	How Will We Be Better Prepared For Future Crisis? A Framework for Event Scholars and Practitioners	211
5.3.1	A multi-dimensional resilience framework for events, event organizations and community event ecosystems.....	212
5.3.2	Community and organizational capacity: Protective roots, or easily weathered by the storm?	213
5.3.3	Resilient event management practices incorporate continuous improvement and lessons learned from a crisis.....	220
5.3.4	Resilient event organizations are adaptive and strategically embrace change	221
5.3.5	Resilient event ecosystems have an embedded system of supports	223
5.4	Resilient Community Event Ecosystems	224
5.4.1	Shared vision for placemaking events in our post-pandemic world	224
5.4.2	The role of stakeholder relationships in supporting crisis recovery and resilience.	226
5.4.3	Leadership, values and the essential human infrastructure of events.....	236
5.4.4	Leadership role of local government.....	239
5.5	Social Capital: A Foundation for Crisis Response, Recovery, and Resilience for Events and Communities.....	241
5.6	Conclusion	243
6.	CONCLUSION.....	245
6.1	Inspiration For This Dissertation	245
6.2	Summary of the Dissertation	248
6.3	Contributions of this Research.....	249

6.3.1	Community-focused festivals and events: The integral role of placemaking and social impact in our post-pandemic communities	250
6.3.2	Multi-dimensional timeframe and holistic view of crisis response and recovery ...	250
6.3.3	Learning from the front lines: Why prioritizing the experiences and perspectives of event stakeholders is critical to understand crisis response, recovery, and resilience	251
6.3.4	Social capital: A theoretical contribution in a theoretically fragmented field	252
6.4	Exploratory Research During an Unprecedented Time: Case Study Methodology, Limitations, and Areas For Future Inquiry	254
6.4.1	Limitations of this study	255
6.4.2	Areas for future inquiry	256
6.5	Recommendations for Policy and Practice	262
6.5.1	Recommendation 1: Adopt a holistic view of how residents engage with festivals and events in the community	262
6.5.2	Recommendation 2: Establish an organized network of event stakeholders	263
6.5.3	Recommendation 3: Leverage and invest in partnerships that maximize opportunities for the community festival and event ecosystem	265
6.6	Reflexivity and Autobiographical Reflections.....	267
6.7	Conclusion	269
	REFERENCES	270
	APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER	305
	APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM	309
	APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE	310

List of Figures

Figure 1: The endogenous pathway to social capital	39
Figure 2: The exogenous pathway to social capital	40
Figure 3: Model of festival and community resilience	49
Figure 4: Social capital and events conceptual framework	50
Figure 5: Factors contributing to event, organization and ecosystem recovery and resilience following a crisis.....	160
Figure 6: A multi-dimensional crisis response, recovery and resilience framework for events, event organizations and community event ecosystems	213

List of Tables

Table 1: Conceptual structure of the research questions	61
Table 2: Selection of interview questions	69
Table 3: Community-focused event stakeholder profiles	71
Table 4: Types of events and relationship to the City of Kitchener	78
Table 5: Factors influencing community-focused events and event stakeholders during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.....	110
Table 6: Collaboration between community-focused event stakeholders during the crisis.....	138

1. INTRODUCTION

The onset of the COVID-19 global health pandemic in March 2020 evoked great uncertainty. We faced many unknowns about our personal health and safety, and worried about our loved ones and neighbours. We closely monitored daily public health updates on television and social media. As days and weeks passed, we introduced new behaviours, like wearing masks and standing at least six feet apart wherever we went. Many of us worked from home, if we were lucky enough to stay employed. We shifted school, church, and leisure activities online. As weeks and months ensued, we missed—literally and figuratively—family gatherings and holidays, weddings, graduations, and funerals. We awaited vaccines promised to help us return to “normal.”

Because we could not gather together for most of the pandemic, we could not attend events. The magnitude of canceling or postponing major cultural and sport events, like the Tokyo Olympics, was not inconsequential. But on a smaller scale—in every community across the globe, in fact—we were unable to hold cultural festivals, sport events, and neighbourhood street parties. Just when we thought things were turning around, new COVID-19 variants emerged, adding frustration and confusion, and making guidelines about safety and testing unpredictable and seemingly never-ending. These were unprecedented times for events, event stakeholders, and communities.

1.1 About This Research

This dissertation explores how community-focused event stakeholders in Kitchener’s event ecosystem planned, adapted, and navigated their roles during the COVID-19 global health pandemic. It examines the factors that shaped event transformations during and after the crisis, with particular attention to the vital role of interorganizational relationships among stakeholders.

This case study seeks to identify what supports the crisis recovery of events, event organizations, and broader event ecosystems, and what factors may contribute to long-term resilience in the face of future disruptions of any type or scale. To guide this inquiry, the following four research questions were posed:

1. How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?
3. What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?
4. What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?

1.2 COVID-19: An Unprecedented Crisis for Events, Event Stakeholders, and Communities

At the heart of planning and delivering community-focused festivals and events are “event stakeholders.” Event stakeholders include government, for-profit, not-for-profit, and grassroots organizations and volunteers directly involved in event planning and delivery, but also policymakers, sponsors, and others invested in events as a means to achieve the social and economic goals of their community (Getz, Andersson & Larson, 2007; van Niekirk & Getz, 2016, 2019). The term “host community” considers both the geographic region and the myriad event stakeholders engaged in the planning and delivery of multiple events each year, including residents (i.e., Ziakas & Costa, 2010). The collective of event stakeholders in a host community is an “event ecosystem” (i.e., Kwiatkowski, Ossowska, Strzelecka, Dragin-Jensen, Hannevik

Lien, Janiszewska & Kloskowski, 2023) or a formal or informal “event network” (Ziakas, 2013). The idea of an event ecosystem is germane to the focus of this dissertation.

During and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholders in event ecosystems assessed, adapted, and responded to the crisis. At first, they asked: “How can we host a festival if we can’t meet in person? Do people care if we host our event online? How do we even do that? Will our sponsors want their money back? What if we lose all our volunteers because we have no work for them to do during the shutdown? Are we going to lose our job?” As months passed and public health guidelines began to lift, new questions emerged: “How can we bring back our in-person event without becoming a “superspreader” event that makes people sick and ruins our reputation? What does it mean to hold a “hybrid event”—how complicated would it be to do so? How do we enforce rules like physical distancing and vaccination? What if we do all this work to prepare for our event, only to have to cancel it when the rules change again?”

As if this unprecedented global health crisis wasn’t challenging enough, major sociopolitical issues emerged and evolved during this time. The Black Lives Matter international movement to end anti-Black racism, for example, heightened racial tensions in communities. In Canada, the Freedom Convoy movement and “anti-vax” crusades led to increased agitation, divisiveness, and security concerns in public spaces. In a short time, community-focused festivals and events had quickly become more complicated, costly, and challenging to plan and execute. While they inherently knew their festivals and events bring joy, festivity, and belonging to residents and communities, event stakeholders were left to wonder: “Is this all worth it?”

1.3 Community-Focused Festivals and Events as Essential Social Infrastructure

Also referred to as leisure or placemaking events, “community events” focus on residents as their target market, rather than external audiences from outside the geographic area (Stevenson, 2020).

Community events include festivals, non-mega sport events, and cultural or heritage celebrations; they are commonly held in shared or publicly accessible spaces such as parks or town squares. By their nature, community events are temporary, yet they often have a “regular and rhythmic relationship” with places and can become a fixture in the cultural life of a community over time (Rota & Salone, 2014). In contrast, in event tourism, large-scale festivals and events such as mega-sport competitions are designed and hosted with a primary goal of attracting tourists to a region. While event tourism is concerned with bringing economic benefits to communities, community-focused festivals and events aim to achieve pro-social outcomes for communities and their residents. In the past two decades, event scholars have moved beyond an initially predominant focus on event tourism to examining such events as tools for placemaking and community development. As this shift has unfolded, event scholars have documented positive social benefits of events and festivals for residents and communities, including sense of community, sense of inclusion, shared identity, values, and community pride (Derrett, 2003; Duffy & Mair, 2018a; McClinchey, 2008, 2017; Richards, de Brito & Wilks, 2013; Schwarz & Tait, 2007; Taks, 2013).

Whether we view events as a social tool or an economic tool guides the way event scholars and practitioners think about crises like the COVID-19 global health pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, most research on event disruption examined the impact of natural disasters, such as floods or landslides, or time-limited public health outbreaks, such as the case of SARS-CoV in the early 2000s. While event studies as a field of inquiry has become more balanced in its study of event tourism and community-focused events, the majority of research on events and crisis response has examined the economic impact to cities when large events were on hold and tourists were no longer visiting the region (i.e., Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2016; Mohanty,

Himanshi & Choudhury, 2020; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). However, in contrast to a flood or a short-term public health outbreak, COVID-19 represented an extensive shut-down of all social gatherings. Given its complete disruption to social life, the COVID-19 global health pandemic invited a move beyond event tourism to examine crisis response, recovery, and resilience for community-focused festivals and events, event stakeholders, and event ecosystems.

During and emerging from the pandemic, event scholars agreed that community-focused events will remain an important part of our lives and our communities (Center for Culture, Sport & Events, 2022; Duffy & Mair, 2021; Ziakas, 2021a; Ziakas, Antchak & Getz, 2021). Some even suggested “the need for socially and culturally meaningful events is likely to increase, especially if they are able to heal communities in the aftermath of the pandemic” (Ziakas, 2021a, para. 4). There was early conjecture we may collectively emerge from the pandemic with a preference to stay closer to home and avoid large crowds, leading to increased localism (Center for Culture, Sport & Events, 2022). Others predicted we may shift to greater communitarianism, a philosophy that emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community (McAuley & Nesbitt-Larking, 2022). There were more questions and speculation than answers. Given this unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 global pandemic, event studies research examining the pandemic experience is inherently exploratory. As time passes, a new body of event scholarship is emerging. The next section describes this dissertation as part of this emergent literature, and how it will respond to four significant gaps in post-pandemic event scholarship.

1.4 Responding to Gaps in the Literature

To position this dissertation within the emerging body of post-pandemic scholarship, it is important to identify and address key gaps in the existing literature on festivals and events. First,

while previous research has examined event disruptions mainly from an event tourism perspective with primarily economic impacts, less is known about the crisis response, recovery, and resilience of community-focused festivals and events that have primarily social goals. Second, this research takes place during a critical time for event scholarship. Prior to the pandemic, the field was being challenged by both the emergence of critical event theory and by a growing concern for the ongoing sustainability of the event sector due to climate change and other threats. The pandemic underscored the need to better understand crisis response, recovery, and resilience for events and communities. Third, in contrast to event research that examines the experiences of event attendees (i.e., consumers), this dissertation prioritizes the first-hand experiences and relationships of event stakeholders (i.e., event producers) to understand the crisis response, recovery, and resilience experience. In response to a theoretically fragmented view of event stakeholders, it utilizes social capital theory to understand the role of interpersonal and interorganizational relationships in crisis response, recovery, and resilience. Finally, while the majority of emergent event literature describes the pandemic experience, this study offers a multi-dimensional view of the crisis. To begin, it adopts a three phase timeframe of the crisis experience: pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic (Christakis, 2021). It also draws on Ziakas, Antchak and Getz (2021), who asserted that COVID-19 crisis response and recovery for events would occur at three levels: the event, the event organization, and event ecosystem.

1.5 The COVID-19 Global Pandemic: A Crisis and a Call to Action for Events and Event Studies

The COVID-19 pandemic and widespread sociocultural shifts were taking place alongside two significant changes underway in event studies: emergence of critical event scholarship and intensified concerns about event fragility and sustainability. Together, these circumstances in

both the world and the field of event studies elevate the needs to understand (a) the role of community-focused festivals and events in post-pandemic society; and (b) how events and communities can be resilient in the face of inevitable crises and disruptions in the future.

1.5.1 The fragility of community events

Long before the pandemic, event scholars and practitioners (i.e., Getz & Page, 2016; Lehto, Kirillova, Wang & Fu, 2022; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016) were sounding the alarm about the fragility and sustainability of events. Climate change and geopolitical tensions were among the escalating risks to events and the event sector itself. The onset of the pandemic heightened this attention to risk management and a call to action to better understand and prepare for any number of disruptions, large or small (Silvers & O’Toole, 2021). To some, event studies as a discipline falls woefully short on crisis management and recovery frameworks and models, failing to understand what builds resilience of event ecosystems and what fosters their sustainable growth and prosperity (Miles & Shipway, 2020; Ziakas et al., 2021, p. 1). In response, post-pandemic event scholars are drawing on broader literature on crisis response, recovery, and resilience. This scholarship has its foundation in the study of natural disasters (i.e., Aldrich, 2012; Quarantelli, 1986; 1997), and is often examined by studying organizations (Denyer, 2017) and communities (Cutter, Barnes, Berry, Burton, Evans, Tate & Webb, 2008; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008).

1.5.2 Event scholarship at a crossroads

In the years leading up to the pandemic, the field of event studies—a relatively new and highly interdisciplinary area of scholarship—was already undergoing a maturation, influenced in part by the emergence of critical event studies. Critical event studies is “motivated by a desire to engage in emancipatory and liberatory activity, one rooted in a concern for the people and places

impacted by events” (Lamond & Platt, 2016, p. 5). Critical event scholars including Rojek (2013), Clarke and Jepson (2011), Jepson and Clarke (2013), and Calver, Dashper, Finkel, Fletcher, Lamond, May, Omerod, Platt and Sharp (2023) had been attending to issues of power, equity, access, inclusion, representation, and safety. While most often applied to event attendee experiences and consideration of how and for whom events are designed, critical event scholarship is perhaps more valuable than ever before as we contemplate post-pandemic events and communities.

1.6 Crisis Response, Recovery and Resilience

This study situates the COVID-19 global pandemic as an example of a crisis for events, event organizations, and event ecosystems. The literature on crisis response, recovery, and resilience centres on communities and organizations. Management studies scholars identify that, in a crisis, an organization may respond in one of three ways: inaction, routine responses, and novel, original responses (Billings, Milburn & Schaalman, 1980). While inaction or routine responses may be appropriate during a low-level crisis, in a time of a high-level crisis such as a global pandemic, new approaches are likely to emerge. This latter response—the process of adaptation in the face of adversity—is known as resilience (Norris et al., 2008). Like event studies, the broader resilience literature is highly interdisciplinary. As scholars from psychology, sociology, and management studies collectively seek to understand what made organizations and communities “survive” this crisis, they draw on several constructs about stakeholder interactions, or “interorganizational relationships” (Babiak, 2007; Oliver, 1990). These include interorganizational trust (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998), collaboration (Wood & Gray, 1991), and community and organizational capacity (Chaskin, 2001; Barasa, Mbau & Gilson, 2018; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Godschalk, 2003; Patel, Rogers, Amlot & Rubin, 2017).

Event scholars draw from a wide range of theories, including network theory, system theories, stakeholder theory, and exchange theory. This study recognizes that a single theory—social capital—is a common theme through the wide-ranging literature on communities, events, community and organizational capacity, interorganizational relationships, and crisis recovery, response and resilience for organizations, communities, and events. Many scholars have contributed to the theoretical development of social capital, including Putnam (1995, 2000), Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Portes (1998, 2000), leisure scholar Glover (i.e., Glover, 2006; Glover & Hemmingway, 2005; Glover, McNaughton & Mock, 2021), and management scholars Adler and Kwon (2002), Nahapiet and Ghosal (1998), Cots (2011), and Lin (2001).

When applied to events and communities, social capital is vital to civic life, core to relationships between stakeholders, and a key ingredient in the resilience and recovery of events and the communities they serve. According to Ziakas and colleagues (2021), in the face of crisis response and recovery, resilient events and host communities are characterized by event stakeholders who possess and leverage social capital. Relational trust, reciprocity, and mutual support foster safety to engage in joint problem-solving, information sharing and decision making. While such relationships may have existed pre-pandemic, Ziakas and colleagues suggest they may be strengthened by the crisis, leading to increased resilience for the future.

1.7 Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter two offers a review of the relevant literature and establishes social capital as the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter three describes the qualitative case study methodology used to examine the study's four research questions and provides a comprehensive description of the case. Chapter four presents the findings of the research. Chapter five presents a framework for crisis response, recovery and

resilience that incorporates event management practices, and essential characteristics of event organizations and event ecosystems. Chapter six offers contributions to the research, acknowledges the limitations of the research, suggests areas for future inquiry, and makes recommendations for local government. The methodology and conclusion chapters include reflections on how personal, interpersonal, and contextual reflexivity is an asset for this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Outline

The literature review is organized in three sections: (a) community events, (b) event stakeholders, and (c) crisis response, recovery, and resilience. The first section establishes the foundations, significance and study of community-focused festivals and events. It emphasizes the state of event studies and the fragility of the event sector leading into the COVID-19 global pandemic. The first section concludes with what we know—so far—about the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on community-focused festivals and events. The second section of the literature review examines event stakeholders. Drawing heavily on management theory, it proceeds to outline key constructs in interorganizational relationships including cooperation, coordination and collaboration, power and legitimacy, trust and reciprocity, and norms and sanctions. Social capital theory is described as fundamental to interorganizational relationships. Finally, the third section of the literature review examines crisis response, recovery and resilience. It defines key concepts and describes how scholars apply resilience to events and communities both prior to and emerging from the pandemic. This third section establishes social capital as a foundation of resilience for organizations and communities.

Social capital is featured prominently in all three sections of the literature review: (1) as both a source and outcome of community-focused festivals and events and a mechanism to generate their positive impacts; (2) as a vital component of interorganizational stakeholder relationships; and (3) as core to successful crisis response, recovery and resilience for organizations, communities, and events. This chapter concludes by discussing social capital as the theoretical framework for this research, with attention to (a) the sources, motivations and outcomes of social capital espoused by Portes (1998, 2000); (b) endogenous and exogenous

pathways to social capital posited by Glover and colleagues (2021); and (c) the role of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Woolcock, 2001).

2.2 Event Studies at a Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities

Events and festivals are linked to the broader disciplines of tourism, hospitality, and leisure, fields that live in a state constantly evolving and expanding due to rapid technological and societal forces like climate change, artificial intelligence, and global mobility (Lehto et al., 2022, p. 1). For more than a decade, event scholars have been ringing alarm bells that events and the event sector are vulnerable, fragile, unsustainable and dysfunctional due to over-tourism and commodification of events (Rojek, 2013; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016; Ziakas, 2021a, p. 1). Before the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Getz and Page (2016) declared that “the very mention of ‘global pandemic’ sends chills down the collective spines of everyone in the tourism and events industries” (p. 433). Without question, the COVID-19 global pandemic exposed this fragility of planned events (Pernecky & Faisal, 2023; Getz, 2023; Ziakas, 2021a; Ziakas et al., 2021). Donald Getz is credited with establishing event studies over more than twenty years ago (Pernecky, 2016). Recently, he asserted that the pandemic propels scholars and practitioners to reevaluate the overall value proposition of events as agents of change for society:

Innovation in our complex, chaotic world is now more a matter of survival than of continuous improvements. Things might never get better, only worse. In that kind of a world, innovators in the events sector will focus on adaptability, sustainability, resilience, and enhancing value to secure support from diverse stakeholders. The related research frontiers will continue to shift (Getz, 2023, p. 641).

With this call to action, post-pandemic event studies has the opportunity to move beyond some of its past criticisms. The following section further describes the state of event studies prior to the pandemic and identifies how the crisis may ignite the evolution of the field.

2.2.1 Pre-pandemic foundations of event studies

Getz (2005, 2007) cited the year 2000 as the official emergence of event studies as a field. Many have recognized its relative immaturity, leading to calls for an ongoing, critical examination of concepts, theories and practices (Calver et al., 2023; Getz, 2023; Michopoulou, Pappas & Azara, 2023; Pernecky & Faisal, 2023; Wilson et al., 2017). Highly interdisciplinary in nature, event studies is often critiqued for the absence of a strong theoretical base (Patterson & Getz, 2013, p. 237) and limited epistemological breadth (Getz & Page, 2016, p. 359). Pernecky (2016) believed failure to adopt a holistic and strategic view of events as social, cultural, and political phenomena leaves event studies “theoretically impoverished” (p. xv). Spracklen and Lamond (2016) called event studies “weak in its use of theory, weak in its criticality and epistemology, and weak ethically” (p. 173).

Engaging with critical theories of power, representation and social justice is a marker of a maturing field of knowledge (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). In the years leading up to the pandemic, the emergence of critical event scholarship was establishing an agenda for ethical management, governance and coexistence of events with the wider—more complex—external world (Robertson, Ong, Lockstone-Binney & Ali-Knight, 2018, p. 865). Two foundational texts, edited by Spracklen and Lamond (2016) and Lamond and Platt (2016), began to offer methodological (e.g., ethnography and autoethnography, participatory action research) and theoretical (e.g., critical race theory, radical feminism, queer theory, disability theory) alternatives more aligned to critical analysis of power and representation. Increased adoption of critical theory was propelled by social movements emerging alongside the pandemic, such as Black Lives Matter in summer 2020 (Ali & Balme, 2022; Calver et al., 2023; Rohlinger & Meyer, 2022).

2.2.2 Opportunities for post-pandemic event scholarship

The COVID-19 global pandemic was a unique moment in history, with no health emergency remotely similar in just over a century (Rohlinger & Meyer, 2022, p. 3). Optimistically, the unprecedented nature of the crisis may have fast-tracked broader appreciation of the complexity of events and communities. This responds to concerns raised by Ramsbottom, Michopoulou and Azara (2018) who noted, “Simply using the word “event” or talking about “event management” corners us in a small space that does not reflect the immensity of the spheres of influence events can have on human and social life” (p. 3). Further, Duffy and Mair (2018a) highlighted the relative inattention to the grassroots nature of events, emphasizing the role of host communities and ensuring festivals can work for the benefit of all community members (p. 102).

Prior to the pandemic, our knowledge of crisis response and recovery for events and communities was overwhelmingly based on natural disasters and economic downturns (Boukas & Ziakas, 2013; Mair, Ritchie & Walters, 2016; Mohanty et al., 2020; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). Because the pandemic had profound economic and tourism impacts due to restricted travel and near shut downs of the hospitality sector, a large part of the post-pandemic event literature will examine event tourism (Duffy & Mair, 2021; Richards, 2021; Sigala, 2020). However, given this global crisis fully disrupted our participation in events as part of community and social life, Duffy and Mair (2021) suggested the pandemic brought into sharp focus the importance of intangible concepts such as belonging, togetherness and *communitas*. As they noted, “If there is a small positive to take away from the global pandemic, it is that it has forced us to recognize and re-evaluate the importance of simply being with other people” (p. 18). The following section establishes why the study of community-focused festivals and events is vital post-pandemic.

2.3 Community Festivals and Events

Community-focused festivals and events are designed primarily for local residents and are distinct from tourism-driven events (Getz, 2008; Getz & Page, 2016; McKercher, Mei & Tse, 2006; Stevenson, 2020). They usually occur in public spaces such as parks, town squares, or neighbourhood streets, and are intended to foster a sense of place, belonging, and shared identity among participants (Derrett, 2008; Duffy & Mair, 2018a; Getz, 2010; Finkel, McGillivray, McPherson & Robinson, 2013; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013; Jepson & Clarke, 2013; Mair & Weber, 2019; Mair & Whitford, 2013; McClinchey, 2008, 2017; Stevenson, 2020). While these events occur in geographic locations, their value lies not only in their physical settings, but in the relationships they cultivate—what has been referred to as relational community (Duffy & Mair, 2018a; Glover & Stewart, 2006). In this sense, we understand community less as a bounded place and more as a network of social ties and mutual engagement shaped through repeated, meaningful interactions.

This dissertation focuses less on theorizing community as an abstract construct, and more on understanding how community is operationalized and sustained through event practices and stakeholder collaboration. Community-focused events contribute to the social infrastructure of everyday life, offering spaces where residents can connect and where organizations can build partnerships that support collective wellbeing (Coghlan, Sparks, Liu & Winlaw, 2016; Duffy & Mair, 2018; Finkel & Platt, 2020; Misener & Mason, 2006; Platt & Ali-Knight, 2018). These partnerships—and the social capital that underpins them—are what enable events and event stakeholders to respond, adapt, and recover in times of crisis.

2.4 Social Capital and Events

Social capital has been described as the “glue” which connects individuals and groups through their relationships and networks (Pooley, Cohen & Pike, 2005, p. 73). The core proposition of social capital theory is that social ties constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, enabling individuals and social groupings to achieve outcomes they could not otherwise achieve, or could only do so at extra cost (Coleman, 1988; Burt, 1992; Putnam, 1995). There are several views of social capital; for Coleman (1988), for example, social capital is essentially a byproduct of activities engaged in for other purposes whereas for Bourdieu (1986), social capital can and should be deliberately developed and enhanced. It has been applied across many disciplines. While there is extensive interdisciplinary social capital literature, the intent of this review is to discuss how social capital has been considered within event studies.

A majority of event scholarship has applied social capital in the context of mega and non-mega sport event bidding and legacy (Finch, Legg, O’Reilly, Wright & Norton, 2021; Misener & Mason, 2006; Wäsche, 2020); sport for development (Peachey, Borland, Lobpries & Cohen, 2015; Schulenkorf, Thomson & Schlenker, 2011); and community sport events (Chen, Yu & Potwarka, 2024; Kaplanidou & Potwarka, 2024). Arcodia and Whitford (2006) and Getz and Page (2016) have pointed out that the specific role of social capital in events has not always been clear. It has been positioned as an input necessary for establishing and sustaining events, as an outcome that is a general effect of the networking and relationship building inherent in producing events, and as something accrued from engagement with an event (as volunteer, organizer or participant). And, as Getz and Page (2016) note, “Where tourism exactly figures into the social capital equation is somewhat of a mystery” (p. 617).

Three key social capital scholars—Putnam, Bourdieu, and Coleman—dominate the discussion of social capital within event studies (Duffy & Mair, 2018a). The functional-civic-collective view of social capital, espoused by Putnam (1995, 2000), considers social capital as a product of community events. In contrast, an instrumental approach, taken up by Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), is more likely to consider the interactions (intentional and unintentional) between event stakeholders in the broader host community. This section of the literature review focused on Putnam’s view of social capital as an outcome of events and a collective benefit to residents and communities; further attention to the instrumental view is included in section two of this literature review in discussing event stakeholder relationships. However, it is important to note that this academic distinction between instrumental and relational social capital is less black and white within a community. Glover (2006), for example, critiqued leisure scholarship’s “kumbaya approach” that failed to acknowledge that social connections made through leisure activities, such as events, would be used for strategic or instrumental, as opposed to collective or altruistic, action (p. 359).

Social capital generation in leisure experiences such as planned events is explored by Glover, McNaughton and Mock (2021), who consider endogenous or exogenous pathways. Endogenous social capital originates from within leisure-based social networks, and exogenous social capital comes from sources outside of immediate social networks, including strangers (p. 158). Exogenous social capital may be generated when attending a festival or concert, for example. According to Glover and colleagues (2021), when strangers come together in festivity, it reinforces a collective identity or “imagined community” derived from an awareness of common affiliation (p. 163). The use of rituals and symbols in planned events (described earlier in this review) and the generation of liminality and *communitas* at an event (both described in the

next section) can enhance social capital by increasing perceptions of collective unity, building relationships, solidarity, and identity (Chalip, 2006).

Gittell and Vidal (1998) offer a view of bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital takes place among similar people, while bridging social capital occurs among those who are not alike. A third type of social capital, linking social capital, exists between people who are interacting across explicit formal or institutionalized power or authority groups (Woolcock, 2001). Bonding and bridging social capital reflect “horizontal” social networks and relationships, while linking social capital reflects how communities are “vertically” networked with institutions and political structures. Bonding social capital is affiliated with “thick trust” between individuals, while bridging social capital is related to “thin trust” (Putnam, 2000). Scholars have critiqued these categories as arbitrary and oversimplified when they are instead much more fluid and interdependent (Blackshaw & Long, 2005; Poortinga, 2012; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). While the presence of one or two forms of social capital may provide a partial safety net for individuals and communities, social capital is said to provide the greatest benefits in a community when all three forms are present for individuals to draw upon (Woolcock, 2004).

An event or festival may only be days or hours in duration and may be discounted as not being long enough to generate social capital. However, given that event stakeholders work throughout many weeks—even a year or more—to plan and stage an event, social capital can be nurtured and developed in all aspects of this process (Duffy & Mair, 2018a, p. 101). Event scholars have largely applied Putnam’s (1995, 2000) relational view of social capital to situate event participation, planning, volunteering and consumption as benefits for individuals and the community (Misener & Mason, 2006; Misener, 2013). They highlight how relational social capital is facilitated through local associations, alliances and clubs creating a “civic

infrastructure” (Arcodia & Whitford, 2008; Misener & Mason, 2006). Bonding, bridging and linking social capital has been applied to volunteer engagement (Arcodia & Whitford, 2008; Misener, 2013; Taks, 2013); event volunteers engage with those like and unlike themselves, and thus experience both bonding and bridging social capital. When events engage a variety of stakeholders through informal alliances, associations or formal institutions, relationships are vertical in nature, with potential to develop both bridging and linking social capital (Misener, 2013; Woolcock, 2001). Resident interactions based on linking and vertical social capital can translate into meaningful partnerships, sustained communication, and collaboration (Arcodia & Whitford, 2008; Misener, 2013; Taks, 2013). Richards (2015b) emphasized the function of iterative events—recurrent community-embedded events that bring attendees together repeatedly—to strengthen social relationships and produce bonding social capital.

It is important to acknowledge the complexities of the formation of social capital, including the context of political and economic variables, and the possible “negative” or “dark side” or inequalities in the distribution of social capital (Portes & Landolt, 1996). Several scholars, including Glover (2006), have recognized that not all stakeholders have an equal opportunity to be engaged in community and to build social capital; in the context of planned events, if residents are not engaged in decision-making, or feel that the process is top-down or disingenuous, it may lead to tensions, community alienation and social dislocation (Misener & Mason, 2006; Ziakas, 2016). Critical event scholarship can make new contributions to these discussions about who is and is not included in event planning.

Since social capital can be generated, policymakers and event organizers can act with intention to host and support festivals and events to benefit residents and promote community

well-being. The following section examines festivals and events as strategies to achieve social impact in communities.

2.5 Festivals and Events as Community and Policy Strategies

The accumulated social value of implementing event strategies to build community capacity and enact positive social change is what Ziakas (2016) calls the “social utility of events” (p. 1137).

This literature review has already outlined that festivals and events have many benefits for individuals and communities. A key task for event scholars is to understand the mechanisms by which these positive impacts are generated. Event planners and policymakers can then use this knowledge to generate desired outcomes. In his theory of social leverage, Chalip (2006) draws on two key social science constructs, *communitas* and liminality, to describe how events benefit individuals and groups. Liminality is defined as the “ambiguous” stage during a ritual, rite of passage, or celebration; we are said to “stand at the threshold” between a previous way of structuring identity, time, or community, and a new way, which enables new institutions and customs to become established (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Events are liminal spaces, when we may dress differently, act differently, play differently, and feel differently, often in an expressive, creative manner. Liminal experiences generate *communitas*, marked by spontaneous, open, non-ordinary behavior, interest in each other’s activities, and a sense of belonging (Turner, 1969). According to Chalip (2006), “Liminality and *communitas* make events fun. We sometimes forget that fun can have social value” (p. 124). Shared experiences and meanings derived from an event can generate an intense feeling of group unity and solidarity that can build networks and empower community action (Chalip, 2006; Green & Chalip, 1998).

For Chalip (2006), social leverage represents a move from an *ex-post* to an *ex-ante*, strategic approach for planned events; it encourages us to plan for and then evaluate event

impacts against the strategies that were and were not implemented (p. 113). Events are the “seed capital,” but what host communities do with them is vital to the realization of sustainable, long-term benefits (Ziakas, 2014a, p. 17). Social leverage is applied to planning for event legacy, or its long-lasting impact in the host community. Event legacies may include new or upgraded event facilities, transportation and housing built for the event but remain as an asset for residents. Much less attention has been given to utilizing a leveraging framework for small to medium scale events and community focused festivals (Misener, 2015; Taks, 2013).

While a city’s events vary widely in terms of size, sectoral focus, or organizational structure, they are part of a common ecosystem, in that they typically rely on the same urban infrastructure and political and economic resources (Richards & Palmer, 2010). In the 2010’s, event scholars and practitioners began to differentiate a “city with events” from a strategically focused “eventful city.” In an eventful city, a local event program is designed with intention; it draws on a city’s vision, stakeholder relationships, event programming and marketing, all with an eye to planning and monitoring short-term outcomes and long term economic and social sustainability (Antchak & Pernecky, 2017; Richards, 2015a). Scholars have adopted related concepts such as “urbanization of events” where urban space is produced by the staging of events (Smith, 2015) and “eventfulness” to describe the vibrant impacts to cities (Columbo, 2017; Richards, 2017b). A leading scholar on the relationship between events and cities, Richards identified this as a turning point for event scholarship. He noted:

This is where events, as carriers and shapers of time, become of vital significance in the contemporary urban landscape. Cities have always created and utilized events, as a means of regulating the urban clock, of setting the tempo of lived time in the city. But increasingly, events have taken on a wider and more significant role in cities as they have sought to pursue a broader range of urban goals. Events are now seen as a means to boost the urban economy, to support culture, to spearhead urban redevelopment, to stimulate social cohesion, and to put cities on the global map (Richards, 2015a, p. 39).

As events were increasingly recognized as mechanisms for policy and community development, the lines between theory, practice and public policy became blurred (Whitford, 2009). This led to calls to shift from a traditionally fragmented view of single events and event sectors, and focus on the entire event ecosystem (Columbo, 2017, p. 563; Smith, 2012; Ziakas, 2024, p. 17).

Ziakas (2019a) referred to this new era of event theory, research and practice as a paradigm shift (p. s28). Drawing on the early work of Getz's tourism pyramid (2007), Ziakas proposed a theoretical and policy framework called an event portfolio, where a community's event stakeholders adopt planful event activities and strategies against desired community objectives (Ziakas, 2010, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2019a, 2019b, 2021b, 2024; Ziakas & Costa, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Ziakas & Getz, 2021). One of the foundational principles of the event portfolio is that event stakeholders intentionally work together – as a formal or informal network – to achieve these shared goals. Later in this literature review, event portfolios are proposed to boost event and community resilience in the face of a crisis (Ziakas et al., 2021).

While the COVID-19 global pandemic is not the first time in human history events have been suspended or cancelled, the long-term effects on events and communities are yet to be seen (McGillivray, 2020). The next section will summarize what event scholars believed would be the possible impacts of the pandemic for events. It will introduce findings from early and emergent studies about the crisis. This section represents this growing literature as best as possible given it will continue to emerge further in the months—and years—ahead.

2.6 Communities, Events and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic

In the early months of the crisis, event scholars sought to capture the reaction of the event sector to shock, sector lockdown, and lack of clarity about the future, including job insecurity and loss of income for those employed in the event sector (Armbrecht et al., 2021; Banks & O'Connor,

2021; Gajjar & Parmar, 2020; Janiszewska, Hannevik Lien, Kloskowski, Ossowska, Dragin-Jensen, Strzelecka & Kwiatkowski, 2021; Madray, 2020; Mohanty et al., 2020; Palrão, Rodrigues & Estevao, 2021; Rentschler & Lee, 2021). Beyond the immediate health risks, restrictions and uncertainty, the COVID-19 global pandemic brought forth logistical and organizational hurdles, as well as wide-ranging changes in social and behavioral attitudes of event organizations (Ali & Balme, 2022, p. 338). Event scholars were also documenting how, during the pandemic, the event “gap” was filled by virtual events (Jauhiainen, 2021; Madray, 2020; Seraphin, 2021). The return to public gatherings and collective celebrations following pandemic shutdowns also invited study of local event policies and practices, including resident engagement and the use of public space (Barker & Smith, 2020; Center for Culture, Sport & Events, 2022; Davies, 2020; Glover, 2020; McGillivray, 2020; Ziakas et al., 2021).

Back in 2016, Getz and Page speculated that, in the face of disruption like a global pandemic, we might see a shift in attention from mega events that move from country to country, to local geographies demanding their own celebrations, meetings and games to bring people together for live experiences (p. 433). During the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars began to ask whether residents might now respond differently to event tourism, possibly turning inwards and reconsidering whether they wish to continue to invite “outsiders” into their communities in the same way (Center for Culture, Sport & Events, 2022). Rentschler and Lee’s (2021) examination of Australian arts festivals during the pandemic suggested a post-pandemic move towards increased localism, a preference towards local democratic structures, local institutions and local communities (Evans, Marsh & Stoker, 2013, p. 405). During phases of the pandemic when social gatherings were prohibited, localism was activated by necessity, as communities opened streets and public spaces in new ways as social space; with smaller, neighbourhood boundaries, there

was an increased practice towards smaller, outdoor community events, such as street parties and porch parties (Davies, 2020). If preferences for more intimate experiences and smaller gathering sizes would be sustained post-pandemic, such a shift towards more such hyperlocal events within the event mix in a community could mean grassroots communities adopt more leadership to plan, deliver, and promote localized events (Center for Culture, Sport and Events, 2022).

Finkel, Sharp and Sweeney (2018) called planned events “microcosms of society;” they noted that, because an event is, by its nature, temporary and usually bound by geographic space, it can be considered as a reflection of or response to societal norms at the time they take place (p. 1). With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that, alongside the unprecedented global health crisis, a number of social movements emerged in society broadly and communities locally, including the Black Lives Matter movement and other moves calling for equity and inclusion for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities (Rohlinger & Meyer, 2022). This led the Center for Culture, Sport and Events (2022) to question whether we will see an event management shift from an “if we build it, they will come” approach (especially in event tourism) to more deliberate attention to who is missing from an event. Examination of representation in planned event design, content, and audience engagement is aligned with the influence of critical event scholarship described earlier in this review (i.e., Calver et al., 2023). It was speculated that event-related resources may become more scarce as a result of the pandemic (Center for Culture, Sport and Events, 2022). For example, emerging from the pandemic, Canadian non-profit organizations identified volunteer shortages, difficulty recruiting new volunteers, and volunteer burnout (Rodney, 2023). Scholars at the Center for Culture, Sport & Events (2022) hypothesized that event organizations in a community event ecosystem may

need to work together in new ways in response to fewer resources, a view also espoused by Ziakas, Antchak and Getz (2021).

As outlined earlier in this review, the COVID-19 pandemic happened at a time when event scholars were acknowledging the vulnerability of events. Early literature suggests the pandemic has been a catalyst for event scholars to explore what contributes to resilience for planned events and event ecosystems. Coles, Garcia, O'Malley and Turner (2022) summarized views (largely from event tourism literature) that the COVID-19 global pandemic would lead to a “reset”—a time to introduce new behaviours or systems for mediating and managing behaviours that had become inherently unsustainable—that would establish “the new normal” (i.e., Ateljevic, 2020; Benjamin, Dillette & Alderman, 2020). Higgins-Desbiolles (2020b) identified divergence in the views of event scholars and event practitioners; where event practitioners appeared to favor a resumption of the “old normal” and sooner, event scholars expressed more sympathy for the transformative potential of the pandemic and the desirability of a new normal. Coles and colleagues (2022) pointed out this dichotomy suggests a disconnect between the academy and those it seeks to study (p. 12).

2.6.1 Conclusion to section one of the literature review

The first section of the literature review presented the foundations of community-focused festivals and events and characterized how—in the face of COVID-19—pre-pandemic critiques of event studies present new opportunities for transformation of the field and for better acknowledging how festivals and events may serve as community and policy strategies. This first section of the literature review concluded by discussing the possible impacts of the pandemic on events, communities, and event scholarship. Next, the second section of the literature review

focuses on event stakeholders and, specifically, the relationships between these stakeholders within a community event ecosystem.

2.7 Event Stakeholders and Stakeholder Relationships

Crowther (2014) advocated that events be created from a “stakeholder centric outlook,” emphasizing co-creation, collaboration, and appreciation of the required and desired outcomes for all stakeholder groups (p. 15-16). In planned events, stakeholders include a wide range of individuals and organizations who contribute to or are impacted by an event. Following Freeman’s (1984) foundational definition, stakeholders are those groups “vital to the survival or success of an organization.” In the event literature, this concept has been widely adopted and adapted (Getz, Andersson & Larson, 2007; Getz, 2010; Jarman, 2016; van Niekerk & Getz, 2019; Wallace & Michopoulou, 2019), allowing scholars to explore not only who stakeholders are, but how they relate to one another within an event ecosystem.

While various typologies exist (e.g., primary vs. secondary, internal vs. external), this study does not seek to refine stakeholder categories. Rather, it adopts an ecosystem perspective aligned with Getz, Andersson, and Larson (2007), who emphasize the interconnected and mutually dependent nature of event stakeholder relationships. Their framework, along with concepts from social capital theory, underpins the analytical focus on collaboration, trust, and collective resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. With this context in place, the next section turns to the nature and dynamics of relationships between event stakeholders—relationships that proved critical in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic.

2.7.1 Event stakeholder relationships

In management studies, interorganizational relationships (IORs) are defined as voluntary, close, long-term, planned strategic action between two or more organizations with the objective of

serving mutually beneficial purposes towards a problem (Babiak, 2007; Oliver, 1990). Management literature describes how organizations are motivated to form partnerships, including both offensive and defensive reasons, and speaks to constructs such as collaboration (Wood & Gray, 1991), power (Pfeffer, 1981), trust (Zaheer et al., 1998), and reciprocity (Powell, 1990). Event scholars have clearly acknowledged the essential function of interorganizational relationships (Andersson, Getz & Mykleton, 2013a, 2013b; Getz, 2005; Getz et al., 2007; Long, 2000; Michopoulou, Azara & Pappas, 2019; Potwarka & Snelgrove, 2017; Quinn, 2005; Taks, Chalip & Green, 2015). Yet, Wilson and colleagues (2017) argued the role of partnerships has been largely unexplored, calling for further research on strategic partnerships, informal relationships, and the role of networking (p. 207). Azara, Pappas, and Michopoulou (2021) pointed out event environments are increasingly interdependent, and the behavior of individual event stakeholders is much more fluid and complex than the literature has previously acknowledged. The following section explores the influence of management studies on understanding event stakeholder relationships.

2.7.1.1 Cooperation, coordination and collaboration

Interorganizational relationships are viewed along a continuum from loose to strong relational connections across three main horizontal relationship types: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration (Smith, Carroll & Ashford, 1995). Cooperative relationships involve one party working with another to help achieve their outcome. Cooperation is a prerequisite of coordination, which concerns the combination of parts to achieve the most harmonious results. Where cooperation suggests that parties work together to help one another out, collaboration implies shared ownership and parties working together towards a shared outcome. Though one of

the most cited views on collaboration is espoused by Wood and Gray (1991), Ritter and Gemünden (2003) argued no single theory captures the complexity of the collaborative process.

A number of event studies have examined cooperation, coordination, and collaboration amongst event stakeholders. Wallace and Michopoulou (2023) drew on Andersson and Getz's (2008) research on festivals and Zhou, Ross, Pu, Kim, Kim, Kaplanidou and Leopkey's study of collaboration in sport events (2021). They concluded that one of the most informal and low risk interorganizational relationships for event stakeholders is cooperation to maintain core values and shared objectives. They also highlighted that one of the essential conditions for collaboration is a shared vision. In their study of the Jeddah Festival, Yagmour and Scott (2009) identified nine characteristics of collaboration in an event ecosystem: governance, trust, commitment, communication, mutual acceptance, stakeholder expertise, stakeholder allegiance, communication and leadership. Many event tourism studies have explored models of stakeholder collaboration as critical to the success of tourism destinations (i.e., McComb, Boyd & Boluk, 2017; Perkins, Khoo & Arcodia, 2023).

2.7.1.2 Power, legitimacy and salience

Some of the prominent management scholars on stakeholder power include Etzioni (1964), Pfeffer (1981), Morgan (1986), and Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997). Etzioni (1964) distinguished between coercive power, based on physical force, violence, or restraint; utilitarian power, based on material or financial resources; and normative power, based on symbolic resources. Morgan (1986) discussed different sources of power, including formal authority, control of scarce resources, control of decision processes, control of boundaries, interpersonal alliances, and symbolism. According to Morgan (1986), power predicts dynamics of interorganizational conflict and cooperation over time, and influences who gets what, when, and

how. Pfeffer (1981) links power to resource dependency theory, discussed later in this review. Power in an interorganizational relationship can be a function of the organization's size and position in the market, the extent to which it has control over the rules governing exchange of resources, effectiveness of coercive strategies, and the strategic importance of the relationship to the organization (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997). Legitimacy is built when organizations conform to the rules, norms, cultural values, and expectations that prevail within the broader social system (Meyer & Rowan, 1977); these are closely connected to norms and sanctions discussed below. Legitimacy helps an organization achieve solid standing amongst others (Suchman, 1995). If a partner organization possesses legitimacy or status, other partners may derive legitimacy or status through the affiliation (Podolny & Page, 1998). Within an event ecosystem, there are advantages for smaller, grassroots festivals to align with larger, more established events, including knowledge and resource sharing. Power and legitimacy have been investigated by various event scholars including Andersson and Getz (2008), Getz and colleagues (2007), Larson (2002), Reid and Arcodia (2002) and Spiropoulos and colleagues (2006). As critical event scholarship matures, explorations of event stakeholder power—which stakeholders do and do not have it—will be a prominent theme (Jepson & Clarke, 2013, p. 61).

2.7.1.3 Norms and sanctions

Social relations have important implications for understanding patterns of exchange in interorganizational relationships (Nahapiet, 2009). Exchanges are guided—implicitly or explicitly—by social norms and sanctions that are foundational to the maintenance of social order and the functioning of any social grouping (Coleman, 1990). Norms are produced, reproduced, and reinforced through the normal conduct of everyday life (Bendor & Swistak, 2001). Social norms differ from other norms (such as moral norms and legal norms) in that they

are socially defined and enforced through sanctions. Sanctions are a negative consequence of some degree of severity for the violation of the social norm. Sanctions may be applied by those directly impacted by the violation, or by third parties who are collectively implicated by the violation (Elster, 1989). Norms and sanctions are part of the relational dimension of social capital (Claridge, 2020). Both Putnam (1995) and Coleman (1990) referred explicitly to the importance of social norms. To Putnam (1995), social trust in a complex modern environment can grow from two closely tied sources: norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (p. 171). To Coleman, social norms are part of a stakeholders' cost-benefit analysis when making a choice; that is norms may be accompanied by potential rewards (for compliance) or punishments (for non-compliance).

2.7.1.4 Interorganizational trust and reciprocity

Achrol (1997), Uzzi (1996) and Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone (1998) are often-cited management scholars on interorganizational trust. Zaheer and colleagues (1998) base interorganizational trust on three components: reliability, predictability, and fairness. When trust is present, stakeholders are more likely to give each other the benefit of the doubt; they are open with each other, knowing that shared information will not be used against them. To Achrol (1997), interorganizational trust is indicated by confidence in the other's sincerity, reliability, loyalty and willingness to refrain from opportunistic behavior (p. 66). Trust implies uncertainty of outcome and therefore involves relinquishing some influence and control (Achrol, 1997; Uzzi, 1996). The literature describes thin and thick trust (Fukuyama, 1995; Newton, 1997).

Individualistic communities have "thin trust", based on vertical relationships and economic outcomes. In contrast, less individualistic communities develop "thick trust" around shared focal realities and social cohesion (Arai & Pedlar, 2003, p. 193).

Reciprocity is closely related to trust. Powell (1990) believed reciprocity exists when each member of the network feels a sense of obligation to other partners. Stakeholder relationships based on reciprocity are characterized by balance, harmony, equity, and mutual support rather than by coercion, conflict, and domination (Oliver, 1990). When trust and reciprocity exist, stakeholders do not feel the need to guard against potential opportunistic behavior by another (Zaheer et al., 1998). When stakeholders trust their actions will be rewarded, either directly or more generally in the form of positive relations with others, they may choose to do (or be persuaded to do) something for others or for the general good (Siisiainen, 2003). Reciprocity can bind communities together by transforming individuals from self-serving agents to members of a community with shared interests, a common identity, and a commitment to the common good (Putnam, 2000).

Interorganizational trust and reciprocity have been examined in event scholarship for quite some time. Getz and colleagues (2007) discussed how, especially in the case of a new festival, interorganizational trust can give event stakeholders access to resources, influence decision making, and allow for legitimacy building. de Klerk and Saayman (2012) considered festival leaders as entrepreneurs who rely on trust with their vendors and others to successfully launch and sustain their event. Sport event scholars (i.e., Pereira, Mascarenhas, Adao, Flores, & Pire, 2015; Taks, Green, Misener & Chalip, 2018; Wood, Snelgrove, Legg, Taks & Potwarka, 2018) have explored how lack of coordination, competition and distrust, and insufficient human and capital resources are barriers to maximizing intended outcomes in a host community.

This section has demonstrated how event scholars have drawn heavily on management studies to support their understanding of interactions between event stakeholders. While much of this research has examined stakeholder exchanges at the level of a single event or festival,

stakeholder relationships should also be viewed at the level of the community event ecosystem. This is explored in the following section.

2.7.2 Stakeholder relationships in a community event ecosystem

Having some form of institutionalized mechanism or governance can support interorganizational relationships at the ecosystem level. Stone (1993) discusses “urban regimes” as alliances between local governments and interest groups in a city, with specific agendas or aims. Ring and Van de Ven (1994) identify a “boundary spanner” to perform an interpersonal function between actors across organizations; while individual actors as boundary spanners may come and go, institutionalization of the boundary spanner function establishes interorganizational trust. An often-cited view of stakeholder governance for event ecosystems was established by Stokes (2006). In her study of Australian event tourism agencies, she identified corporate, community, and synergetic frameworks of decision making and stakeholder involvement. Where a corporate framework is driven by a top-down agenda focused on economic indicators, a community planning approach is more grassroots, initiated by public sector agencies and community groups to achieve broader social, ecological, cultural, and economic impacts. As a middle ground, Stokes described a synergetic approach led by public agencies to achieve both market- and community-driven objectives, seeking a balance of stakeholder input across major, new, and existing events. This work was extended by Kelly and Fairley (2018), who found establishment of an Events Board provided a conduit to create and facilitate relationships in the ecosystem.

Abson, Norman and Schofiel (2024) contended that event scholars have largely neglected the people and organizations that design, deliver, and create events. Their review of the literature revealed only a handful of empirical research papers that focused on leadership in event management; they concluded that we know relatively little about who leads within events, how

leadership manifests itself in specific types of events, and how those within a wider event network can affect leadership processes. They emphasized how leadership within multifaceted activities, organizations, networks, and ecosystems is unlikely to present itself as traditional, top-down leadership; instead, they advocated for a more “nuanced view of leadership” where event ecosystem leadership can be enacted by anyone and is more than just a singular behavior or natural skill (p. 170). As we emerged from the pandemic, Abson and colleagues called for further investigation into how shared leadership in the form of collaboration, accountability, responsibility, and capability adapts to changing organizational and environmental conditions.

2.8 Theoretical Foundations of Event Stakeholder Relationships

So far, this second section of the literature review has emphasized the influence of management studies on stakeholder relationships. Next, it will explore how event scholars also draw on other theories that illuminate why organizations collaborate and how these relationships contribute to resilience in times of crisis.

To be sure, several organizational theories offer useful background for understanding why stakeholders in event ecosystems form and sustain relationships. Resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) suggests that organizations partner to access or control scarce resources in the external environment, which creates interdependencies among actors. Exchange theory (Blau, 1964) adds that such collaborations may be driven by rational calculations of benefit, including access to funding, venues, media visibility, or staff capacity. These perspectives highlight the functional motivations underlying event partnerships. Additionally, concepts from systems and complexity theory help frame the event ecosystem as a dynamic, adaptive system composed of interconnected parts (Holland, 1992; Ziakas, 2014). While not explicitly applied in this dissertation, they underscore the importance of interorganizational

coordination and responsiveness in navigating disruption. The sections that follow examine two theoretical perspectives that are central to this study's conceptual framework: network theory, which explains how stakeholder relationships are structured and sustained over time, and social capital theory, which provides insight into the quality, purpose, and outcomes of those relationships—particularly in times of uncertainty.

2.8.1 Network theory

Network theory considers how systems and sub-systems of relationships operate to achieve common outcomes (Blau, 1964). The architecture of a network is defined by its density, centrality and multiplexity of the “ties” between the members of the network (Achrol, 1997). Density measures the extent to which stakeholders are linked to and communicate with each other. Centrality reflects the extent to which connections are shared amongst the network stakeholders relative to the set of relationships as a whole. Multiplexity is an indicator of network integration and defines whether stakeholders are collaborating only through one type of link or in multiple ways (Achrol, 1997). Different network types and structures reflect different purposes and structural characteristics; a network may be open or closed, and it can transcend private–public sector boundaries (Mandell & Keast, 2008; Provan & Milward, 2001).

Powell (1990) proposed the “network organization,” whose main purpose is to link members and their resources, facilitate joint action, and leverage these interactions. In a network organization, governance can influence information-sharing, communication, problem-solving and decision-making processes that are collaborative, deliberate, inclusive, democratic, and transparent (Dredge & Whitford, 2011; Mandell & Keast, 2008). Networks presume harmonization of conflict, where the members use informal, peer-level processes to negotiate, compromise, and resolve conflicts (Achrol, 1997; Dredge, 2006). Like a boundary spanner

described in relation to ecosystem governance, a network broker serves as administrator and coordinator of the network (Podolny & Page, 1998; Zaheer et al., 1998).

Ratten and Fernandez (2024) pointed out that the event management literature uses the term “network” alongside other terms such as “partnership” and “alliance.” Richards and Jarman (2021) applied event networks as “a system of actors or nodes connected by flows of information and resources” (p. 1). Richards (2015a, 2015b) argued that event networks rely not only on strong ties between event stakeholders who are in close and frequent contact with each other, but on weak ties with event stakeholders beyond the local events network. He described how strong ties help to create bonding and a feeling of belonging within the local network, which facilitates trust and makes transactions between event stakeholders easier. Over time, weak ties to those event stakeholders beyond the local network can provide new opportunities and a basis for innovation, change and renewal. Jarman (2016, 2018) linked these festival community networks to transformative placemaking.

A contribution of network theory to event studies is Granovetter’s (1985) theory of embeddedness, which asserts behavior is embedded in networks of social relations, where we show a preference for interacting with acquaintances, personal friends, and family members rather than strangers. Networks constituted of embedded ties benefit not only from the value of pooling of resources, but from cooperation, joint problem solving, and thick information exchange (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Powell, 1990; Uzzi, 1996). Within organizations, personal ties that emerge among individuals whose organizations enter contracts with each other are highly influential. Ziakas (2014; Ziakas & Costa, 2011a) argued that embeddedness is crucial for sustainability and effectiveness of event networks and offers insights into what shapes and constrains stakeholder decision-making in the event ecosystem (p. 34).

Although “social networks” and “social capital” may be used synonymously, several scholars described the distinction between these two constructs (Ferlander, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 2004; Woolcock, 1998). Social capital goes beyond measuring simply who is interacting with whom (the social network) to consider the characteristics and consequences of that interaction. Section one of the literature review discussed social capital generation through event participation, planning, and volunteering as benefits for individuals and the community (Misener & Mason, 2006; Misener, 2013). In the following section, social capital theory is applied to stakeholder relationships in event organizations and communities.

2.8.2 Social capital theory

Nahapiet (2009) called social capital an “especially powerful lens for the study of interorganizational relationships” (p. 4); it can be applied across several different levels (from an individual person to an organization, region, or even nation) and across a wide range of organizations (public, private, and voluntary; large and small; formal and informal; established and emergent). Social capital connects to features of exchange theory discussed earlier. For instance, reciprocity operates when a person does something of value for another without expecting anything immediately in return (Nahapiet, 2009, p. 37). Appropriability is the idea that social connections of one type often can be used for different purposes (Coleman, 1988; Adler & Kwon, 2002). Social capital is closely aligned with themes of trust, and norms and sanctions discussed earlier in this section of the literature review.

Section one of this literature review introduced two views of social capital: functional-civic-collective (Putnam, 1995; 2000) and instrumental (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). When applied to events, Putnam’s view of social capital is best aligned to the experiences of residents engaged in planning and attending community events. The instrumental approach to social

capital, described in the next section, best describes stakeholder exchanges in a community event ecosystem.

2.8.2.1 Instrumental social capital

In an instrumental view of social capital, stakeholders gain direct access to resources of other groups, including contacts with experts, or valued affiliations with institutions; these are then usable as a source of other benefits to the stakeholder (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's view of social capital includes two elements: (a) the social relationship itself, that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates; and (b) the amount and quality of those resources. Notably, Bourdieu argued that social networks are not natural givens; they must be constructed through investment strategies "consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term" (p. 249). How much social capital exists depends on a number of factors, including the extent of one's social ties, the size of one's social networks, the volume of resources held by other members of those networks, and the durability of the network. For Coleman (1988), social capital consists of the obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of social structures, the information channels available within these structures, and the norms and effective sanctions that encourage individuals to forego self-interest and act in the interests of the collective. Glover and Hemmingway (2005) believed Coleman's description of the benefits of social capital are the most significant feature of his approach (p. 391).

Following from Putnam, Bourdieu and Coleman, another social capital theorist, Portes (1998, 2000), continued to advance our view of social capital, highlighting how social capital can: (a) capture different aspects of the social environment; (b) imply different resources, support and obligations; (c) affect social outcomes through different means; and (d) may lead to different

consequences (Ferlander, 2007). He also made a notable contribution by distinguishing between three different dimensions of social capital: (a) the possessors of social capital (those making claims); (b) the sources of social capital (those agreeing to these demands); and (c) the resources themselves.

Portes' definition of social capital is the ability to secure benefits through membership in networks and other social structures. To possess social capital, a person must be related to others and it is those others, not himself or herself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage. At this individual level, the sources of social capital are clearly associated with a person's networks, including those that he or she explicitly constructed for that purpose. The effects or outcomes of social capital are linked to an array of material and informational benefits; that is, the outcomes are clearly separate and distinct from the social structures that produced them. Portes distinguished between instrumental and consummatory motivations; consummatory motivations for social capital are driven by internalized social norms and sanctions (such as obeying traffic rules or donating to charity), while instrumental social capital functions more like social exchange, or reciprocity, where a stakeholder provides privileged access to resources in the expectation they will be fully repaid in the future. Portes noted many such exchanges are complicated because obligations and time horizons for return are often uncertain.

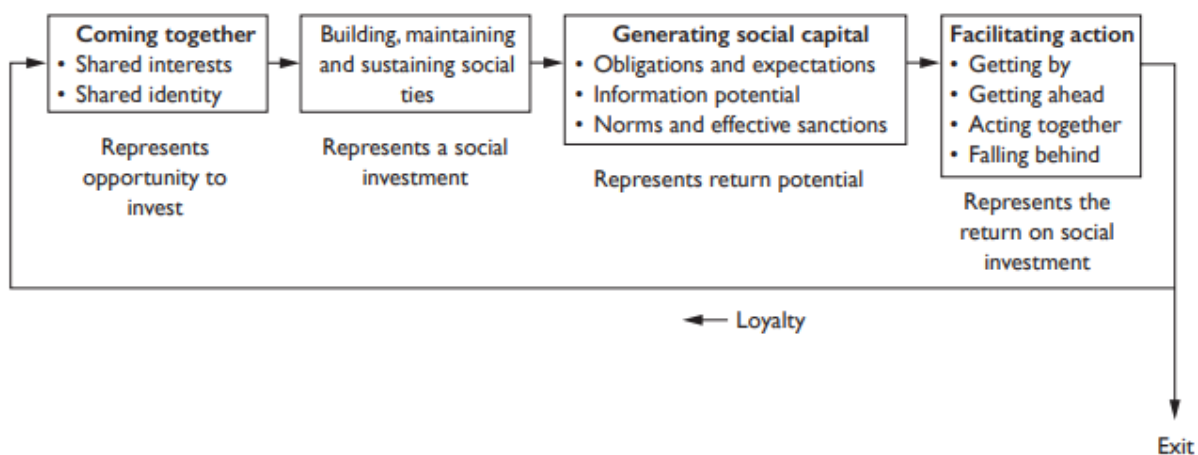
An instrumental view of social capital is well-aligned to studying interorganizational relationships, in that individuals within one organization interact and exchange resources with other individuals in one or more other organizations. There are several views of organizational social capital in management literature. These include Adler and Kwon's (2002) "opportunity-motivation-ability" framework; Nahapiet and Ghosal's (1998) "structural, relational, and cognitive" dimensions of social capital; Cots' (2011) "stakeholder social capital" that

emphasizes the role of relational values, such as solidarity, unity and team spirit (p. 333); and Lin's (2001) view of social ties as generating information, power and influence, establishing social credentials, and reinforcing identity. Because they are grounded in cases of business organizations, these views are typically applied in the context of job search, career progression, and early access to market opportunities. For the study of community events and festivals, management approaches are augmented by views from leisure studies, such as the endogenous and exogenous pathways to social capital espoused by Glover and colleagues (2021).

2.8.2.2 Endogenous and exogenous pathways to social capital

Section one of the literature review introduced exogenous and endogenous pathways to social capital. In a community event ecosystem, while event stakeholders are members of different event organizations (i.e., for-profit, non-profit, resident-led, or local government), they make up a formal or informal event network by virtue of a shared geography and related or shared goals of contributing to resident and community well-being. This coming together via shared interests and shared identity is aligned with the endogenous pathway to social capital, in Figure 1 below.

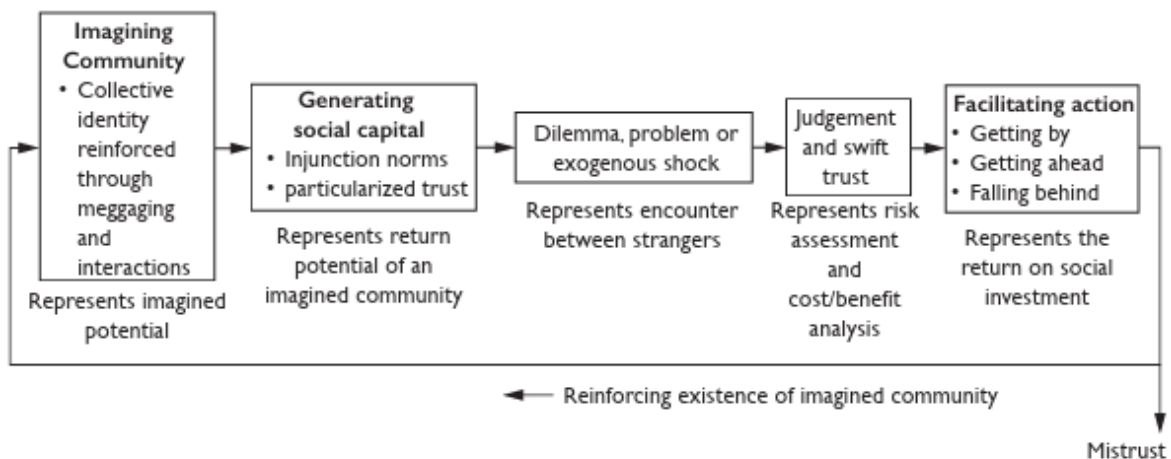
Figure 1: The endogenous pathway to social capital



Source: Glover, McNaughton and Mock (2021, p. 160)

This endogenous view of social capital highlights that stakeholders who share common interests or identities may come together to build, maintain, and sustain social ties, representing intentional social investment opportunities. As a result of these social ties, social capital as “return potential” is generated through mechanisms such as obligations and expectations, norms and sanctions, and information potential. Glover and colleagues (2021) suggested these social ties can lead to a return on social investment in one of four ways: (a) instrumental, or “getting ahead;” (b) expressive, or “getting by;” (c) collective, or “acting together;” and even (d) obstructive, where an action may lead to one or more of the parties “falling behind.” The endogenous pathway is contrasted with the exogenous pathway, shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The exogenous pathway to social capital



Source: Glover, McNaughton and Mock (2021, p. 164)

Exogenous social capital generates support and assistance based on an imagined community or imagined potential. This perceived collective identity can serve as a simple, intrinsic motivation for generosity in generalized exchange, through the development of injunctive norms and particularized trust (p. 164). A shared problem, dilemma or external shock—like the COVID-19 global health pandemic—can trigger this interaction. While mistrust can destroy stakeholders’

willingness to engage, this view of social capital suggests that, in the face of the crisis, a stakeholder will need to make a quick judgement and cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the trusting an unfamiliar partner is worth the risk. Endogenous and exogenous social capital pathways will be discussed further at the end of this chapter, when social capital is outlined as the theoretical framework for this study.

2.8.3 Conclusion to section two of the literature review

This second section of the literature review focused on event stakeholders. It established that event scholars interested in stakeholder relationships draw heavily on theories and constructs from management studies. It highlighted network theory and social capital theories as key to understanding relationships between event stakeholders in community event ecosystems. The third section of the literature review will focus on crisis response, recovery, and resilience. As event scholars and practitioners seek to understand how events, event organizations, and event ecosystems may be resilient in the face of future crisis and disruption, engaging with this literature on crisis response and recovery is essential.

2.9 Crisis Response, Recovery and Resilience

A crisis is defined as an unpredictable event that threatens stakeholders' expectancies related to health, safety, environmental, and economic issues (Coombs, 2019, p. 3). In the emergent event studies literature on the COVID-19 global pandemic, scholars have used terms "crisis" and "disaster" in their writing. Ziakas and colleagues (2021) defined crisis for planned events as being unplanned by the affected event stakeholders and out of their immediate control; these can include external circumstances (i.e., natural disaster, human error, human malfeasance, or economic, social and cultural conditions) or circumstances internal to an event organization (i.e., weak or incompetent management, failure to act in time or appropriately). Kwiatkowski and

colleagues (2023) called the pandemic a disaster for the event sector (p. 485). Leading event scholar Getz (2023) even asked if the pandemic represented a permacrisis, characterized by extended period of instability and insecurity resulting from a series of catastrophic events (p. 641). The term crisis will be used throughout this review, as it aligns with extant literature from classic crisis management scholars such as Quarantelli (1986, 1997). This literature is extensive, and a comprehensive overview is outside the scope of this review. Instead, this section emphasizes the linkage between crisis response and recovery and the literature on resilience. First, it describes organizational and community resilience and then shares the way event scholars view resilience prior to and emerging from the COVID-19 global pandemic.

2.9.1 Resilience

Resilience offers a unique way of thinking about innovation for adaptation in a world of unprecedented transformations (Folke, Carpenter, Walker, Scheffer, Chapin & Rockström, 2010). Often linked to system theory, resilience offers a framework for studying how systems cope, adapt or transform in face of exogenous disruptions (Vaneekhaute, Vanwing, Jacquet, Abelshausen & Meurs, 2022). Resilience has been conceptualized as an ability or process and is often characterized as adaptability (Handmer & Dovers, 1996; Kulig, Edge, Townshend, Lightfoot & Reimer, 2013; Waller, 2001). The complexity and temporal nature of resilience has been well established in the literature (Cutter et al., 2008; Dovers & Handmer, 1992; Supardi & Hadi, 2020). Twigger-Ross, Kashefi, Weldon, Brooks, Deeming, Forrest, Fielding, Gomersall, Harries et al. (2014) offered four dimensions of resilience: (a) resistance (holding the line); (b) bounce-back (getting back to normal or pretending nothing has happened); (c) adaptation (adjusting to a new normal); and (d) transformation (changing to meet any future threats). Dovers and Handmer (1992) and Supardi and Hadi (2020) distinguish proactive and reactive

resilience; while reactive resilience seeks to stabilize and maintain the status quo, proactive resilience accepts the inevitability of change and adapts to new conditions and is more aligned to adaptation and transformation.

Management scholars generally adopt an instrumental view of leaders and organizations' response to crisis and disruption. Godschalk (2003), for example, proposed a series of critical elements necessary in building resilient organizations; these include efficiency, autonomy, strength, interdependence, governance, adaptability, and collaboration. Cutter and colleagues (2008) argued that resilience is not just adaptive but has inherent characteristics that promote optimal functioning in non-crisis periods. Systematic literature reviews by Barasa and colleagues (2018) and Patel and colleagues (2017) revealed the connection between organizational resilience and operational behaviors including communication and information sharing, leadership practices and governance processes, resources, preparedness, collaboration, and relationships. Many of these characteristics align with Chaskin's (2001) view of community capacity.

Risk management scholars apply community resilience as a preferred holistic and contextual view of stakeholders and their experiences (Aldrich, 2012; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Koliou, van de Lindt, McAllister, Ellingwood, Dillard & Cutler, 2020; Matarrita-Cascante, Trejos, Qin, Joo, & Debner, 2022). The extant literature includes several models of community resilience, such as those purported by Magis (2010); Berkes and Ross (2013); Vaneeckhaute and colleagues (2017); and Matarrita-Cascante and colleagues (2022). Drawing on system theory, Magis (2010) and Vaneeckhaute and colleagues (2017) described community as a dynamic socio-ecological system, bringing the social, economic and natural context of the community to the foreground. Berkes and Ross (2013) advanced Magis' (2010) definition, identifying nine

strengths that play a role in agency and self-organization; these include engaged governance, social networks, values and beliefs, knowledge, skills and learning, leadership, people-place relationships, community infrastructure, and a positive outlook (p. 14). In 2008, Chaskin expanded his analysis of community capacity (presented in section one of this review); in introducing community resilience, Chaskin situated community as both context and as collective actors who can exhibit resilience by organizing and acting in response to adversity (p. 65).

Section two of the literature review discussed the theoretical fluidity of event studies, sharing a number of theories used by event scholars. Two such theories, system theory and social capital, play a prominent role in crisis response, recovery, and resilience. These theories are discussed below, starting with an outline of system theory and how it has been applied to events.

2.9.2 System theories and crisis response

Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) defined a crisis as a disruption that affects and threatens the basic functions and existence of an entire system. Holling (1973) applied the term resilience to describe the persistence of systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables (p. 14). Systems scholars including Holland (1992) and Wheatley (1992) believed that when a system is pushed to thresholds where minor adaptations are no longer sufficient, a crisis can create opportunities for systems to develop and recombine structures and processes, thus renewing them and creating conditions for their ongoing viability. Norris and colleagues (2008) proposed three elements of system resilience: (a) the system's ability to retain its basic identity, function and structure in the face of change; (b) its strategic use of available resources; and (c) the use of intentional processes to preserve some qualities and allow others to fade away.

Magis' (2010) definition of resilience described earlier situated the community as a complex adaptive system, ensuring that it can thrive in change, uncertainty, and unpredictability because of intentional capacity building (p. 401). Prior to the pandemic, event studies scholars had begun to apply complex adaptive systems to community event ecosystems. In the context of event tourism, Olmedo and Mateos (2015) discussed how event ecosystems are dynamic structures, where complex and non-linear relationships between event stakeholders develop over time to form a unified whole that behaves simultaneously in an unpredictable yet orderly manner. Ziakas (2010, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2019a, 2019b, 2021b, 2024) conceptualized an event portfolio as a complex adaptive system where a network of event stakeholders can rapidly evolve solutions for both the event organizations and the host community (p. 160). The next section connects social capital to the crisis response and recovery literature.

2.9.3 Social capital and crisis response

Scholars in the crisis response literature, including Nakagawa and Shaw (2004), Jamieson (2014) and Aldrich and Meyer (2015), have looked to social capital to explain community recovery from natural disasters. For example, community leaders utilize social capital in the crisis recovery process (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004), while volunteering, social events and redesign of community space were viewed as mechanisms to maximize social interactions that “increase reservoirs of trust and deepen networks” (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p. 262). These scholars also drew on the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital presented earlier in section one of this literature review; they discovered that, while bonding or horizontal social capital between those most like us is the most commonly available social resource available during a disaster, bridging social capital between unfamiliar groups can provide opportunities and information to access novel resources that assist in long-term recovery.

Next, section three of the literature review turns specifically to crisis response, recovery, and resilience for events. It is guided by the view of event scholars Ziakas, Antchak and Getz (2021) who posited that pandemic recovery for events will occur at multiple levels, including the response of single events, event organizations, and the event ecosystem. The connection between social capital and resilience for events and communities is discussed in greater detail.

2.9.4 Crisis response and recovery of events, event organizations, and event ecosystems

Events can be vulnerable to crisis for reasons such as over-dependence on funding from one or only a few sources; focusing on a niche market that is vulnerable to competition or economic conditions; or having an organizational culture or leadership that resists change (Ziakas et al., 2021 p. 19). Ziakas and colleagues (2021) believed that, in the face of a crisis, events and festivals must reconfigure through event redesign, repositioning, or rebranding. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the most popular event reconfiguration was online events (i.e., Jauhiainen, 2021; Madray, 2020; Seraphin, 2021).

Ziakas and colleagues (2021) argued the event is not likely to be resilient, but rather the event organization is where resilience can occur. As outlined above, organizational resilience refers to an organization's ability to "anticipate, prepare for, respond, and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions in order to survive and prosper" (Denyer, 2017, p. 6). During the pandemic, Liu-Lastres and Cahyanto (2021) found event organizations' success was linked to past experience or training in crisis and risk management, as well as leadership, resources, communication, innovation, support and mindset (p. 4). These echo the characteristics of resilient organizations discussed earlier in this section.

Ziakas, Antchak and Getz (2021) proposed that resilience is most likely when the event organization is part of a network. As discussed earlier in this review, networks support

distributed leadership, reciprocity, cooperative decision-making, and frequent supportive interactions; in the face of disruption, the network can facilitate connection with new partners and resources (Comfort, 2005, p. 347; Goodman, Speers, McLeroy, Fawcett, Kegler, Parker, Smith, Sterling & Wallerstein, 1998). Taking the value of event stakeholder relationships one step further, Ziakas and colleagues (2021) asserted that the ultimate tool for resilience is the event portfolio. If an event portfolio exists in a host community, event stakeholders (in an event network) already practice collaborative learning, evaluation and impact assessment; thus, the overall event ecosystem is always modifying the portfolio in response to environmental conditions and trends. This framework provides important guidance for this study. Though it was proposed early in the pandemic, it has not been tested in the literature to date.

Also early in the pandemic, Dragin-Jensen and colleagues (2022) and Kwiatkowski and colleagues (2023) documented the responses of event stakeholders and proposed models of ecosystem resilience and innovation; their models drew on Twigger-Ross and colleagues' (2014) four progressive stages of resilience (resistance, bounce-back, adaptation, and transformation) shared earlier in this section. Where “sustaining innovations” are short-term, highly reactive responses aimed at stabilizing an unstable situation, “adaptive innovations” involve the need to adapt to new rules and realities. Finally, “transformative innovation” is long-term oriented and draws on stakeholder creativity to develop a new perspective based on the crisis experience. These models were based on the experiences of stakeholders in the first year of the crisis, which could not yet capture mid- to long-term responses of event organizations.

Other models of event resilience emerging from the pandemic were considered by Michopoulou and colleagues (Michopoulou, Pappas & Azara, 2023; Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023), who examined the intersections of event creativity, innovation and resilience. They

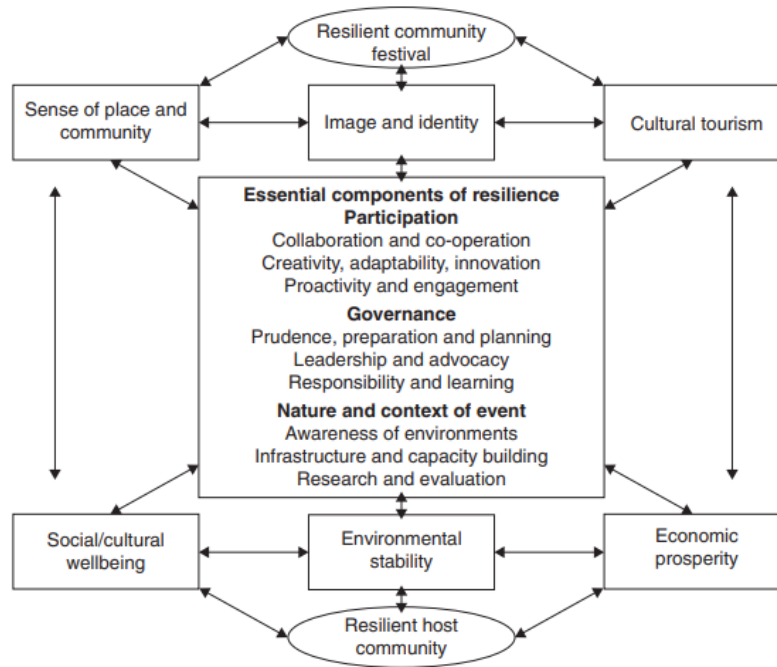
highlighted the complex interplay of internal and external dynamics involved in event planning and delivery, especially during times of uncertainty. They presented a 13 element, three-dimensional “path of complexity” that draws on three interrelated fields of study: stakeholder theory, project management, and event management, and their overlapping areas of project stakeholders, event projects, and event stakeholders.

These views of event innovation and resilience are commended for acknowledging the complex nature of event management. Unfortunately, they fail to suitably address the social dynamics of planned events embedded in host communities. This is why social capital and community capacity are so critical for understanding the crisis response, recovery, and resilience of events, event organizations, and event ecosystems. The contributions of these theories are explored in the next section.

2.10 Events and Festivals as Tools for Community Recovery and Resilience

In her examination of cultural festivals in Australia, Derrett (2008) asserted that having a robust festival culture builds not only current community capacity, but the “future capacity of that community to meet challenges that might beset them” (p. 107). This reflects the view of resilience as both proactive and reactive (Dovers & Handmer, 1992; Supardi & Hadi, 2020). Derrett’s model of festival and community resilience is shared in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Model of festival and community resilience



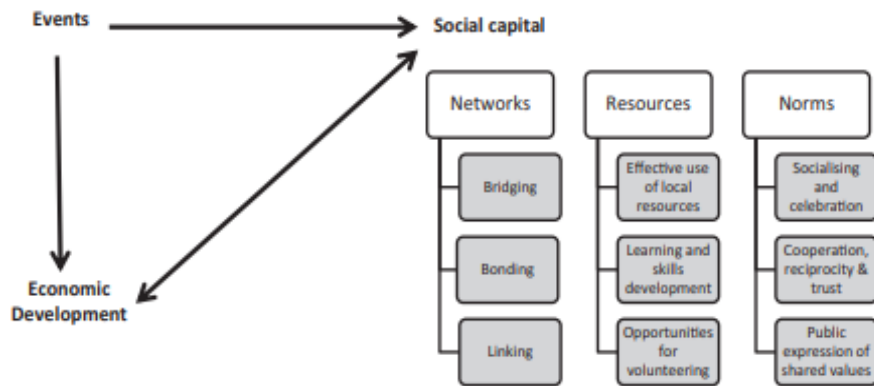
Source: Derrett (2008, p. 118)

In Derrett’s view, a resilient host community is characterized by social and cultural well-being, environmental stability, and economic prosperity; this reflects a triple-bottom-line approach to event impact. In response to a crisis like the COVID-19 global pandemic, we would expect that local governments would be especially concerned with recovery at all three levels. Derrett’s framework drew on management studies’ concepts of collaboration and co-operation, leadership, and adaptability; she connected them with positive intended social outcomes of events, such as sense of place and community, image and identity (suggesting roles for both event tourism/place branding and event placemaking). She highlighted how planned events proactively foster sustained collaboration, resilience and resourcefulness through community development and capacity building.

While Derrett’s framework would be strengthened by drawing more explicit attention to the interaction of stakeholder relationships, it does aptly recognize the roles of leadership,

planning and governance at the community level. The framework would also be complemented by the theoretical rigor offered by Duffy and Mair's (2018a) conceptual framework of social capital and events, outlined in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Social capital and events conceptual framework



Source: Duffy & Mair (2018a, p. 100)

Duffy and Mair (2018a) highlighted bridging, bonding and linking social capital generated through networks of event stakeholders. Their model showcased volunteering, skill development, and effective use of local resources. They, too, apply management studies' views of interorganizational relationships and behaviors such as trust, reciprocity and cooperation. Their model would be made stronger by explicitly introducing the roles of some key event stakeholders, such as local government. The strengths of these two frameworks are they emphasize the importance of norms and values and the essential role of the host community.

As Ziakas (2016) reminded us in his discussion of the social utility of events, to understand the conditions under which social capital can be created, we must consider the regional, historical, political, economic and sociocultural characteristics of host communities (p. 1145). This attention to context is the notion of Granovetter's (1985) theory of embeddedness discussed earlier. Depending on geographical and social context, or across space and time, the form and strength of social capital in an event ecosystem may vary considerably (Ziakas, 2016).

Wider cultural, institutional, and historical factors shape the configuration of communal social capital that can affect the development and sustenance of interorganizational relationships over time (Nahapiet, 2009). Without question, the COVID-19 global pandemic—combined with increased sociopolitical tensions and threats from climate change—created a unique historical and social context for the modern event sector and offers opportunities for reconfiguration and transformation of events.

2.10.1 Crisis as a catalyst for transformation

In section one of this literature review, event studies was established as a discipline reckoning with many challenges: theoretical fluidity and immaturity, fragmentation, and failure to adequately consider issues of power, equity and representation. While the growing fragility of the event sector was on our radar, the COVID-19 global pandemic—and the subsequent financial and social dilemmas that unfolded alongside it—is one of the most challenging crises to face planned events (Getz, 2023; Kwiatkowski et al., 2023; Pernecky & Faisal, 2023). Pre-existing vulnerabilities, exacerbated by an unprecedented crisis, were heightened by a dawning realization that some of these problems are here to stay, and—given continued threats from war, climate change and even future pandemics—perhaps even set to intensify in the years to come (Pernecky & Faisal, 2023; Getz, 2023). In the context of a crisis, events, event organizations and event ecosystems might be viewed as victims; alternatively, the crisis can be viewed as a catalyst to bring a community together (Kwiatkowski et al., 2023, p. 482), and a rare and invaluable opportunity to rethink and reset events in more socially sustainable and community-centered ways, with the public good as the key benefactor (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). Rowen (2020) suggested the pandemic could become a “time-space threshold” for the transformation of the event industry. Stevenson (2023) linked the disruption to stimulating either an acceleration or

deceleration of social sustainability outcomes in communities. Pernecky and Faisal (2023) explored the notion of “pragmatic hope,” to conceive of events as fundamentally social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental phenomena that are needed for humans to carry on and thrive, despite the volatility of our times (p. 628).

There has never been a more compelling time for event scholars to recognize and study the complex, multi-dimensional considerations of crisis response, recovery and resilience for events, event stakeholders, and host communities. For event practitioners, there are expected to be myriad learnings from the experiences of event organizations that survived the pandemic (and those that did not). Finally, emerging from the crisis, policymakers and other community-focused festival and event stakeholders are looking to achieve positive outcomes for post-pandemic communities: to renew the social fabric of communities following unprecedented disruption, to engage residents who were disconnected or isolated, and to strengthen the foundation of a local festival and event sector (Getz, 2023; Pernecky & Faisal, 2023). If we believe in opportunities for transformational resilience, Chalip’s (2006) theory of social leverage and Ziakas’ paradigm of event portfolios, both discussed in section one of this literature review, empower policymakers and other stakeholders that intentional action can transform and reconfigure communities and events emerging from the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Community event stakeholders will be at the heart of this transformation.

2.10.2 Conclusion to section three of the literature review

The third section of this literature review recognized that our knowledge of crisis response, recovery, and resilience is based almost exclusively from natural disasters. It highlighted several key and interrelated characteristics of resilient organizations and communities including leadership and governance practices, values and beliefs, skills, knowledge and relationships. The

limited literature on crisis response, recovery and resilience for community-focused festivals and events was shared, including views of event ecosystem complexity, innovation, and creativity inspired by early experiences of the COVID-19 global pandemic. While these models add to our collective knowledge of how events and communities can be better prepared in the face of future disruption and crisis, they do not adequately recognize the complexity of stakeholder interactions and community context. Additional models were shared that prioritize the roles of social capital, community capacity, and interorganizational collaboration.

2.11 Summary of the Literature Review

This literature review was presented in three sections: (1) the foundations, significance, and study of community-focused festivals and events, including the potential impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic and implications for the field of event studies; (2) the integral role of event stakeholders and interorganizational relationships in a community event ecosystem; and (3) an understanding of crisis response, recovery and resilience prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic and what event scholars hope to learn from this crisis experience. Social capital was discussed in all three sections of this literature review. First, social capital was outlined as a positive social outcome or product of participation, planning, volunteering and consumption as benefits for residents and communities. The second section of the literature review was focused on stakeholders and relationships. Drawing on Portes' (1998, 2000) instrumental view, this section highlighted how social capital enables stakeholders to secure benefits through membership in networks and other social structures. Finally, the third section of the literature review highlighted how social capital builds and strengthens individual, organizational, and community resilience. The following section establishes social capital as the theoretical framework for this study.

2.12 Social Capital: A Multi-dimensional Theoretical Framework to Explore Crisis Response and Resilience in Events, Event Organizations, and Community Event Ecosystems

Foley, McGillivray and McPherson (2012) cautioned event scholars not to underestimate the value of social capital as a theoretical framework to understand the socio-cultural impacts of events on communities. The multi-dimensional nature of social capital described in the literature review has led some scholars (i.e., Claridge, 2018, 2020) to critique social capital theory as poorly defined and conceptualized. Glover and Hemmingway (2005) are more pragmatic, pointing out “How one conceptualizes social capital fundamentally shapes the questions one then asks and the answers to them” (p. 394). In this study, the research questions and case study methodology examine how community-focused event stakeholders in Kitchener’s event ecosystem planned, adapted, and navigated their roles during the COVID-19 global health pandemic. It examines the factors that shaped event transformations during and after the crisis, with particular attention to the vital role of interorganizational relationships among stakeholders in the crisis recovery of events, event organizations, and the broader event ecosystem, and what factors may contribute to long-term resilience in the face of future disruptions of any scale or type. Social capital theory is most relevant for research questions three and four. RQ3 explores what changes emerged in relationships between community-focused event stakeholders, and how these relationships may have supported resilience and recovery during the pandemic. RQ4 examines what elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience and crisis preparedness for events.

In adopting social capital as the theoretical framework, this study builds on three key contributions from the literature: (a) sources, motivations, and outcomes of social capital (Portes, 1998, 2000); (b) endogenous and exogenous pathways of social capital (Glover et al., 2021); and

(c) the dimensions of bonding, bridging and linking social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Woolcock, 2001). The next sections are outlined according to sources, motivations, and outcomes of social capital, and how they may apply to event stakeholders in a community event ecosystem before, during, and after a crisis like the COVID-19 global pandemic.

2.12.1.1 Sources of social capital

Social capital represents the ability of stakeholders to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other structures (Portes, 1998, p. 6). This social-structural view reminds us that social capital is not the possession of an event stakeholder, but rather the source of their social capital is the connection to the other event stakeholders. These connections are often called “social ties,” a notion echoed from network theory and utilized in Granovetter’s (1985) embeddedness theory. Drawing on Coleman (1990), to possess social capital, an event stakeholder must be related to other event stakeholders, and it is those other event stakeholders who are the actual source of the advantage. It is reasonable to expect that there is some degree of commonality between the stakeholders by virtue of their being part of the community-focused festival and event ecosystem. This shared interest or identification would inform a sphere of sociability, representing the endogenous pathway of social capital (Glover et al., 2021). This study seeks to understand the nature and strength of this shared identification between the members of the ecosystem prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, it explores if a new relational dimension—being an event stakeholder during a global health crisis—may have shifted the nature and strength of the shared identification. A shared experience of a crisis or disruption represents the exogenous pathway of social capital, where a shared exogenous shock creates reinforcing experiences that build relationships, solidarity, and identity (Glover et al., 2021, p. 163).

2.12.1.2 Motivations of social capital

Adopting social capital as the theory for this study invites examination of why event stakeholders in a community event ecosystem may have been motivated to engage with (or not engage with) one another prior to the pandemic, and whether these motivations shifted in any way during and emerging from the crisis. This draws on Portes (1998), who posited instrumental motivation functions like social exchange, or reciprocity, where there is an accumulation of obligations from others, without a specified form or timing of repayment. Glover and Hemmingway (2005) pointed out that this need for sustained investment and maintenance of social networks may represent perhaps the most fundamental issue for social capital: if a social network weakens or disappears, whatever social capital existed within it also weakens or disappears (p. 396-7). Glover and colleagues (2021) drew on Coleman (1990) to describe the three most common motives of social capital; first, “obligations and expectations” encourage individuals to invest in their social ties and accumulate obligations, which investors trust will be reciprocated and repaid. Second, “information potential” entails the use of community networks to access specialized information without having to obtain the information directly. Finally, “norms and effective sanctions” convince members to work for the collective good of the network and, in this case, the good of the community (p. 161). During the course of the crisis, event stakeholders may adopt or adjust one or more of these motives to invest in relationships with others. This would be the case if there were weak or non-existent ties with other event stakeholders before the crisis, triggering an exogenous pathway of social capital. If event stakeholders are in “survival mode” during the height of the crisis, they may be looking for immediate solutions and exchange of information and be less concerned with specific repayment terms. Similarly, whether or not a relationship existed before the pandemic may influence the presence and degree of trust and reciprocity

between the event stakeholders. For example, if trust already exists between the members of the event stakeholder network, these stakeholders may simply be likely to believe that “down the road” it will work out. During the crisis, stakeholders may feel that resources are scarcer and more become more withdrawn, exhibiting more mistrust of others in the ecosystem. In contrast, under the unique circumstances, event stakeholders may be more willing to risk trusting new partners to share knowledge and resources from goodwill or benefit to the community or ecosystem as a whole. Finally, if motivations change in the crisis, will stakeholder relationships return to “normal” or be sustained and strengthened post-pandemic?

2.12.1.3 Outcomes of social capital

Glover and colleagues (2021) cautioned that social capital should not be conflated with its outcomes, but rather viewed as something that enables action that would have otherwise been unlikely without social assistance (p. 162). In the endogenous view of social capital, they highlighted four types of “action”: expressive action or emotional support (“getting by”); instrumental or material action (“getting ahead”); collective action, or “acting together,” where more than one person works together to improve their shared conditions, advance collective interests, and achieve change through joint organization, mobilization, and negotiation; and obstructive action (“falling behind”) refers to actions taken by network members that do themselves harm. Event stakeholders’ exchanges during the crisis may lead to any or all these outcomes of social capital. Such exchanges could include emotional support during times of frustration or fear; sharing information about navigating COVID-19 public health protocols; teaching another partner about delivering an event online; or even withholding information from one another if they fear scarcity of resources such as sponsors or volunteers. As Glover and colleagues (2021) noted, social ties are built, maintained and sustained, and stakeholders

regularly go through cycles of reviewing whether these social ties are still worth maintaining. Emerging from the pandemic, if new stakeholder relationships were established, will the stakeholders be motivated to maintain these relationships when the crisis no longer exists? Will they continue to perceive benefits beyond the crisis? Did their crisis response and recovery experiences transfer into stronger or sustained relationships, leading to more resilience for events, event organizations, and the event ecosystem? The next section considers how three dimensions of social capital – bonding, bridging, and linking – may also be instructive to examine stakeholder relationships before, during, and emerging from the pandemic.

2.12.1.4 Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital

Bonding, bridging, and linking were described in section one of the literature review. Bonding social capital takes place among similar people, bridging social capital occurs among those who are not alike, and linking social capital exists between people who are interacting across explicit formal or institutionalized power or authority groups (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Woolcock, 2001). Exchanges between event stakeholders involved in similar sized or similar themed events may best represent bonding social capital. Bonding social capital fosters trust, mobilizes solidarity, and facilitates easier communication and understanding (Misener, 2013). Relations between large and small event organizations, those with vastly different areas of focus (i.e., a food festival versus a sport event), or between more established or newer event organizations align to bridging social capital. According to Misener (2013), bridging social capital is crucial to build linkages across power differentials. Finally, relationships between funders, sponsors and policymakers and the event host organization (especially if resident-led) represent linking social capital. Pitas and Ehmer (2020) suggested a strong base of bonding social capital is a prerequisite, but not enough in itself, for development of bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital is

good for “getting by,” while bridging social capital is good for “getting ahead” (Putnam, 2000). While bonding social capital amongst like partners may be sufficient during “normal” times, an exogenous shock to the event ecosystem might foster event stakeholders in the ecosystem to draw on all three forms of social capital to make it through the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented a literature review in three sections: (1) the foundations, significance, and study of community-focused festivals and events, including the potential impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic and implications for the field of event studies; (2) the integral role of event stakeholders and interorganizational relationships in a community event ecosystem; and (3) an understanding of crisis response, recovery and resilience prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic and what event scholars hope to learn from this crisis experience. The chapter concluded with a discussion of how social capital serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

The next chapter outlines the case study methodology adopted to explore the community-focused festival and event ecosystem in the city of Kitchener before, during and since the COVID-19 global pandemic. It describes the case, including the types of community-focused festivals and events in the community event ecosystem, and the role of local government in the ecosystem. It outlines the ethics approval and recruitment procedures, as well as the data collection process and data analysis techniques. It concludes by discussing how reflexivity influences the research.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Outline

The purpose of this research is to explore how community-focused festival and event stakeholders planned, adapted, and navigated their roles during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 global health pandemic. The study examines how stakeholder relationships evolved, the factors shaping event transformations during and after the pandemic and considers lessons for future event recovery and resilience in the face of potential crises. A case study of Kitchener's community-focused event ecosystem explores the following four research questions:

1. How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?
3. What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?
4. What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?

This chapter begins by outlining how each of these research questions respond to the levels of event crisis response described in the literature review. It proceeds to share my unique positionality as both an event scholar and an event practitioner, describing how reflexivity influences the research. Next, the ethics approval and recruitment procedures are outlined, and the events and event organizations included in the sample are described. It goes on to describe

the data collection process and data analysis techniques. The chapter concludes by describing the case of community events in the City of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.

3.1.1 Research questions

The study’s four research questions were developed with two key considerations in mind. First, they were guided by Stake’s (1995) conceptual structure of case study methodology, which is instructive to help describe what happened, who was engaged, and the sociocultural context of the case. Second, as outlined in the literature review, COVID-19 recovery for events occurred at multiple levels, including (1) the response of single event and its organization; (2) the response of the entire event population in a host community; and (3) the community or sociocultural response (Ziakas et al., 2021). Table 1 below outlines how each of the study’s research questions responded to the issues identified for exploration in a case study, and to the level of event crisis response described in the literature.

Table 1: Conceptual structure of the research questions

Research Question	Case Study Issue Being Addressed (Stake, 1995)	Level of Event Crisis Response (Ziakas et al., 2021)
RQ1: How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?	What happened?	Single event response to the crisis
RQ2: What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?	What is the sociocultural context?	Community/ sociocultural response to the crisis
RQ3: What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?	Who was engaged?	Organizational response to the crisis

RQ4: What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?	What are the implications for the future?	All of the above
---	---	------------------

Specifically, RQ1 responded to a descriptive understanding of what happened to events during the crisis. RQ2 responded to the issue of recognizing and understanding the unique sociocultural context of the case. RQ3 responded to the issue of event stakeholder relationships, understanding that community events did not happen in isolation. Finally, RQ4 responded to the issue of what might have changed or been learned that would be applied in future scenarios, or how events, event organizations, and event ecosystems might be more resilient in the face of a future crisis.

As a qualitative researcher, these research questions have been shaped by three considerations: the way that I think about events, my inherent curiosity about interpersonal and interorganizational relationships, and an unexpected global health pandemic. The following section will explore the influence of these three factors on this dissertation, as I consider the nature of reflexivity in this research.

3.1.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is defined as “a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes” (Olmos-Vega, Stalmeijerb, Varpio & Kahlke, 2022, p. 241). I am uniquely positioned to explore these research questions because I am not just an event scholar, but also an event practitioner. For more than a decade, I have led a team that plans and delivers high profile events at the University of Waterloo; these are typically not events for the community at large, but rather institutional events that engage university students, staff, and faculty. Though I have been in this role for more than a decade, I did not set out to be an event

practitioner. Having a graduate degree in social psychology, I am always curious about people and relationships. I spent the first fifteen years of my career working in local government and the non-profit sector, with a focus on community development and social policy. My event scholarship is based on a primary interest in understanding how community-focused events and festivals are leveraged to engage residents, build neighbourhoods, and strengthen communities. I am most interested in the social impact of events, and less in economic impact and event tourism.

Reflexivity can be examined through three lenses: personal, interpersonal, and contextual (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). As a qualitative scholar, I have spent considerable time thinking about how each of these areas has influenced the research questions and how I approached data collection and analysis. From a personal lens, I acknowledge I have extensive first-hand experience in event management. I am cognizant that I approach my work by building, prioritizing, and leveraging relationships with my staff, colleagues, and other partners. While I understand the demands of event management and have familiarity with the community-focused festival and event ecosystem and its stakeholders, I do not deliver community events in the region. Having worked in local government early in my career (albeit not in Kitchener, the location of this case study), I also understand and appreciate the roles of policymakers and administration in local government.

With an eye to interpersonal reflexivity, I explored what relationships may have existed, either directly or indirectly, with any of the events or event stakeholders involved in this case study, and whether they might influence the study's recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. As a local resident, I have attended some but not all of the events with family and friends. I do not have a professional connection to any of the events and festivals being explored in this case study, but I participated as a volunteer in a strategic planning workshop for one of the

festivals that is part of the case study (Festival B). I have professional relationships with several City policymakers and administrators, including the Executive Director, Economic Development, who provided vital background information about Special Events in Kitchener during the proposal, and assisted with participant recruitment.

Finally, in examining contextual reflexivity, I considered that, like everyone, I had my own experience of the COVID-19 global pandemic. For me and my family, the pandemic was a challenging time in some ways and freeing in others. It meant that many of my leisure pursuits, which included travel and attending community events, were no longer possible. At the same time, as an event practitioner during the pandemic, I experienced many of the same challenges as community-focused event stakeholders taking part in this study. For example, the decision making and skill development that was required when events were moved online was a “new normal” part of my professional responsibilities, especially in the early days of the pandemic. Decisions about what was safe to resume in-person, and when, and the complexities of navigating an ever-changing public health policy landscape was also part of my professional pandemic experience. It was a stressful time. Further, the return to “normal” for the events that I led was fraught with new considerations related to organizational capacity, increased vendor costs, and uncertainties about audience engagement post-pandemic. During the data collection process, and through the reflexive thematic analysis process I adopted for my data analysis, I found myself reflecting on the way that relationships had played a role in my own professional experiences. Most notably, I considered ways that my own relationships across departments and within my own event unit, had been intentionally or unintentionally strengthened or weakened not only during the pandemic, but in the many months that followed. Such reflection shone light on ways that I had turned to trusted partners to work together in new ways. It also showed me

that the close relationships that I had, most especially with my staff, were deeply strengthened because of our being “in the trenches” together during a demanding and high-pressure time.

Altogether, these personal, interpersonal and contextual considerations have undoubtedly influenced the design of this study, as well as the data collection and analysis. Through such reflexivity, I embrace my unique positionality as both event scholar and event practitioner; indeed, this is a tremendous asset to the research and to knowledge translation. The section below describes the selection of Kitchener’s community-focused festival and event ecosystem as a single case study and my arms-length relationship to this local knowledge case.

3.1.3 Selection of the case

According to Stake (1995), one of the first criterion in selecting a case is to maximize what we can learn by choosing a case that is “easy to get to” and “hospitable to our inquiry” (p. 4). Thus, as outlined in the section above, the case selection is based on what Thomas (2011) calls a local knowledge case, known to me as the researcher. Kitchener’s community-based festival and event ecosystem is hosted in the community where I live and work, where I have attended some of the events with friends and family, and where I have a small number of professional relationships with some of the event stakeholders.

The selection of the City of Kitchener as the case satisfied a number of dimensions for the purpose and research questions of this study. Kitchener, Ontario is one of Canada’s 23 “big cities” and the fourth largest city in Ontario, having a population of close to 272,000 (City of Kitchener, 2023). As a host community, Kitchener’s ecosystem of festivals and events is large enough to include a range of cultural, music, food and heritage festivals, as well as sport events and new event offerings intended to engage young professionals downtown. These events are of

different sizes, may engage different primary audiences, and may have different goals. These considerations are all outlined in further detail when describing the case.

While there were multiple events involved within the geographic community, the purpose of the research was not to understand a specific organization or event; rather, the case was Kitchener's community-focused event ecosystem; thus, this research adopted a single case study approach. Because of the diverse mix of events that take place in Kitchener each year, a variety of event stakeholder perspectives could be solicited; unlike in a smaller community, this community-focused festival and event ecosystem is large enough not to identify individual events or event organizations.

The community size is also suitable because many of the community-event stakeholders are known, or to some degree familiar, to each other. Compared to a larger urban centre, Kitchener is not so large that event stakeholders across different event organizations may not be able to develop interorganizational relationships with one another. Finally, the case selection was appropriate to explore the distinction in the literature between community-focused events and event tourism. The size of Kitchener and the nature of these events are designed for residents and not primarily geared toward tourists from outside the community. Although some tourists (primarily those residing in the region and within driving distance of Kitchener) do attend some of the events, the case selection ensured an intentional target on the study of an ecosystem with community-focused objectives.

A strength of the case selection was that the City had been building a strategic focus on special events within its Economic Development department in the years leading up to the pandemic. At the same time, the City was implementing a strategy for neighbourhood development and resident engagement, of which events were a tool for engagement and that

complemented the special events efforts. This intentionality by the City presented the opportunity to engage with local government stakeholders who were thinking strategically about the importance of special events for their community and its residents. At the time of the data collection, the City identified that it would be developing a Special Events strategic plan the following year (2025). This is taken into consideration in the presentation of the findings.

3.1.3.1 Timeframe of the case study

The study considered the community's crisis response and recovery timeline to be March 2020 to December 2023. It drew on Christakis (2021), who argued that we cannot claim to be “post-pandemic” until at least 2024. Summer 2022 marked the consistent return to in-person events in this community (Kinsella, 2022; Waterloo Region Record, 2022). Data collection took place from the period April 1 to July 20, 2024. During this time, community-focused festivals and events continued to resume in-person. Overall, this extended period from the onset of the pandemic to the time of data collection allowed for community-focused event stakeholders to reflect on their experiences before the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, and subsequent experiences during the immediate and intermediate phases of the COVID-19 global health pandemic.

3.1.4 Participation criteria

The participants for this study were selected using a purposive sample, what Schwandt (2001) defined as selection based on the participants' “relevance to the research question, analytical framework, and explanation or account being developed in the research” (p. 232). Community-focused event stakeholders engaged for this study must have been involved in one or more festivals or events in Kitchener for at least two years prior to the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, and must have continued to play a role in at least one community event at the time of the

data collection. This criterion allowed the event stakeholders to reflect on their pre-pandemic experiences. The event had to still exist at the time of this study, even if in some modified format from its pre-pandemic format. This criterion was used to suggest that the event had “recovered.”

Of note, residents as event attendees were not participants for this study. Without question, residents as attendees have an important role in community-focused festivals and events and their experience of the COVID-19 global health pandemic will be part of the emergent scholarship on events and the pandemic. However, resident experience was not directly pertinent to this study, as the research questions prioritize the experiences of community-focused event stakeholders whose instrumental and relational activities contributed to the planning, resourcing and execution of festivals events within the community ecosystem. The exception to this decision was residents who served as event volunteers.

3.1.5 Ethics

Prior to data collection, University of Waterloo ethics approval was sought and obtained. The university ethics application process required a detailed description of the recruitment procedures, targeted study participants, interview process, and follow-up procedures. All procedures described in the approved ethics application were followed. Details about the purpose of the study, participants’ rights and responsibilities, identity, confidentiality, data storage, and potential risks and benefits were outlined in the initial recruitment invitation and the information letter for the participants, included as Appendix A. All participants completed a consent form, included as Appendix B, or reviewed the consent form and provided verbal consent to the investigator prior to the interview. The interview guide is included as Appendix C. Table 2 shares some of the questions that were part of the interviews and how they were organized.

Table 2: Selection of interview questions

<p>About the stakeholder and their event(s)</p> <p><i>The following questions will first ask you to describe your event during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.</i></p>	<p>Tell me about your event (<i>probe for size, budget, goals</i>), and what is your role?</p> <p>Think about this event before the pandemic to today. Describe any changes that were made during the pandemic? Did any of those changes remain today, or were they a temporary response to the pandemic?</p>
<p>Interorganizational relationships with other community event stakeholders</p> <p><i>The following questions ask you to think about your specific relationships with other event stakeholders in the community. It will ask you to think about how these connections may have changed throughout the experience of the pandemic to today.</i></p>	<p>What was the role of relationships in the success of your event before the pandemic? Who were the specific partners that you worked with to deliver your event before the pandemic?</p> <p>During the pandemic, did you still work with these people? Did the nature of these connections change? Why do you think that was? Did you do anything intentionally to try to maintain or strengthen these relationships?</p> <p>During the pandemic, did you connect with any new partners or make any new relationships? Who were they? Did you reach out to them or did they reach out to you? What was the nature of the relationship? Were there any new relationships that you felt obligated to enter into?</p> <p>As we are emerging from the pandemic, are there any new partners you are working with today who you were not working with before or during the pandemic? Do you think there will be any changes in your partnerships in the future? If so, who might they be, and why?</p> <p>When you think about these various relationships with other event stakeholders, how important was it to trust them? Can you share an example where trust, or lack of trust, impacted your event planning or delivery?</p> <p>Can you think about a time when you shared something with another event stakeholder (it could be information, resources or something else?). If so, how important was it to get something back in return? Did it matter if it was returned right away or down the road?</p> <p>Do you think about the value of relationships with other event stakeholders differently today, having come through the pandemic? How so? (or why not?)</p>

<p>Examining a holistic view of event stakeholder relationships in Kitchener</p> <p><i>The following questions will ask you to think about Kitchener events broadly, and asks about the various stakeholders who may be involved.</i></p>	<p>Overall, what role do you think events play in Kitchener? Do you feel that this changed in any way as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? Do you think that there is a strategic vision and goals for community events in Kitchener?</p> <p>What do you think is the role of the <i>City of Kitchener – Sponsors - Volunteers</i> in community events in Kitchener? Have you seen a change in this during the pandemic? Do you anticipate that this will change in any way in the next three to five years?</p>
--	---

3.1.6 Recruitment

The recruitment of participants was guided by an exploratory discussion with the Executive Director of Economic Development for the City of Kitchener, held on November 20, 2023. Based on the types of festivals and events delivered in Kitchener, a preliminary list of ten potential participants was developed. Using an agreed upon email template, the Executive Director of Economic Development contacted the potential participants, advising them about the study and asking them if they would agree to take part in an interview. The information letter was provided at that time. If the individual agreed to participate, the Executive Director of Economic Development connected the participant with the investigator via email. In some cases, the Executive Director of Economic Development copied the investigator on the initial email, and the investigator followed up with the potential participant directly. In addition to this initial recruitment, once the interviews with participants began, snowball sampling was employed; at the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked if they might recommend another event stakeholder who would be appropriate and interested in taking part in the study. The referring participant was offered the opportunity to reach out directly to the referral, using an email template provided by the investigator. In some cases, the referring participant was comfortable with the investigator reaching out directly to the referral, indicating that the referral had been

recommended by that referring participant. Both processes were employed, depending on the preference of the referring participant.

3.1.7 Participants

Thirteen individuals were interviewed for the study. Table 3 below provides a profile of the various event stakeholder perspectives represented by the participants. In addition to the nature of the event organization and the event leader role outlined below, participants represented events and festivals that included music, cultural heritage, food, and sport. They also represented different professional backgrounds and lengths of time being engaged with the event and/or the event host organization. Given the prominent role of local government in the community-focused festival and event ecosystem, staff and elected officials from the City were over-represented in the sample. As best as possible, attention is given to avoid identifying details about specific events. However, following the data collection, event organizations were contacted and agreed to be assigned descriptive terms to better support the presentation of findings.

Table 3: Community-focused event stakeholder profiles

Participant profile	Participant characteristics
Longstanding community cultural festivals (2)	Senior level leader and a festival staff leader Run by a not-for-profit organization Festivals have existed for more than ten years
Longstanding food and beverage festival (1)	Senior level leader Run by a for-profit organization Festival has existed for more than ten years
Longstanding sport-focused community festival (1)	Senior level leader Run by a not-for-profit sport organization Has existed for more than ten years
More recent not-for-profit event organization (2)	Not-for-profit organizations that began to collaborate with the City to plan and deliver small-scale events and initiatives in the community up to two years before the pandemic

Participant profile	Participant characteristics
Event volunteer (1)	A festival organization’s long-serving Board member
Event sponsor (1)	A corporate leader in the community, whose company has sponsored large- and small-scale festivals and events in the region
City of Kitchener staff (4)	City staff working in various departments that fund, plan, and/ or deliver special events and support resident-led events and initiatives Included both front-line staff and senior administrators
Elected official at the City of Kitchener (1)	City policymaker with extensive knowledge of the community as a longstanding elected official

Throughout the data analysis, findings and conclusions, every effort was made to avoid any attributions or reference to a single event or event host organization. While doing so was challenging and may have led to less robust description, it was intended to maintain the confidentiality of all participants. The exception was local government (City of Kitchener), which was referenced directly.

The sample was limited by the willingness of some community-focused event stakeholders to participate in the study. One longstanding event organization had changed leadership in the weeks prior to being asked to participate. In spite of several approaches from the City and the researcher, this organization did not respond at all. Another event organization with connections to several of the other event partners failed to respond to several approaches. One front-line community event stakeholder who had been described as being actively connected to some of the participants during the pandemic but was now working in another department, reported being too busy at the time of data collection and did not respond to further follow-up. An economic development partner that interfaces with several of the downtown Kitchener events

and festivals did not respond to multiple invitations to take part. Finally, while a representative from a neighbourhood-based festival had consented to participate, they ultimately did not respond to further follow-up. While the findings may have been more comprehensive with these additional participants, the study remains relevant given the breadth of other participants representing arts and culture, food, and sport festivals, as well as interdepartmental participation from key local government administrators and policymakers.

The purposive sample sought to include event organizations that had “survived” the pandemic by continuing to deliver the event during and post-pandemic. In some cases, the same individuals were not a member of the event organization (or in the same role) for the full six-year period. The researcher used her discretion based on the case-by-case circumstances of each potential participant. For example, a festival’s new Executive Director was interviewed alongside a volunteer board chair who had been part of the full duration of the pandemic experience of the festival organization. It is also worth noting that a small number of City event staff were no longer with the organization or had moved between other departments over the course of the pandemic. If an individual City staff member had left the entire organization of the City of Kitchener at the time of data collection, they were excluded from the sample. If they were still employed at the City but were now based in another department, they were considered eligible to stay in the sample.

3.1.8 Data analysis

All interviews were conducted and recorded online using Microsoft Teams, which automatically generated transcripts. Each transcript was carefully reviewed for accuracy and any identifiers related to the individual participant, the event organization, and the event were removed. Data analysis was conducted using reflexive thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing,

and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, “through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (p. 5). Given the wide choice of techniques and approaches for analyzing qualitative data, the choice of Thematic Analysis was appropriate here because the research was exploratory and intended to establish common interpretations and understandings from the data, rather than to build or test theory.

An initial review of all of the transcripts was conducted digitally; interesting ideas or quotes from each participant were highlighted. For example, several participants reflected that they had not thought about the experience or idea at all or in a particular way at the time of the crisis, but were now able to step back and make observations and offer insights with a new frame of reference because of their participation in the study. Key facts were also noted from each interview that described the nature of the event before the pandemic and what the event looks like today. All transcripts were printed and were reviewed in detail at least twice, each time capturing notes about things that seemed especially interesting. Recurring ideas and concepts were captured in a journal. The notes from the margins of the transcripts and from the journal were then established into a series of initial codes. These first themes were guided by common elements such as the timelines of the pandemic (pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and returning to in-person events), the nature of the event organization (non-profit, for-profit, grassroots) and the nature of the event’s relationship to the City of Kitchener, if applicable (longstanding or new relationship). Coding was also guided by the literature on organizational capacity, resilience, and attention to social capital-related experiences of trust and reciprocity. The iterative process of defining and naming themes took place over four cycles of analysis;

further refinement occurred while writing up the findings that are presented in the next chapter. As outlined in the earlier discussion of reflexivity, as a qualitative scholar, my personal, interpersonal and contextual lenses played a role in the data analysis.

3.1.8.1 Credibility and trustworthiness

To increase the trustworthiness of the analysis, additional outreach was made to participants. Following the data analysis and the first draft of the findings, all participants other than City of Kitchener representatives were contacted by e-mail with a draft of the findings. They were invited to share any new observations or insights from their 2024 event delivery experiences (noting that data collection had taken place during the 2024 planning process but the events had not yet taken place). A feedback session with representatives from the City's Special Events department was held in December 2024; this session was designed to clarify information and to share initial findings. City staff also reviewed the draft findings and provided input in January 2025.

3.2 About the Case

The next section will describe the case in further detail. This description includes the way event stakeholders in the study worked together prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Special attention is given to the role of the City of Kitchener in working with different types of event organizations prior to the pandemic. Note that, throughout this study, the broad geographic community of Kitchener is denoted as the “city of Kitchener” (lowercase) or simply the “city” or “Kitchener”; the official municipal government organization, as one of the event stakeholders within this geographic community, is denoted as the “City of Kitchener” (uppercase) or “the City.”

With a population of more than 272,000 people, Kitchener is the second fastest growing municipality in Canada (City of Kitchener, 2023). Kitchener is the urban centre of the Region of Waterloo. Within the Region, there are several smaller communities in close geographic proximity; these include the cities of Waterloo and Cambridge, as well as smaller regional townships. These adjacent communities host their own festivals and events; thus, regardless of the host community, festivals and events throughout the region will often engage similar attendees, sponsors, and other event stakeholders, such as vendors and production partners. While the events in this case study may draw attendees from this regional geography, the case study is focused on community-based events intended to predominantly engage with residents of Kitchener and the surrounding local region. In addition, neighbourhood-based events would generally be unlikely to attract residents from outside their local neighbourhood.

A City policymaker shared that the City's initial attention toward community special events as a policy strategy dates back to the mid-1990s, when local government administrators hired a Toronto-based communications consultant to create two festivals for the City of Kitchener. In sharing this history, this policymaker highlighted:

The biggest lesson learned during that time was, you know, trying to sort of hire an outsider and do something locally... really wasn't working. You needed something more organic that sort of came from the ground up and had community support so that you could build on it (City policymaker).

The policymaker also emphasized that a number of the current City-run festivals were initiated by community volunteer-led organizations. Over the years, leadership for these festivals shifted to the City when the size or complexity of the festival outpaced the capacity of the volunteers.

At present, in both its strategic plan (2020) and its economic development plan, "Make It Kitchener" (2023) the City describes its aspirations to be "a vibrant, active city" and an

“economically thriving city.” The City of Kitchener views special events as a mechanism for achieving these goals, noting:

We need to imagine our own vibrant city in our own authentic way. We need to continue to create opportunities and places across our city - in our streets, paths, parks, and places - where difference makers and entrepreneurs can offer experiences and moments that truly matter. We need to think both big and small, to enable the vibrancy, festivals and experiences that can shape Kitchener’s culture (City of Kitchener, 2020, p. 16).

Building upon the City’s comprehensive 2023-2026 strategic plan, the City’s Special Events department will develop a comprehensive special events strategic plan that operationalizes its mandate “to create platforms and opportunities for difference makers in our community to bring the city to life” (C. Bluhm, personal communication, November 21, 2023). This work is now underway in fall 2024. Further, within the past year, changes to staffing have been introduced in support of this broader strategy for the municipality and its local partners. This change includes the introduction of a role Director of Culture and Entertainment in November 2023, which was five months prior to data collection.

To understand the case, it is important to outline the different types of events hosted in Kitchener, as well as the administrative and financial resources allocated to this work each year. While large festivals and events take place primarily in the summer months, there are festivals and events that take place year-round. According to City administrators, there are four categories of events that fall within the strategic and operational mandate of the City of Kitchener: (a) large City of Kitchener operated events; (b) large events that are community-led, but heavily supported by the City of Kitchener; (c) community-led events and markets; and (d) resident-led events. These categories are described in further detail in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Types of events and relationship to the City of Kitchener

Type of event	Description of event
<p>City of Kitchener-led festivals</p>	<p>Large festivals (typically with over 5,000 attendees per event) led by the City of Kitchener’s special events team. Such festivals are deemed to be complex in some way, due to physical risk to the attendees, or reputational or other risk to the community or the City of Kitchener.</p> <p>In some cases, these events had been initiated by one or more community groups, and later control over them was assumed by the City of Kitchener when the community group was no longer able to run the event due to event size or organizational capacity. An event may also be initiated by the City of Kitchener to respond to a community need or interest.</p> <p>Volunteers are not engaged in the delivery of these events.</p>
<p>Community-led, but heavily supported by the City of Kitchener</p>	<p>These festivals are typically large in nature (over 5,000 attendees) and would take place on City of Kitchener property, such as Victoria Park or King Street and/or Carl Zehr Square in Downtown Kitchener.</p> <p>The festival host organization may be a for-profit or a non-profit entity responsible for the vision and execution of the event itself. Such festivals are typically longstanding, having existed in Kitchener for multiple decades. Volunteers typically play a significant role for these host organizations.</p> <p>Some of these festivals may receive financial investment from the City. However, all of these festivals receive a high degree of in-kind support. While the role of the City of Kitchener in each event varies, it may include event planning; set-up and tear-down; coordination of resources (i.e., waste removal); security permits; and coordination with approval agencies (i.e., public health).</p>
<p>Community-led events and markets</p>	<p>An additional number of Downtown Kitchener spaces are used for community-led events and markets. These spaces include King Street; Vogelsang Green; the Kitchener Market; and the Gaukel Block.</p> <p>The host organizations are generally volunteer-led or not-for-profit organizations. For the City, the aim of these event activations was to be (a) low touch for staff; and (b) involve little to no new resources other than to provide the physical infrastructure for grassroots organizations to deliver their event, market, or festival.</p>

Type of event	Description of event
Resident-led events in neighbourhoods	<p>The City of Kitchener’s Neighbourhood Development and Volunteer Engagement team provides information and small grants to support small gatherings of fewer than 200 people, where the primary audience is neighbourhood residents. These resident-led events often feature live music and other entertainment, food, and places for neighbours to connect with one another in an inclusive and welcoming environment.</p> <p>A second way the City supports resident-led neighbourhood events is through its system of 15 community centres located throughout the community. Each site delivers both programming and events tailored to the unique needs of each neighbourhood. City staff based at each centre function as “community connectors,” working with volunteer-led neighbourhood associations and interested residents.</p>

3.2.1 City of Kitchener resources and staff structure

The strategy and implementation for the three main types of events (City-led; community-led but heavily supported by the City; and community-led) is managed by the City of Kitchener Special Events team, which is situated within the City’s Economic Development department and now reports to the new Director of Culture and Entertainment. The staff composition of the Special Events unit is a manager, two senior event coordinators (one who has been involved in City events for close to twenty years), two junior event organizers, and two part-time administrative roles. These staff work with other City departments that provide labour to support event logistics, such as waste removal and road closures. Distinct to the special events unit is a Downtown Economic Development department. Related, the Kitchener Business Improvement Association (BIA) is an independent organization with a mandate to work with its members “to undertake projects and promote events that will help Downtown Kitchener continue to evolve into a more competitive commercial hub, business district and cultural destination” (Kitchener Business Improvement Association, 2025); the City is represented on the BIA Board of Directors.

Outside of the economic development functions of the City, the staff responsible for incubating neighbourhood-based events and initiatives are located in a separate Community Services department. One of their core responsibilities of the City's Neighbourhood Development and Volunteer Engagement team is the administration of "Love My Hood" grants described in further detail below. This team also provides resources and supports to resident-led groups looking to host events such as street parties (often funded through these grants). Recently, this team assumed leadership for volunteer engagement across the entire City of Kitchener organization. The staff team responsible for Kitchener's 15 community centres across the city also engage and support resident-led neighbourhood associations who play a role in hosting events at these facilities, such as family-friendly movie nights or cultural celebrations. This neighbourhood team also facilitates the City's annual Neighbours Day celebration where residents are encouraged to stage pop-up concerts on porches, driveways and front lawns.

Two other local government departments play a role in Kitchener events. With the introduction of the new Director of Culture and Entertainment role that began prior to data collection, there is now further alignment with the City's office of Arts and Culture, whose mandate is to support a variety of experiences for residents and visitors to enjoy, and to provide resources for artists, creators and organizations to deliver these experiences. Lastly, the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) administers grants to events and event organizations. An overview of the various funding mechanisms available to support events in the community-focused festival and event ecosystem are outlined in the following section.

3.2.2 Funding and resources for community-focused events in Kitchener

A number of funding sources exist for the variety of events that may take place within the City of Kitchener. The special events team has an annual budget approved by Council's annual budget-

setting process; these funds support staffing and event logistics costs. The primary sources of funding for community-led, City supported festivals are within a framework called Tier 1 and Tier 2 grants. Tier 1 grants are funded through the City's annual budget; Tier 2 grants are approved through an application process. These grants are administered through the City's Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), which manages the funding relationship and connects each event, as appropriate, to the special events team, which assigns one or more contacts to support the event for that calendar year. Often the same event will have a longstanding relationship with a member of the City's special events team, ideally with the same individual to provide continuity from year to year. Grassroots-led events may also access Community Builder grants, administered by the BIA. These grants support and enable community events that focus on collaboration and creating a great experience downtown.

A resident-led event will take a different pathway to access City funding and support. Residents who ideate new neighbourhood-based events can apply to access a one-time Love My Hood grant. These grants support new resident-led projects and initiatives across the city, including events, that can renew or revitalize neighbourhood public and green spaces, contribute to neighbourhood beautification and celebration, foster neighbourhood pride and sense of belonging, and develop stronger relationships between neighbours and neighbourhood groups. These grants are reviewed and approved by a volunteer review committee and then administered operationally by the City of Kitchener's Neighbourhood Development and Volunteer Engagement team, within the Community Services department. For neighbourhood-based events connected to one of the City's community centres, resident groups may receive nominal financial support from a Neighbourhood Growing Fund administered by the community centres staff team. A Community Development Infrastructure Program (CDIP) grant is available to

neighbourhood associations and communities of interest to address issues they have found in their communities.

Resident-led and emergent events led by newcomer organizations may also access grants available for equity seeking organizations. The Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Equity (RISE) Fund is a community grant that provides support for community-led organizations, programs, initiatives or events meant to decrease inequities and increase opportunities and well-being for Black, Indigenous and racialized communities in Kitchener. Grants are awarded through the City's Equity and Anti-Racism Committee.

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Province of Ontario (the senior level of government where the City of Kitchener is situated) introduced grants intended to support the return to festivals. As noted earlier, the community-based festivals and events that make up this case study are primarily targeting residents and would generally be ineligible for sources of provincial funding intended to promote event tourism. The following section will provide more detail about the City's role in three categories of events in the community: (a) community-led events and markets; (b) resident-led neighbourhood events; and (c) longstanding events and festivals. These functions and supports are in addition to the work that the City's Special Events team does to plan and execute its own City-led festivals and events.

3.2.3 The City's role in community-led events and markets

Located in Downtown Kitchener, the Gaukel Block is a pedestrian-only street launched two years prior to the pandemic. The Gaukel Block was intended to advance passive placemaking and beautification, programming, and infrastructure driven by the community's artists, small business, and local leaders. These events and markets have been part of a downtown economic development strategy to attract 20–30-year-olds (versus family friendly events). Novel event

concepts are identified by staff (with outreach to solicit community partners) or from community groups approaching the City of Kitchener. During the pandemic, there was increased interest from grassroots groups wanting to use this outdoor space, including newcomer and cultural groups. According to City staff, the Gaukel Block is continuing to evolve, and may not be able to be a primary event activation space in the downtown in the same way in the future due to continued downtown real estate development.

3.2.4 The City's role with resident-led neighbourhood events

The next section will describe the role that the City plays related to events that are held at the neighbourhood level throughout the community. In contrast to large festivals led by the City's Special Events team or community event organizations that take place in the public square or the large downtown park, neighbourhood-based street or porch parties, movie nights, and cultural celebrations take place in neighbourhood parks, boulevards, and community centers. A City neighbourhood manager distinguished between downtown festivals and neighbourhood-events; he described large festivals as consisting of more "passive" ways to engage at an event attendee compared to resident-led events that involve a "deeper" level of engagement. He expanded:

[Residents] are creating the event, they're running the event, and so it's...more...deeper. It's like deeper relationships, deeper connections with people because they're working on this event with their neighbours to host a movie night in the park. So, everyone there's got a stake in it. They've helped plan it. They've put themselves in it versus me [just] showing up to the [big festival] (City neighbourhood manager).

He went on to describe that the nature of these neighbourhood-based, resident-led events simply could not be planned and delivered by local government. He outlined:

The City can't foster those connections. It would be weird and inappropriate. It's like, it's best coming from residents. To do that, we give them money. We help support them, but I don't have a mandate to kind of go into a neighborhood and say, 'You 20 people, you should really talk to each other more and host a cul-de-sac party'. That's weird, right? (City neighbourhood manager).

When it comes to supporting resident-led events and initiatives, a City neighbourhood manager described its role in the following way:

We're a bridge builder or connector, coordinator, bringing people together, you know, connecting the dots, helping them navigate City Hall, all the paperwork, all the logistics that need to happen (City neighbourhood manager).

This suggests that City staff view the role of local government as one of an enabler, rather than a leader, in community development efforts. They support and facilitation, rather than direct intervention in community-building efforts. While local government recognizes the importance of fostering social connections, staff believe that initiatives for community engagement are more authentic and effective when driven by residents themselves, rather than imposed by the government.

City staff also recognize how its level of support and engagement with community-led and resident-led events is influenced by the capacity of the organizations and groups they work with. For example, in the case of resident-led initiatives, a City neighbourhood manager shared:

When we work with groups that have done events for however many years and they know what they're doing and they kind of have this confidence and this leadership to do it, then the relationship looks and feels different (City neighbourhood manager).

In contrast, when a group of residents comes together for the first time, they are inexperienced, and the City engages with them more closely to navigate the logistics and provide guidance and advice. Alternatively, if a particular neighbourhood does not have capacity at all (typically through a volunteer neighbourhood association), the City will plan and lead some events entirely on its own when it knows the residents would benefit from it doing so.

3.2.5 The City's role in longstanding community-led festivals and events

According to the City's special events coordinator, the role of local government in supporting its festival and events partners is to "Provide the [event host organizations] with the tools that they

need to be successful.” This may range from connecting the organization with the right contacts for public health and emergency services to directly arranging things like custodial services and road closures. Some of the costs of these logistical items are covered by the annual grant from the City to the organization, while others are covered in-kind by the City. The City’s special event coordinator will develop an event plan, and a budget based on the previous year based on the City’s contribution, while the event organization itself has its own budget and event plan. A “very basic” contract exists between the parties, which stipulates the expectations of the host organization, such as insurance.

There are two notable things about the City’s role in working with these types of event organizations. First, prior to the onset of the pandemic, the City identified that it worked somewhat differently with each longstanding festival based on the nature of the event, the nature of the host organization, and the City’s perceived organizational capacity. Second, for these longstanding festivals, in addition to the annualized core funding arrangement, the festival host organization is typically assigned a single staff point of contact within the Special Events team. When this primary contact is the same person for several consecutive years, both the City and the festival organization regard having this consistent relationship as mutually beneficial. These considerations are explored in further detail in a subsequent section, noting that they are important for later understanding the pandemic and post-pandemic experiences.

Generally, the longstanding community-led festival and event organizations have the benefit of decades of history in delivering their festivals in the same locations. This history fosters a predictability of event-related tasks and responsibilities each year, from the development of budgets and event plans through to the execution of the festival. Having a

longstanding relationship with the City is part of this predictability. According to the City's special events coordinator:

[It's] kind of a training thing... they know, and that they're on it right away. So, I don't have to be the hard one coming in and say, 'OK, we need to look at this now because this is not complete' (City special events coordinator).

With these basic elements well-established over time, City staff identified that they work with each of these events in different ways; specifically, they have different expectations and provide fewer operational supports for a third-party event compared to a volunteer-led event, and more explicit written expectations for a large, multi-day festival planned by a committee than a festival led by a not-for-profit organization.

Because of the longstanding nature of the partnership, City staff and leaders from the event organizations alike commented on the high degree of trust and reciprocity that exists between them. As the leader of Festival C shared:

I pretty much do everything they say and when they say it and they like that...if I have questions, they're usually really quick to get back to me. There's a lot of positives on both sides (Festival C).

The leader of Festival A described the evolution in how her organization now works with the City, noting that the number of meetings and connections between the two event partners became less frequent over time. She shared:

Over the years... we used to meet, you know, every month to talk about the event. Now, it's a few e-mails back and forth because after [so many] years, we have a pretty good working relationship...It doesn't take as much effort as it did earlier...as far as managing the relationship, they know that I'll do a good job, and I know that they're supportive. So, it works both ways (Festival A).

City staff described how these longstanding interorganizational relationships come to life from year to year. According to the City's special events coordinator:

I don't go into a lot of detail with them because I don't feel that we need to...I share [my information] and we just move on. I don't ask her what she is doing, and I just want her

to know what we're gonna be doing, and if they have any challenges, then they can come and see us, and we can talk about it.... we understand where each other are [sic] coming from.... I don't need to know what her budget is. I don't need to know any of that. I just need to know from a City standpoint that everything's covered. I don't have to touch base with her, and she will e-mail whenever she needs anything (City special events coordinator).

Overall, prior to the pandemic, City staff and leaders from these longstanding festivals generally reported they had positive interorganizational relationships. Some of the community-focused festival and event stakeholders shared that they had also established positive interpersonal relationships that existed at the time of the pandemic. The benefit of working together with longstanding partners was that these relationships were established prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

This section described the types of events taking place in Kitchener prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It offered an overview of the various City departments engaged in special events and neighbourhood events. It established the types of interorganizational relationships that the City maintains with its not-for-profit, for-profit, and grassroots organizations that deliver events for residents within this community-focused festival and event ecosystem. The next chapter will outline the key findings of the study as they relate to the following four research questions:

1. How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?
3. What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?
4. What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?

4. FINDINGS

As described in the case study description in the previous chapter, Kitchener boasts a dynamic community event ecosystem. Whether focused on culture, sport, music or food, these community-focused festivals and events intend to generate positive social outcomes for residents, with event tourism serving as only a small component of this activity. The description of the case in the previous chapter also highlights how this ecosystem is led by a diverse group of event organizations. Longstanding festivals include those delivered by a not-for-profit social service organization that hosts an annual community festival as a fundraiser for its year-round community services; a not-for-profit festival organization that hosts an annual, multi-day cultural festival across multiple venues; a not-for-profit sport organization that hosts a free community day for fans; and a food festival hosted by a for-profit organization. Complementing these festivals are newer events led by start-up and emergent event not-for-profit and for-profit organizations; as well as neighbourhood-based, resident-led events supported by local government through grants and staff support. As a policymaker, funder, and provider of its own festivals and community event programs and initiatives, the City of Kitchener plays a vital and central role in this community event ecosystem.

By seeking to understand the experiences of these stakeholders in Kitchener's community-focused event ecosystem, this case study explores how event stakeholders planned, adapted, and navigated their roles during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 global health pandemic. The study examines the factors shaping community event transformations during and after the crisis, including the vital role of interorganizational stakeholder relationships throughout the phases of the pandemic. It seeks to identify what supports the crisis recovery of events, event organizations, and community event ecosystems, and what factors can contribute to their crisis

recovery and resilience in the face of a future crisis or disruption of any circumstance or scale.

The case study of Kitchener's community-focused event ecosystem is explored through the following four research questions:

1. How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?
3. What changes emerged in the relationships between community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?
4. What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?

4.1 Outline

This chapter begins by describing what happened to community-focused events in Kitchener during the COVID-19 global pandemic over the period from March 2020 to April 2024, emphasizing a time of constant change and uncertainty that required continuous adaptation by community event leaders. It will proceed to describe how community festivals and events were being simultaneously disrupted by social and economic shifts. Some trends, such as changing demographics and declining voluntarism, existed pre-pandemic, but were exacerbated by the crisis. Others, including a dynamic socio-political landscape and changes in attendee behaviour and expectations were influenced by social and economic uncertainty during and following the crisis. Altogether, these factors were found to have significant consequences for community events and the community event ecosystem as a whole.

Having established the event and community context before, during, and following the COVID-19 global pandemic, the findings will go on to focus on the experiences of community event stakeholders. Specifically, it examines how these cumulative disruptions influenced the relationships among community event stakeholders, with attention to interorganizational collaboration, trust, reciprocity, sharing of information and resources, and goal alignment. Interpersonal relationships, values and leadership are also discussed. These findings inform the final section, which outlines factors contributing to event crisis recovery and resilience as they pertain to event management, event strategies and partnerships, and the community event ecosystem strategy. Throughout the presentation of these findings, the unique role of the City of Kitchener is highlighted, including attention to intraorganizational relationships among local government stakeholders that were evolving throughout the pandemic. As the City prepares to develop its first ever special events strategic plan, the findings conclude by identifying factors and approaches to ensure that its event ecosystem can be resilient in the face of a future crisis or disruption. The following section will address research question one: *How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

4.2 Adapting, Pivoting and Surviving: Community-focused Festivals and Events in Kitchener During a Crisis

The COVID-19 global pandemic was not a homogeneous time for event organizations. When COVID-19 restrictions were initially introduced in March 2020, the world did not expect to have a sustained lockdown. Kitchener event organizations were well into their planning processes for the 2020 festival and event season. At first, they had no reason to believe their events would not take place as normal. As the weeks progressed, they began to discuss “what if” scenarios should

their events not continue. By May, the first festival decided to cancel. Other event organizations followed suit. But it was not as simple as making a back-up plan and sticking to it. Various public health guidelines emerged, and guidance about what was possible, and not possible, and under what circumstances for attendees and event delivery continued to shift—these concerns remained uncertain for more than two years.

Event stakeholders recalled this time period, especially the first cycle of pandemic events as “definitely a difficult time” (City special events coordinator). Clearly, this period was characterized by unprecedented disruption for event leaders, and they remained unprepared for the magnitude of what was unfolding—not just for their specific festival or event, but for the entire community ecosystem of events in Kitchener. Event leaders described a time of improvising as they went along. According to the event leader from Festival A, “All of us were fumbling...no one knew what to do.” This time was also active, whereby event leaders were constantly problem solving. An event leader from Festival B recalled: “We really had to think on our feet and shift.” Overall, event leaders described a time that was hard and uncertain, and they did the best they could under such unique circumstances. Said one City administrator: “We were all just trying to figure it out.”

Just as the timeframe of the pandemic was not homogeneous, each event and the event host organization were different. Though Kitchener events were categorized in four ways (see Table 2), diversity existed across events within and between each category. Factors to keep in mind in the presentation of the findings include the nature of the events themselves (including time of year; whether there was an outdoor or indoor venue or both; number of attendees); organizational capacity (such as staffing and volunteers); the objectives and funding model for the event and the event organization (whether for-profit or not-for-profit); and, where applicable,

the nature and duration of the existing relationship between the community-focused event or festival organization and local government prior to the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a variety of responses by the leaders of community-focused event organizations. To understand these experiences, the following section will first describe how events were delivered throughout the pandemic, starting with year one (2020-2021), and then describing any shifts in event formats from year one to year two (2021-2022). Finally, the return to in-person festivals and events is described, from 2023 through to the 2024 summer festival season.

4.2.1 Year one

There were several common ways existing Kitchener festivals pivoted delivery in the first year of the pandemic, including (a) online format; (b) drive through format; (c) mobile format; and (d) an “event-in-a-box” format, with some festivals adopting more than one of these formats in the first year of the pandemic. However, some event organizations decided not to move to an alternative event format at all, and simply did not host their event at all in year one due to an abundance of caution or unique circumstances related to their event. For those that proceeded, the following section outlines these varied pandemic experiences.

Wherever possible, event organizations used these formats to prioritize core festival elements of food and music. They also considered any other iconic or brand-related aspects of the in-person experience, and whether they could be adapted in some way. Several events pivoted to a virtual format and primarily used YouTube and Facebook platforms. In many cases, rather than a single online “replacement event,” some festivals produced a few smaller online events geared toward different audiences, such as family friendly music experiences or cooking

lessons. An exceptional example was a livestream kick off of Festival B. As its event leader recalled:

We tried to have some fun with that, just to give people a bit of an event and spectacle that they could tune into...And so that was really the focus: “How can we make these online events entertaining and engaging for people?” (Festival B).

Several examples of drive through events during the pandemic were used, replacing a concert, a parade, and a food festival. In the case of the food festival, the event leader described their event pivot:

You remember in 2020 everything was closed like restaurants, everything. So this gave people opportunities to come and get some [food]...basically it was a drive through restaurant, right (Festival C).

This approach was limited, however, because liquor laws at the time did not allow alcohol to be distributed, which was a key component of the in-person event, and a key revenue generator for the event host organization.

In contrast to drive-through events where residents came to a single location to pick up food or to hear a performance, mobile events during year one of the pandemic were a creative way to bring elements of the event safely to neighbourhoods throughout the community. One of the most popular experiences was the “floating Elvis” where the City’s Special Events team took an Elvis impersonator on a decorated float to neighbourhoods throughout the community:

We were trying to find a way to bring events to the community, versus the community coming to the core for events (City special events manager).

This mobile event format was seen as a remarkable success; one City policymaker described its impact on residents during a challenging time, saying:

You would get like people literally coming out of their houses and, you know, gathering on the street but safely spread apart and, you know, enjoying that and doing selfies. And you just saw how it kind of lifted spirits and that’s really what I think we were trying to do, because we recognized as a city, you know, for people’s mental health and well-being

and general positivity and so on, doing those kinds of things.... It was obviously a period of time where people had a need for that kind of stuff more than ever (City policymaker).

Based on the success of this mobile event, one of the City's festival partners approached them about ways to adopt this mobile approach for its own event. This example of pandemic information sharing between partners showcased how community-focused event organizations looked to learn from another. The City willingly shared its specific mobile routes to make sure the second festival was able to access all the different neighbourhoods. Several event stakeholders commented on the novelty of the mobile format, and how special it was to see the responses of residents.

During this time, some cultural festivals tried to replace the iconic elements of their annual event by taking food, costume, or other event elements to the people in a different format: an "event in a box." In this format, the event organizer collaborated with volunteers and sometimes partners to assemble a bag or box of food items or coupons from local businesses for related items that could be delivered to or picked up by residents. However, even the process to assemble these kits was impacted by public health guidelines, resulting in a great deal of effort. As the City's special events coordinator described:

There's a lot of scheduling involved. There was a lot of coordination, and it was a lot of work for not a lot of return, I'll say unfortunately, yeah, like you're not getting the attendance that you would normally—the 10, 15, 20,000 people that you would get. We filled 300 boxes that took us days and days to do because of the pandemic restriction of being six feet apart. We didn't see any revenue at all for from our standpoint, we didn't see anything. We just wanted to break even (City special events coordinator).

This reflection suggests the return on investment for varied event formats during year one was still part of a learning process for event stakeholders throughout the community event ecosystem.

Finally, some event organizers felt their event format was simply not transferable to an online or alternative format during the pandemic. One sport-related event that engaged families

with children decided “For this event, it needs to be live...we just didn’t think it could work and have the same impact” (Festival D). For large City of Kitchener-led events that normally involved thousands of attendees, such as concerts in the public square, it simply was not feasible to find an alternative format for the event. Some event stakeholders were not-for-profit organizations that hosted events as fundraisers or “friend-raisers,” but their primary mandate was not hosting events. These event leaders, especially those who were more likely to work with large crowds or vulnerable populations in some way as part of their broader mandate, recalled how their organization considered risk during the pandemic. For both Festival A and Festival D, their organizations’ boards of directors decided that hosting the events in person could jeopardize the rest of the organization’s activities or could risk the reputation of the organization if it were to host a “superspreader” event in the community.

For those event organizations in a position to adopt one or more year one pandemic event formats, there were two key considerations required to make these pivots. Several community-focused event leaders noted that, in the first year, having the permission of any funders or sponsors to use already approved grant or sponsorship money to move to an online format was appreciated, and was one less stressor during an already uncertain time. Second, some event leaders reflected on the need to learn new technical skills. As a leader from Festival A remarked:

I can do a computer, but I certainly don’t know how to video.... I don’t know how to edit.... None of those are my skill set for an event, so it was a lot of learning and a lot of bumpy starts for some of it (Festival A).

Almost all of the event organizers highlighted that, in spite of making earnest efforts, the pandemic event experience in the first year simply “wasn’t the same” (Festival A). Some reported it felt “weird” and “strange” for drive-through events. The leader of Festival C reflected that “There was no energy...it was OK for the time, but, like, that was never a sustainable format

of that event. I mean, the public only had so much appetite to do those types of things, right?”

While event organizers acknowledged the event experiences were not generating the outcomes they may have wanted or were used to, they felt they had tried their best and that mattered, too.

As the leader of Festival C shared:

For us, the drive through was to show that we could do it, that in that pivot moment of changing plans and that just to make sure that everyone knew that we were still there, and we were still trying. And again, just you know, trying to entertain I think because everyone was at home (Festival C).

During year one of the pandemic, there were not yet opportunities for hybrid events, where festivals could offer a mixed model of in-person and online event elements. As the months passed, however, public health guidelines began to shift, and aspects of masking, sanitization and social distancing started to be introduced, bringing opportunities to incorporate some in-person experiences. The evolution of festival delivery in year two is outlined in the following section.

4.2.2 Year two

While many community-focused event stakeholders reported they had been optimistic about a return to their pre-pandemic “normal” event by 2021, COVID-19 continued to evolve based on new variants, new knowledge, and introduction of a vaccine. Alongside these positive changes, however, were frequently changing public health guidelines and, consequently, a great deal of unpredictability and uncertainty. There was a great deal of frustration shared by the event stakeholders as they reflected on these times, mostly seen as the inability to plan in the face of constant change. As the leader of Festival C recalled:

It was hard to be fully intentional with everything we were doing at that time because a lot of it was changing constantly. What could and couldn't be done? And you know, you're trying to plan ahead with a moving target, which was the really difficult part (Festival C).

Many recalled working hard, knowing they were always in jeopardy of having to pull back from the plan. As the City's special events coordinator remembered:

It was tough because, and this was just as we were just about to slowly kind of open up and then they shot us down again. And it's like, 'Oh, my God, we're gonna lose all of this'... So that's when you had to really shift very quickly (City special events coordinator).

Left with no choice but to carry on, following the first-year pandemic event experience, some of the event organizations slightly modified their second-year plans, while others made significant shifts in the second year. Part of these adjustments were due to learnings from the first year. At the same time, as the pandemic itself evolved, new public health guidance began to introduce two major considerations for community events. First, there were emergent opportunities for "hybrid" events, which included both in-person and online experiences. Second, in-person events that incorporated "physical distancing" became a potential solution, as event organizers found themselves calculating attendee and vendor capacity at venues and introducing and enforcing public health guidelines such as masking and sanitization. Both hybrid events and physical distancing would become core elements in the return to in-person events from year two and beyond.

Community-focused event organizations that had hosted events online in year one had mixed responses to this format in year two. The leader for Festival B acknowledged that, with experience and with more time to plan, they were able to add more components and more sophistication to their online event offerings. A leader from Festival A described how staying 100% online in the second year was an intentional risk mitigation strategy, saying:

We were very happy to just say no, we're going online...We can do another online year...It was better. It was safer. There was [sic] way too many people on staff that were, you know, afraid of being extra sick of people having seniors [fall ill]. It just wasn't worth it to anyone like it wasn't worth people's lives just so we could have an event and that's sort of how we looked at it at the time (Festival A).

In contrast, Festival B chose to scale back on its online events, noting “We just found that it was so much energy and effort into it with not as much, you know, payoff for everyone involved.”

The festival chose to focus on other formats, taking event elements into neighbourhoods, which had proven to be very well received by local residents in year one of the pandemic.

Festival E leaned into a hybrid approach by “gamifying” its event; using an online competition with tasks to be completed “in real life,” small teams (or “social bubbles” that were permitted and encouraged at the time) could earn points by completing in-person activities and riddles related to local businesses, and compete with other teams on a live, online leaderboard.

According to its event leader:

It was like a really multi-faceted wild event that the community pulled together in, like, a time of need in the cold, dark February month...People could play from home as well and they could, like, really engage with it online (Festival E).

By summer 2021, Festival C hosted a smaller version of its in-person event, noting “We had half the crowd that we normally would have just because, you know, some people still didn’t want to go out. And then... you know, the energy wasn’t quite the same.”

Event organizers who were transitioning into physically distanced in-person events noted the additional work and intentionality required. This effort included having attendance “clickers” and ensuring that attendees and vendors were at least six feet apart. Because singing was not encouraged during this time due to public health guidelines, efforts were required to present taped entertainment or to be creative, such as having a drone fly over top of a backyard concert. Overall, the outdoors became an important asset to an event. Some event leaders were able to leverage the outdoors as a key element of small or pop-up events. As the leader of Festival F recalled:

In late 2021 and into early 2022, we were popping up these new exciting events at a time when people have been locked inside their homes isolated for, you know, on and off for a long period of time, obviously experiencing, you know, maybe fear or maybe anxiety, you know, a lot of pieces around being at a public and masking and vaccines and all of this stuff. So, we entered the space at a time when people were just itching to get out (Festival F).

The City of Kitchener's Special Events team reported being intentional about using the outdoors as an asset for events in year two. Movie nights or enchanted forest experiences naturally offered safer outdoor and physically distanced environments. Further, the City was intentionally activating outside of the downtown core. Staff were more deliberate about using neighbourhood spaces such as smaller community parks for these activities. One other notable example about the strategic use of outdoor space during this time was that Festival B hosted an event at the local airport, which provided ample space for both social distancing and creativity of event delivery, although it was not widely open to the public.

During both years of the pandemic event experience, community-focused event leaders were reimagining how to maintain the role that food played for their festival, through online cooking lessons, festival foods available in a drive-through format or accessing festival-themed foods or ingredients in a boxed format to pick up and enjoy at home. Festival B described trying to engage local business partners to make coupons available in the boxes or online experiences. Several festivals reported their food-related vendors and partners were challenged with capacity and they did not have the operational resources (including volunteers and kitchen facilities) to mass produce foods for take-out. This consideration of varied organizational capacity, especially amongst festivals that collaborate with volunteer-led cultural groups, is a theme that will be discussed in further detail below. The next section will shift attention to the impact of crisis on the event stakeholders and some of the factors that were influencing event leaders and organizations during this time.

4.2.2.1 Difficult, murky and confusing times: The impact of a crisis on community-focused event stakeholders

Constantly shifting policy directions about masking, physical distancing, and event capacity was taking its toll on event leaders, who regularly reported frustration with ongoing uncertainty. As the City's special events coordinator noted, "This was a very difficult time." The leader of Festival F described the "Very murky, very confusing" process of event planning during this time, saying:

It was very hard to know if you were doing the right thing and because obviously cancelling events comes with a whole other, you know, ripple effect of impacts depending on the size and scale and scope of the event.... there was a lot of anxiety around, like, you had to have a lot of contingency plans. What if the province, you know, comes down three days before and says, you know, everything closed or mandatory masking, or they drop capacity? There were so many variables, and you didn't know what direction it would go. It was just very confusing and at times hard to make decisions and you never really knew if you were making the right decisions (Festival F).

Specifically, this continued frustration and uncertainty had consequences for organizational capacity, volunteer engagement, and interactions with event partners, as outlined below.

Several community-focused event leaders emphasized how the crisis heightened existing vulnerabilities for their organization and for their partners. These included cash flow, declines in volunteers, and changes in the capacity of grassroots partner organizations such as vendors and artisans. A City administrator reflected on overall trends in community events during the pandemic, and observed:

I think what it's done is it's exposed weaknesses in the groups that are looking potentially for support.... where there have been bad business practices, or maybe not completely efficient business practices, those are being pointed to now. Some groups are saying it's a lack of sponsorship or other areas, but ultimately it comes down to cash flow....and so that cash flow line stopped flowing [during the pandemic] So, whether it's cash flow or resource flow that the pandemic really just created this kind of set timeline, and everyone can look at and like, yeah, this is this was the disruptor (City administrator).

The leader of Festival C called increased event costs and a decline in volunteers a “double whammy” that required some of their partners in the event community to make tough decisions about the return on their finite resources. Festival organizations that collaborated with volunteer-led partners (typically cultural organizations or neighbourhood associations) were especially impacted by limits on in-person gatherings during this time; these smaller partner organizations were now unable to come together to prepare food, to practice music and dance, or to fundraise. Festival A, for example, reported there was a “Massive decline” (in the number of these cultural partners), and shared, “We lost quite a few that didn’t survive the pandemic.”

Many community-focused event and festival leaders identified the majority of their organization’s volunteers participated in some physical aspect of event execution. When public health guidelines prohibited in-person events, volunteer engagement opportunities ceased to exist. While community-focused event leaders discussed the integral role of volunteers to their event or festival until that time, they all acknowledged that volunteer engagement was a lower priority for their organization, especially during the early part of the pandemic, given the great upheaval to their events, overall. Festival A’s leader recalled that, at the onset of the pandemic one or two volunteers reached out to ask if the event needed help, but the organization’s relationship with event volunteers was completely put on hold. Even when events moved online, far fewer opportunities were available to engage volunteers; often, event staff performed tasks because it was simpler than having volunteers do them. Also, given so much new learning and uncertainty, engaging volunteers generally felt like extra work at this time. An exception was when a Festival B volunteer committee that typically led the planning of an in-person celebration each year was able to successfully transition to moving the event online. As the leader from this event organization described:

That committee was probably our most active, that stayed together as a committee and continued in some sense of normalcy because they were still able to, to plan it out and then do an online event. So that was awesome for them to see, but it wasn't the same for the rest of our volunteer groups (Festival B).

For the most part, however, several event leaders reflected they did not want to create “meaningless opportunities” to engage volunteers just for the sake of engaging them, while others also noted they were concerned for everyone’s safety and well-being (Festival D). As the leader of Festival B recalled:

We tried to think about what we could do for volunteers, but there really wasn't a lot of opportunities for us to provide the same experiences that we were able to do in the past... we just didn't want to try and cobble stuff together that wasn't actually going to be a worthwhile experience for a volunteer or wasn't going to keep them safe (Festival B).

Overall, until events began to resume in person, community-focused event organizations understood that there were limited ways to engage with their volunteers.

At the outset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, event leaders would never have anticipated two full years of disruptions to their festivals and events. The following section will discuss how community-focused event leaders responded to the gradual lifting of public health guidelines, as they collectively sought to “return to normal.”

4.2.3 Returning to “normal” events (2022, 2023)

Following the second full year of the pandemic, and a transition to more in-person socially distanced and hybrid event experiences, public health restrictions were lifted, and event organizations were now left to consider the return to “normal” events (where “normal” was considered to be “pre-pandemic” format). Several community-focused event leaders discussed a phased-in approach for 2022; for example, in 2022, most events reported using fewer vendors, fewer volunteers and making more adjustments to programming (if applicable). Community-focused event stakeholders recalled being unsure what to expect in terms of attendance and

attendee behaviour. Those with food or artisan vendors warned their vendors they were not sure what sales would be like.

Most festivals reported their attendance returned quite quickly to pre-pandemic rates across these two years (noting that weather for such outdoor festivals is always an unpredictable variable that will influence attendance). The leader for Festival A enthusiastically recalled:

We were blown away with how many people came out and how many people were just happy to be there. I mean, the weather was gorgeous. We had a wonderful weekend. Everybody was so thrilled. I mean, we were the kickoff festival and that's what the city called us was the kickoff to summer post COVID. And it was like everybody came out. Everybody was just there. They were dancing on lawns (Festival A).

Some event organizations introduced shifts from their pre-pandemic format. For example, in 2022 Festival A reduced its hours, choosing to end the event earlier. The following year, even though space restrictions were reduced, and the number of vendors increased to pre-pandemic levels, Festival A chose to maintain its reduced festival hours to better reflect its reduced staff and volunteer capacity. Throughout the return to these in-person festivals, event leaders prioritized the health and safety of their staff, volunteers, and attendees; as the event leader for Festival A highlighted, "Nobody got sick that we knew, so that was really all that mattered."

The event leader of Festival F characterized a distinct shift between 2022 and 2023, moving from an enthusiastic return to events, but quickly to an over-saturated space for small events and markets, in particular. They shared:

Into 2022 and probably throughout 2022, to be honest, I think that momentum really like stuck throughout the entire year. People were still really excited to get out. Vendors were excited to go to markets and sell their products. They were really eager to get in front of customers. There was just, like, really, really, really strong engagement... [It] was almost this like whiplash because we hadn't had events in so long. All of a sudden, like, everybody wants to run an event and, particularly in 2023, there was just a wild oversaturation of events and markets.... Every weekend there were, like, five community markets that you could choose from and as a potential, you know, attendee or consumer in some capacity, I found it very overwhelming (Festival F).

This festival leader believed that having more events happening on the same days spread attendance out too thin and led to increased competition for vendors.

During this time, there were unique dynamics for festival and event organizations engaging with past and prospective sponsors. While event sponsorships generally have a “lifecycle” and changes in sponsors are not isolated to the pandemic experience alone, community-focused event and festival leaders reported a great deal of uncertainty working with both new and sponsors during the early days of the pandemic. An event leader with Festival B described the pandemic time as being “really tough,” recalling:

A lot of sponsors, obviously they want their name in front of people... They want that connection with that experience of the festival and that good feeling. And so when you don't have that in person feel right, it was “OK, who wants to sponsor our online virtual event?” How can we attract sponsors to that? ...It was an unknown.... We couldn't say “this is how many people are gonna watch the stream. This is how many eyeballs you're gonna get,” right? So that was the real challenge going from something we knew so well. “Here are your benefits as a sponsor to the festival. You get this, this and this and this and this and this” is how we know this is the brand recognition you get at the festival... but we didn't have any information for our sponsors for during the pandemic (Festival B).

Understandably, corporate sponsors were going through an uncertain time, as well, and many continue to go through instability post-pandemic with layoffs and other economic uncertainties. This uncertainty was happening at the same time as the emergence of returning to in-person events, leading to a challenging time for both for-profit and not-for-profit event organizations alike. As the leader of Festival C recalled:

We had a very hard time finding sponsors because a lot of the companies were just pulling everything back right... the landscape was so uncertain, no one knew what the future was gonna hold... You couldn't get them to commit to dollars because they didn't know if they're to have the revenue six months from now or a year from now... [they were] all trying to just survive their own businesses, which is understandable (Festival C).

In addition to sponsors being more cautious, some newer event organizations may have been at a disadvantage during this time of sponsor instability. Festival E, for example, was working to

establish new sponsor relationships, and discussed challenges with trust and reliability when negotiating with new sponsors. This leader reflected:

Money is always a thing... It's hard. It's confusing. It's constantly changing... I think the more scarce things are after the pandemic, the more [sponsors] are holding back and kind of risk averse... I want to believe everything and it's so hard because you're, like, until it's there it's not real cause a lot of sponsors have been like, "Yeah, we're in, yeah, \$10,000." And then they disappear and leave us hanging for thousands of dollars. So, God, just tiring, it's very hard and it's not sustainable (Festival E).

The impact of sponsorship is further discussed in a later section as a concern for festival and event organizations coming out of the crisis.

Finally, during the return to in-person events, event leaders were uncertain about volunteer engagement. Some reported they quickly realized they would return to regular volunteer capacity (i.e., Festival D), while others (i.e., Festival A) identified shifts in their volunteer engagement post-pandemic. Volunteer engagement will also be discussed in further detail related to the remaining research questions. In the next section, the role of local government during the crisis is discussed.

4.2.4 Enabling community-focused event stakeholders in the face of unprecedented disruption: The role of local government during the pandemic

City staff in various departments interacted with community and neighbourhood-based festivals and events, and with other local government stakeholders, in several ways throughout the pandemic. As a host for a number of City-led festivals and events, City special events managers were adjusting the planning and delivery of their own events. At the same time, the City was actively consulting with its partner festivals, and with residents and neighbourhood organizations looking to host neighbourhood-based activities. Finally, it had oversight for creating and maintaining the well-being of its residents, and community-based events and initiatives were part of that objective. Overall, the City's primary interactions with stakeholders in the community

event ecosystem during this time were to (a) offer flexibility and support to community event organizations; (b) provide guidance and direction based on public health policies; and (c) continue to ensure that residents had opportunities for safe social engagement, wherever possible and appropriate. These supports and interactions positioned the City as an enabler of community events during a time of great uncertainty. Examples of these types of interactions are outlined below.

4.2.4.1 Offering flexibility and support for community event stakeholders

There were a number of ways the City allowed for flexibility in its interactions with event stakeholders. Given that the City had a financial relationship with many of its event partners, they determined that festival grants could be applied to new pandemic formats, such as online or drive through events in year one. City staff also had to collaborate differently with their partners, and in some cases work differently with other City departments, due to new event formats. In the case of parking lot and drive-through events, the City's special events coordinator described:

Generally [our Special Events department] is not part of [that event], but in this situation it was because it became more of a special event in a parking lot that we didn't have to close the road down. But we had to bring in a lot of police and officers because we were right off the highway... it was an interesting, interesting concept and we had to do registration for all the cars because all the cars had to be so far apart (City special events coordinator).

City staff were concerned for their partners in the overall community event ecosystem, especially not-for-profit groups. The City's special events coordinator, who managed a number of the on-the-ground relationships with event organizations, remembered: "We tried to keep them as engaged as possible, so we would try to meet with them more [at the beginning of the pandemic]." Likewise, City neighbourhood staff recalled that, when it came to collaborations with resident groups that led events in neighbourhoods, the City maintained realistic expectations for what residents had the capacity to deliver during this time. This approach was especially

salient given that community centres were physically closed in the early days of the pandemic. As a City neighbourhood manager remembered: “The opportunity for [residents] to deliver programming and events the way they were skilled at doing was no longer there.”

4.2.4.2 Providing guidance and direction based on public health policies

One of the unique roles of the City throughout the pandemic—and especially during the precarious period of returning (or trying to return) to in-person events—was managing expectations of residents and event partners who were eager to return to normal. City staff remembered that many of their event stakeholders expected that any outdoor event was “safe,” and these event stakeholders were frustrated when the City had to convey that it was “not so simple.” The City’s special events coordinator recalled:

That was never a pleasant conversation... basically because the groups would say “Can we do something?” [and we would say] “No, no, you can’t. Yeah, bad news” (City special events coordinator).

City staff were left to function as a go-between these frustrated event stakeholders and the local public health authorities, conveying both guidance and direction about the safety and viability (or not) of the proposed events. This dynamic was most pronounced for City neighbourhood staff engaged with residents and grassroots community groups. These City staff described the difficult balancing act of having to communicate and uphold policies related to in-person gatherings, while not stifling the enthusiasm of residents who were looking to create ways to connect with others outdoors during the pandemic. The following example shared by a City neighbourhood manager highlighted this tension:

They were thinking creatively, like, “Well, if we have a road hockey tournament outside, that should be OK”... And it was difficult because they weren’t able to do that. And then there was frustration. Sometimes people didn’t understand, you know, all the public health regulations and why they couldn’t. That was tough, yeah... They didn’t see it as a big deal necessarily. “We’re outside. What’s the big deal?” But we still have to enforce those policies (City neighbourhood manager).

As the pandemic persisted, City staff eventually saw residents' enthusiasm for planning neighbourhood-based events wane; as a City neighbourhood manager recalled:

I think people were getting burnt out, right... they just thought, "OK, well, maybe we can try again in a couple months," and then each time there were still these restrictions in place and... they weren't able to do it in the way maybe they wanted to do it (City neighbourhood manager).

Another City neighbourhood manager recalled, "We had gone through so many open up and shut down and open up and shut down again that people's enthusiasm for trying to do something [was gone]." Overall, Special Events and Neighbourhood and Volunteer Engagement staff alike recalled that while their role to provide guidance and direction based on public health policies was appropriate, it put them in a difficult position and often caused tension with partners. These challenging impacts on the relationships between event stakeholders are discussed in greater detail in a later section.

4.2.4.3 Ensuring that residents had opportunities for safe social engagement

City event staff noted they were also managing an obligation to communicate to the public about what was safe and what was not during this time. It was notable that these rules and regulations were established by a higher level of government beyond the City's influence, yet they were expected to communicate and manage these expectations at the local level. As the City's special events coordinator recalled:

And so that's where we just tried to make sure we could provide the right messaging to the public, as well. And letting the public know we were doing everything in line with what the province was asking to keep everyone safe and... really trying to push that message as well (City special events coordinator).

In addition to this communication responsibility, the City was examining what to do with its own City-led events, and also how to support residents and neighbourhoods. Staff whose primary mandate was to support community centres and neighbourhood associations and related

organizations recalled this was a surprisingly busy time for engaging with residents. As one City neighbourhood manager recalled:

It's funny because, in the pandemic, my team was quite concerned about our ability to do our jobs because everything's shut down and a lot of our work is neighbourhood-based gatherings and stuff like that. But we actually had our two busiest years in the pandemic, not in the sense of doing the actual events, but we have the two busiest years of receiving applications and funding projects. Now that meant we had to defer things. We would get an application for like a road hockey tournament and we would approve that, but then it wouldn't happen until it was safe to do so. People were still thinking and trying to find ways to do that, even though they couldn't (City neighbourhood manager).

Finally, as guidelines in support of outdoor events became more viable, there were also efforts by the City to activate its placemaking space on Gaukel Street. Two years prior to the pandemic, the City had initiated this pedestrian-only street, intended to advance passive placemaking and beautification, programming and infrastructure driven by the community's artists, small business, and local leaders. According to a City administrator, during the pandemic, there was an increased interest from community groups wanting to use this outdoor space, including an increased number of newcomer and cultural groups. This shift in engagement from new partners, especially grassroots groups and organizations, would foreshadow broader contextual factors that were playing out as the community was emerging from the pandemic. The community event landscape was impacted by a socio-political climate characterized by increased social apathy, economic disparity, and reduced social engagement. Post-pandemic inflationary pressures were not only increasing event costs, but also shifting the behaviours and expectations of event attendees. Finally, the capacity of volunteers, including the leadership capacity of resident-led organizations, was sharply reduced coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. These compounding contextual factors are discussed in the next section, which responds to research question two: *What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?*

4.3 Factors that Influenced Events and Event Stakeholders During COVID-19

Community-focused event stakeholders discussed several factors—both internal and external to their event organization—that were impacting their event before, during, and after the pandemic. As outlined in Table 5, these factors included: (a) increased cultural diversity; (b) a dynamic socio-political landscape; (c) changes in event attendee demographics, behaviours and expectations; (d) inflationary pressures that created new costs to deliver events; and (e) changes in resident capacity and voluntarism that were exacerbated by the pandemic.

Table 5: Factors influencing community-focused events and event stakeholders during and following the COVID-19 pandemic

Increased cultural diversity.
A dynamic socio-political landscape, leading to increased social apathy, economic disparity, and reduced social engagement.
Changes in event attendee demographics, behaviors, and expectations.
Inflationary pressures that created new costs to deliver events.
Changes in resident capacity and voluntarism.

Some of these contextual factors, such as increased cultural diversity and shifting volunteer trends, were already felt by event organizations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still other factors, such as the dynamic socio-political landscape and declining economic prosperity, may have had undercurrents prior to the pandemic, but were exacerbated by the crisis. Notably, these issues were not unique to Kitchener, but were factors unfolding in communities across North America and beyond. The following section highlights how, alongside the crisis of the pandemic, these additional factors had both immediate and longer-term impacts on community-focused festivals and events in Kitchener. It includes discussion of how event stakeholders adapted to meet the shifting social needs of residents during such a complex time.

4.3.1 The changing face of communities: Increased cultural diversity and community-focused festivals and events

According to the City, a more culturally diverse Kitchener led to new event partnership requests from cultural organizations. These inquiries, which started to emerge prior to the pandemic, were viewed by City staff as exciting new outreach and community development opportunities.

However, it was noted that the City would need to be equipped with different resources and strategies to respond most effectively to these requests. Specifically, City staff shared a need to have adequate spaces and facilities across the community, and to have a holistic view of recognizing cultural holidays and traditions through their festivals and events strategy. As one City neighbourhood manager described:

We are experiencing a ton of pressure from so many cultural groups for physical space. I don't mean pressure in a negative way... [rather] pressure to accommodate different cultural festivals and events and celebrations, and where we're struggling with is how we do that equitably. Because, like we could have had Diwali events at every 14 community centres. But that doesn't make sense for us to do that, and we actually don't have the financial resources to support that (City neighbourhood manager).

Another City neighbourhood manager agreed:

We do not have the physical space or the financial resources to support all of the cultural requests we are getting, and the city needs to address it holistically (City neighbourhood manager).

Aside from these pragmatic considerations, overall, City staff were eager to engage in new processes and discussions to ensure equity, fairness, and representation in community-focused festivals and events. As the City's special events manager reflected:

I don't know if it has to do with COVID, to be honest. I think it has to do more with the other things... Black Lives Matter. The residential schools. Racism. That's to me what the issue is, right? And that if people are not seeing themselves in city run events, that could be a problem.... So, I don't know, there's [we need] a bit more compassion and care and making sure that we people see themselves in the city because it's changing, the demographics are changing. And you know the old events aren't gonna cut it anymore. We're gonna need to think of different ways to do it (City special events manager).

In addition to introducing new events that were more representative of Kitchener today, the City also discussed ways to build capacity amongst grassroots organizations and resident-led neighbourhood associations representative of these changing demographics. City staff cited several tangible initiatives in support of this desired expansion. First, they aimed to make processes clearer and more transparent so that grassroots organizations could better understand and access resources such as City-owned venues and City community grants. Second, the City developed intentional relationships at the neighbourhood level, seeking to build transparency and trust between neighbourhood stakeholders and local government. A City neighbourhood manager contemplated:

How can we work with those folks differently? Maybe it means bringing something back to a community centre so that those residents are feeling trust with the municipality that their needs are being looked after (City neighbourhood manager).

It was clear the City was alert to the changing dynamics, and both the risks and opportunities related to responding to these demographic changes. At the time of data collection, the City was introducing a new community-wide event to celebrate the Black diaspora in the region. City staff were enthusiastic about how they would be able to learn from this example and hoped that this new venture would positively influence future event partnership discussions for the community.

4.3.2 Social movements, unrest, and a dynamic socio-political landscape

An unprecedented global health pandemic was not the only major influence on community events during this time. Several North American social movements that emerged during the pandemic included Black Lives Matter, Every Child Matters efforts highlighting residential schools in Canada, and the Freedom Convoy movement. Community-focused event stakeholders described two ways that this socio-political context impacted their events: (a) negativity and the

need for increased event security, and (b) an increased interest in corporate engagement for events with connections to cultural diversity.

Several community-focused event and festival leaders commented on the increased polarization that emerged during the pandemic, noting increased conflict, division and negativity that impacted their event and the community as a whole. According to the leader of Festival A:

The world got a little mean over COVID...there was that “pull together” and then there was that “pull apart,” and that intersected everything, including our event.... So, it wasn’t necessarily targeted at us, I don’t know, it was just people lashing out at anything. So, we did get more negativity.... Our volunteers get yelled at more, our staff gets yelled at more. We had threats of, you know, the truck driver rally, you know, coming through (Festival A).

As a result, the leader of Festival A reported a “huge shift” in their event security as their organization returned to an in-person event; she shared that the organization expected this to become a long-term change. She went on to describe how on-site event roles previously provided by volunteers, such as parking lot attendant, were now performed by paid police officers:

We have now had to hire police officers because people [were] trying to run our volunteers down or screaming and yelling at 15-year-old kids and you know that kind of stuff just—we just couldn’t abide by it and it was not pretty, like it wasn’t present before COVID, and it’s come since (Festival A).

The impact of more negativity at or surrounding post-pandemic events is a real consideration for policymakers, as well. The City reflects on local government’s need to balance the risks for festival safety with the risk of eliminating the benefits that come from community events altogether. As a City policymaker shared:

I really think it’s important that we don’t allow what, in the whole scheme of things, is a small amount of risk, from taking away from all of the good and positivity that can happen. You obviously need to be proactive. You need to have plans in place. You need to make sure you have appropriate, you know, security in place and deal with things as best as you can. But quite frankly, if we let the bad guys win by just stopping doing [them], ... it would be a shame.... The risk of not doing these things is far greater than the risk associated with doing them for the community, in my view (City policymaker).

Certainly, this tension requires careful consideration by all community-focused festival and event stakeholders in their own ways going forward. This consideration includes local police, a stakeholder organization that was not included in this study.

Another consequence of the dynamic post-pandemic sociopolitical landscape felt by some community-focused event organizations was a heightened interest in corporate voluntarism for events related to cultural diversity and inclusion. The leader of a longstanding community cultural festival, Festival A, described a significant increase in offers for corporate voluntarism since the pandemic, attributing it to Black Lives Matter. She shared:

[Companies want to be involved] so they can say, “Hey, look, we sent 30 people to move tables on Friday as a group. Look at us all on our T-shirts and we spend a lot of time taking photos [for our corporate social media]”.... It’s not necessarily a bad thing. It still brings people, it still makes people aware, but yes, definitely more of that that “Hey, how can we be a part of your festival? We wanna be more culturally diverse” (Festival A).

In addition to socio-political and demographic shifts, as communities emerged from the pandemic, event stakeholders in Kitchener were alert to trends in reduced social engagement and increased social apathy. Thanks to almost two years of public health restrictions limiting social gatherings, an event sponsor described how the pandemic heightened a greater “Non-civic participation, where we watch Netflix, stay inside, get Skip The Dishes and work from home.” With the post-pandemic trend toward reduced social engagement, community-focused event stakeholders reported changes in the behaviour of community event attendees. This trend, and what it meant for community-focused event organizations, is discussed below.

4.3.3 Not necessarily “back to normal”: Changes in festival and event attendee behaviour and expectations

The duration and unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 global pandemic made it impossible for Kitchener event leaders to make predictions about their events. By 2024, there was more

routine to the post-pandemic event planning and execution, yet community-focused event leaders agreed that things were not exactly the same as they once were. Among the greatest changes they observed were related to post-pandemic event attendance, attendee behaviour, and attendee expectations. These are discussed in further detail below.

Several community-focused event leaders reported being pleased by how quickly attendance returned or even exceeded pre-pandemic levels. All event organizers reported that attendance for their events recovered quickly, or even very quickly, following the pandemic. As the City's special events coordinator noted:

So, starting in 2022...we were thinking it was going to start slowly. It probably got to 60% already of capacity like from what we were, so 2023 we're definitely, probably even more over what we were from 2019 for capacity (City special events coordinator).

Festival F, however, observed a plateau from the immediate enthusiasm of returning to in-person to events; they noted that in 2023 they did not see nearly the "huge growth" they had seen in 2022, and suggested that as time passed, people were more likely to have returned to pre-pandemic rates of travel outside of the community. Aside from attendance itself, many event leaders commented on two key shifts when it came to who was attending their events since the return from the pandemic: (a) changing demographics at their events; and (b) changing behaviours of event attendees.

Although it may have varied by event, community-focused event leaders speculated about the changing demographics at Kitchener events. Noting that it was "definitely different," the City's special events coordinator pointed to economic development in the downtown, including more residential condominiums and the light rail transit system in the community. Several event stakeholders noted that, anecdotally, their events saw even greater local participation post-pandemic, compared to those coming from a short distance outside of the

region. However, the greatest observation of the event organizers was an increased cultural diversity of event attendees, attributing this shift not to the pandemic, but to the continued cultural demographic shifts of the community overall that were described earlier. Many community-focused event leaders found this change to be a positive shift, calling it “fantastic” (Festival D) and “wonderful” (Festival A).

In contrast to the positive shift in attendee cultural representation, several event stakeholders remarked on the negative impacts of the economic downturn on post-pandemic event and festival attendee behaviours. Most of these event stakeholders observed that, while there was enthusiasm to attend the festival, attendees were less willing to spend money when they got there. A leader for Festival B reflected:

I feel like people are coming out from under a rock more recently. Like, you know... there are still people that are hesitant about being out in public around people, but I feel like... they're fewer and fewer now. And I think that there's a real appetite. People wanna get out. They wanna do stuff, but they wanna do it for free (Festival B).

The City's special events coordinator echoed this observation, saying, “People are coming out more, they're just not necessarily spending more.” Some event organizers observed this reduction in attendee spending was most apparent for certain components of their festival; noting that attendees especially enjoyed free stage entertainment but were not spending the same way on alcohol or crafts as they had before the pandemic. A leader from Festival A suggested that, during the pandemic, people were at home, and behaviours like online shopping or making crafts were more prevalent; she shared:

We are finding that people are far more interested right now in being entertained than shopping. Our marketplace is just nowhere near as attended, but our stage... people are just crazy for the stage and for the food (Festival A).

The leader of Festival C, a food and beverage festival, noted that alcohol sales across their event, and anecdotally across other festivals in the community, were “significantly” and “drastically”

lower than before the pandemic. He noted that while alcohol was not the focal point of their event, it did represent a big revenue component, leaving them to try to reduce expenses in other ways to respond to this shift. Likewise, the leader of Festival B reflected:

We know that free events bring people out and bring community together, and we really want to do that, but we have to find a way to cover costs so that we can continue to do those things (Festival B).

While attendee behaviour suggested their pandemic experience did not deter most residents from attending community events post-pandemic, the shift in reduced attendee spending at events, in combination with increased costs and reduced voluntarism, had a negative impact for local community-focused event and festival organizations. The next section further explores the overall cost and financial sustainability of events post-pandemic, and the response of event organizations.

4.3.4 The cost of post-pandemic community events

Three key factors negatively impacted the cost of post-pandemic community events. As outlined above, event attendees were reported to be less likely to spend money on alcohol and non-food vendors, meaning reduced revenue. Second, the costs of event suppliers (such as audio-visual production, rentals, and staging) increased significantly. And, finally, corporations re-evaluated their local sponsorships and return on investment of supporting local events. Several event leaders described how the financial viability of their festival was being jeopardized by a significant rise in event-related costs upon the return from the pandemic. Festival C described how the cost of events was “skyrocketing:”

Every supplier went up in 2021 and then went up again in 2022. Every supplier was higher and then, in 2023, there were the same. I think the suppliers realized they probably hit a plateau of what they can charge. [But since the pandemic] my expenses have gone up probably 30-40, maybe 50% higher than they were before COVID...everything from the porta potties and the fencing and the tables and chairs.... After COVID, I called the supplier for our stage and they're no longer in business because they didn't survive

COVID. So now there's fewer companies providing that service and the companies that are there are busier, one, and two, can charge more and get away with it because there's nowhere [else] to go. So, every cost of the event has gone up drastically, but our revenue hasn't gone up that much because I can't all of a sudden start charging the consumer 40% more, 50% more (Festival C).

As a result, event leaders reported the need to review all costs and explore ways to make cuts post-pandemic; reviewing suppliers was a frequently cited example. However, these changes were not without their own inherent risks. For example, when using a new, lower-cost partner, "If it doesn't work out, then it affects the whole operation" (Festival C). Costs related to insurance and on-site security costs were noted as expenses that continued to increase, but could not be compromised.

As noted earlier, while post-pandemic attendees were returning in the same or even higher numbers, they were willing to spend less at the festival. For free community-based events, revenue sources were limited, and could include VIP tickets (if available), food or beverage tickets (if available), as well as vendor fees, sponsorships, and grants. Two festivals (Festivals B and C) that included alcoholic beverage sales were seeing substantial declines post-pandemic. At the same time, for festivals that charged food, beverage or artisan vendors a fee to participate at their event (such as Festivals A and F), increasing their vendor fees too much could risk losing the vendor altogether.

Instead of raising vendor fees, community-focused festival and event organizations found they needed to turn to sponsors in new ways. For example, the leader of Festival A, a longstanding community festival, commented on how sponsorship was emerging as a more important revenue source for their event to remain viable and sustainable coming out of the pandemic, sharing: "We have taken more sponsors than we used to, but that is because things are far more expensive and there's just no other way" (Festival A). However, as noted earlier,

sponsorship was not exactly the same as it was prior to the crisis. Themes of sponsor hesitancy, changing relationship lifecycles, and the need for customized sponsor engagement mean that event organizers were navigating new challenges in securing and maintaining sponsorships. The leader of another newer event organization, Festival F, described that even existing sponsors stopped engaging with them for future events. She did not directly attribute this to the pandemic, but shared this perspective on the post-pandemic sponsorship landscape:

We'll have sponsors that, you know, will engage with us and we have a good relationship with them. And then when we reach out about future asks, [they ghost us]. I don't know if it's like a capacity thing and folks are, you know, just dropping off because they don't have time to get to all their emails, but that's something we've seen quite a bit of is previous partners that just are now unresponsive (Festival F).

Thus, sponsorship required more effort, and could be more frustrating and a greater concern for newer event organizations or those with limited organizational capacity or fewer established sponsor relationships than longstanding community-focused festival and event organizations.

Finally, festivals looked to grants as a revenue or cost-recovery mechanism. However, some festivals noted that provincial grant funding criteria, which prioritized event tourism, left community-based festivals excluded. Most festivals engaged in this study reported they drew less than 15% of their attendees from beyond the local region (noting that a tourist attendee was typically defined as a 40 kilometre or more distance to attend the event). According to the leader of Festival C:

What's missing is there's a whole bunch of events out there that offer great value to their communities that have no option, no opportunity for grants... And then what do those events do?... The interesting dynamic is that... at the same time, you know... cities are thinking about events as being an important way to engage their residents and to build that vibrant community, engage diverse communities, all of that (Festival C).

In a post-pandemic environment where rising costs, reduced attendee spending, and challenges with sponsorship are influencing the sustainability of community events, grant funding and other

government support may become increasingly important to ensure a vibrant event landscape in communities. Community-focused festival and event organizations that seek to secure new financial resources through grants may find themselves wanting or needing to leverage these opportunities as a way to collaborate with other community event stakeholders in ways that they had not done before the crisis. Festival B shared an example of receiving a small amount of grant money following the pandemic. It leveraged the funds and its relationships in the community-focused event ecosystem by approaching some of its partners, saying: “Hey, we’ve got some money. Can we, like, find something that we can all get around and leverage each other’s resources?” (Festival B). This led to a new collaborative festival season kick-off event in fall 2024 and demonstrated how some festival and event organizations were willing to think and act differently—acting with less competition and more collaboration—to survive. The next section describes another trend that is forcing festival and event organizations to strategize and respond in new ways: changing volunteer engagement.

4.3.5 We knew it was coming: How the pandemic exacerbated trends in volunteer engagement

Another major influence on post-pandemic event sustainability was reduced event voluntarism. Community-focused event leaders differentiated between “day of” event volunteers and leadership volunteers who were more engaged in planning and governance committees for the event. The leader of Festival F believed that event volunteer opportunities could be more “fun and lighthearted” than other volunteer roles in not-for-profit organizations, especially for volunteer roles that engaged directly with challenging social issues and clients. She was quick to espouse the unique benefits of event volunteers compared to paid staff, saying:

One of the things I love about volunteers is, generally speaking, they wanna be there... when you can work with people that want to be there, you can do some really cool things (Festival E).

Several event leaders acknowledged being aware of declines in volunteers and changing volunteer interests and commitments prior to the pandemic, some noting that their organization had already been contemplating the implications for their event organization. Some of the themes highlighted by these event leaders included the changing needs and expectations of today's volunteers, especially younger volunteers who are more skill- and network-oriented, more likely to seek short-term roles, and may not desire to have a continuous relationship with the event organization. The event leader of Festival E described young professionals as more likely to reach out to offer support using skills that they use in their jobs, such as social media, photography, and video content creation. She identified how working with today's generation of event volunteers required a mindset shift for event planners:

We have some volunteers that keep coming back or like, some will leave for a year and come back to you like another year later. Let's just kind of work with that and give people more opportunities to be there for the day. And if we never see them again, well, they had a great time at the event. They helped out and then they're gone. That's OK, nothing wrong with that (Festival E).

Some event leaders lamented that today's volunteers were less dependable when it came to attendance and timeliness, with consequences for the organization and for other volunteers. As the leader of Festival F shared:

We'll have, you know, volunteers or roll up two hours late for their shift and they just don't understand... they don't understand the impacts of not showing up or showing up late. We have to do a lot of reminding. We'll have people that will just kind of drop off and disappear... And then what ends up happening is you end up with a small group of highly engaged volunteers and then the brunt of the work falls on them (Festival F).

Several City staff described how the City's approach to event volunteers has shifted over time. A longstanding event staff person described how the Special Events team no longer uses

event volunteers (though they hoped it could return to doing so); instead, their event budget now included the cost to pay City staff to provide general labour. This change required careful attention based on local government labour relations, in that City staff noted the need to be clear about volunteer versus paid staff functions where, for example, the event was expecting a volunteer to do something that they should not be doing at an event. City administrators identified that they saw future opportunities to recruit and train a pool of community event volunteers for strategic and holistic deployment across multiple Kitchener events. In the meantime, the need to pay staff to perform tasks previously completed by volunteers was a challenge for the City and all other event organizations post-pandemic.

Finally, community-focused event organizers who worked with cultural organizations noted a difference in the organizational capacity of these volunteer-led organizations, who often participated as performers or vendors at their festivals. As the leader of Festival A observed:

We've been slowly noticing a decline in certain cultural groups...so back in the day there was many German clubs. We have very few now... a lot of the European clubs that would have been very predominant 10 or 15 years ago, it is shifting to more of the like African, Caribbean, Asian Indian [groups]. So, we notice that shift, but we also noticed that age demographic, the more that people are settled, the younger people don't tend to join the clubs, they don't tend to go to the club houses, they don't go to the groups and stuff like that because they already they go to school, they have their friends (Festival A).

Together, changing trends in who volunteers, how they volunteer, and why they volunteer intensified since the pandemic. This intensification is likely to have a considerable impact on the future and sustainability of community-focused festivals and events in Kitchener. As the City's special events coordinator concluded, a lack of dependable volunteers in the community "really hurts every single event, it doesn't matter what event it is."

From this discussion, it is clear that community-focused festival and event stakeholders were not simply contending with the unprecedented impact of a global health pandemic. Their

crisis and recovery experience – compounded by a rollercoaster of ever-changing public health guidelines that made it difficult to plan and execute festivals and events—was exacerbated by economic and demographic changes, increased event costs and reduced attendee spending. It also forced community-focused event organizations to increase their risk management practices, including enhanced security practices and trying to mitigate loss of volunteers and sponsors. With this prolonged degree of uncertainty and rapid change—and recalling that this study engaged only community event organizations that were still operational following the pandemic—it was not surprising that many event stakeholders spoke about how they “survived” the COVID-19 pandemic. As one festival leader reflected: “I know there’s a lot of festivals that didn’t survive, and we somehow figured it out” (Festival B). Several leaders of event organizations reflected on the experiences of those festivals and events that were still struggling.

A City policymaker observed:

Overall, right now there’s a number of major festivals across the country and cultural institutions that are struggling, and are having to make, you know, tough decisions, ranging from downsizing to really refocusing their efforts on some of their fundraising ability to in fact shutting down totally (City policymaker).

“Survival” was not a black and white journey, and some community-focused event leaders in were still struggling. As the leader of Festival E remarked: “Right now, I’m financially feeling it and, I’m like, ‘Is it all, has it all been worth it?’” This sentiment was echoed by an event sponsor, who commented on the exhaustion he observed in the leaders of community-focused event partner organizations:

If you talk about the underlying doers, they all feel a sense of exhaustion, too. And that’s a really bad spot to be, right? They’re waning, because they know how difficult it’s been and you know, and their emotions [are] coming out because they also believe so passionately in it (Event Sponsor).

This exhaustion was evident in the following example shared by Festival E, a newer community event organization. Speaking about sustainability and their efforts to seek event sponsorship, she shared:

There's a limitation to participating without any help in a meaningful way... that's sort of the phase that I'm hitting now is like, "Oh my goodness, how much energy do we need to put in before somebody else does something?" We need big leadership, because I don't think it's gonna come out of the trenches. The trenches are so exhausted, I don't think it's gonna come out of corporate sponsors because the people that need to ask them are exhausted. And then they're kind of complacent and a little indifferent (Festival E).

This discussion highlights the complexity of factors with which community-focused festival and event organizations contended—in addition to an unprecedented global health pandemic! As a City administrator noted, "COVID was just an accelerant to an already changing dynamic." At the same time, the interrelationship among these varied factors is worth highlighting. As a City administrator noted:

Coming out of the pandemic, whether it's, you know, the community trusting in government or this kind of new need for transparency, or you've seen how, during the pandemic societal issues, EDI issues, equitableness issues have really been magnified. So, I think they all tie together.... The issues are just seemingly bigger now, right? Everything's more prominent. Everything's more exposed (City administrator).

Some event leaders explicitly remarked on the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic and recognized that crisis recovery was unlikely to be immediate. For example, the event leader for Festival D shared this perspective:

A friend of mine told me "The number of years that it takes you to get into the weeds and the garbage is the number of years it usually takes to get out, for months or days or whatever," which I thought was interesting. So, if it took two years and we've had two bad years... [it's] probably gonna take two years to recover (Festival D).

As community-focused event and festival organizations emerged from the crisis, they were left to contend with a very different landscape. While some festivals and events did not survive, the event stakeholders in this study had recovered in some way by virtue that they still exist. To

understand the factors that may have contributed to this crisis recovery, community-focused event and festival leaders were asked about their relationships with other event stakeholders in the community. These relationships included partners who helped to fund or execute on their event, such as sponsors, volunteers, and vendors. Given the central role of local government in this community-focused festival and event ecosystem, all non-City event leaders in this study had some interactions with City staff, and all City staff had some connection with at least one of the festivals or events. The following section will consider these relationships between the event stakeholders, focusing on research question three: *What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders and how did these relationships support recovery and resilience?*

4.4 Relationships Among Event Stakeholders: Supporting One Another in the Face of Crisis

A series of organizing principles will guide this section. First, this section will temporally describe the way event organizations worked together before, during, and following the pandemic. Second, event stakeholder relationships in these three timeframes are described according to three distinct types of relationships: (a) interorganizational collaboration between event partners; (b) interpersonal relationships; and (c) intraorganizational collaboration, with a focus on inter-departmental engagement at the City of Kitchener. Finally, the finding distinguished between (a) event organizations that have longstanding relationships with the City; and (b) resident-led and newer community-driven event organizations. While longstanding festivals and events were characterized by more established operating expectations and experiences, the newer or more grassroots event stakeholders, by their nature, were building their organizational capacity, had a less-established relationship with the City, and were still establishing connections with volunteers, sponsors and other event stakeholders in the

community event ecosystem. The first section discusses how stakeholders engaged with one another prior to the crisis.

4.4.1 Interorganizational relationships among community-focused event stakeholders:

How partners worked together before the crisis

Community-focused event stakeholders reflected on the many ways they worked with other event organizations in the community prior to the pandemic. The following sections will consider their experiences of resource sharing and reciprocity, and the value of flexibility and communication. It will further discuss interorganizational trust, and how it intersected with interpersonal trust, loyalty and shared values. Finally, some examples of negative interorganizational relationships are shared.

4.4.1.1 Resource sharing, reciprocity, flexibility, and communication

Community-focused event leaders differentiated between sharing physical resources, such as generators or fencing, and sharing knowledge, such as insurance information, grant writing tips, and even written policies. When sharing resources, event leaders' rationale for sharing (or not sharing) information considered factors such as who was making the request, how the request was made, and if there was any benefit or risk for the event leader or their organization to share the information. For example, some community-focused event leaders expressed more willingness to share information and resources with smaller not-for-profit organizations that had less capacity. As the leader of for-profit Festival C described:

Not-for-profit are very different than profit. And that, to me, is a big deal.... I am much more intent on giving people information for something that's community driven (Festival C).

Event leaders noted the nature of the request and how the request was made influenced their response. For example, the leader of Festival C shared that a quick request that was easy to respond to was more likely to be well received; they shared:

I do tend to find it's either an all or nothing. If it is someone asking me literally to give everything over or "Hey, I just have a quick question. Can you help?" And a lot of the time... I can and sometimes I can't, depending on what they're asking for, right? (Festival C).

The leader of Festival A commented that it was much easier to share information with a requesting event organization when there was interorganizational alignment:

If I have someone call me and demand my stuff, I'm probably not even going to call them back, whereas if someone calls me and... if they fit with our mandate, with our parameters, it's a lot easier to help (Festival A).

Newer organizations experienced that other community-focused event leaders were supportive when they reached out looking for information. As the leader of Festival F described:

I have found from the very beginning that every event organization we've worked with has been incredibly forthcoming with, like, any information and resources that they had available (Festival F).

Two newer event organizations, Festivals E and F, each described promoting other events and activities as "informal partnerships," which were viewed as being especially valuable as they were building their event organization's network of supports. Festival F's leader commented on the tremendous value of strategic alignment with more established events. She shared an example of having had a "happy accident" with another event the year before - where attendees from a large festival nearby had organically found their way to Festival F's smaller event. From this experience, she was inspired to more intentionally schedule future events in a way that complemented and even took advantage of other events in the downtown, asking, "What else is going on in the community on this particular day? Can we partner with them? Is it a different

audience? Are we going to be in competition?” She also shared an example of approaching the larger festival about exploring ways to cross-promote between the two events:

How do we create a flow-through between the two events and how do we also not step on each other’s toes? [We’re] finding ways to have those discussions and make our events complement each other rather than compete with one another (Festival F).

Perhaps newer festivals felt less competitive, given that they may have had more to gain from resource sharing than the more established event organizations.

The type of information or resource being shared was also important. The leaders of more established community-focused event organizations were comfortable sharing information about their suppliers and extended the benefit of this information sharing to themselves and the supplier. The leader of Festival C noted that making referrals to suppliers worked to his advantage by strengthening his own relationship with the supplier, saying: “I could tell them I referred them and give them more business and then it might help me later on.” Sharing information about sponsors and vendors, however, was a different matter, as event leaders described these as being “my relationships” (Festival C), and that sharing sponsor lists, in particular, created competition (Festival C). Festival A’s event leader articulated they were less comfortable “handing over my list” of vendors to another event; if they chose to share the information, their preference was not to simply share the vendor list, but rather to promote the other event to their vendors who could choose whether to participate. She described how trusting relationships with both the partner event and with the vendors themselves were critical considerations, saying:

I have to feel the trust of that festival [requesting the vendor list] before I will suggest it to my vendors... I’m also very protective of the people because I like to maintain those good relationships... they know that I’m looking out for their best interest (Festival A).

For this event leader and several others, relationships with other event organizations in the community-focused event and festival ecosystem were characterized by reciprocity. According to the leader of Festival A:

So, you know, I know [event leader]. And so, if [they] need a bit of help, absolutely. Cause if I need help, [they'll] help me (Festival A).

This norm of reciprocity, without an expectation of immediate return, was echoed by the leader of Festival B, who noted:

You have people that are gonna be supportive of you if you're supportive of them. There's going to be some, maybe, potential shared resources down the road from them if they are successful (Festival B).

The leader of Festival D considered how reciprocity and mutual support ultimately benefited the entire community event ecosystem. He asserted:

I firmly believe that if I share with you, you share with me, we're all better and we can both be successful. We're not competing, right?.... We're all in the same community. Let's just share and all be successful, right? That's my motto (Festival D).

Altogether, community-focused event leaders described they were willing to share information and resources with another event organization, as long as it did not compromise their relationship with a third party, such as a vendor, and it did not threaten their own funding relationships (especially with sponsors). There was a willingness to support newer organizations by showing them the ropes. Finally, there was a reciprocal nature to sharing of information, with an understanding that the positive benefit might not be immediate, but the longer-term goodwill was associated with the likelihood of receiving information or resources back from that event organization – or another event organization – at some point in the future.

Community-focused event leaders spoke about communication and establishing clear expectations as being “paramount” to working with other event organizations. The City’s special events coordinator noted that when working with her event and festival partners, she aimed to

“provide them with up-front information, transparent information as much as possible.” The importance of setting and communication clear expectation of partners such as vendors was described as having been a learning process for Festival A, whose leader shared the following:

Our relationship with vendors really focuses as much as we can on, like, clear communication, providing them as much information as we can to make sure that they are successful. Making sure expectations are clear. So that’s something we’ve gotten a lot better with over the years (Festival A).

At the core of these experiences of resource sharing, reciprocity, flexibility, and communication was trust. Trust can be engendered between two or more event organizations as interorganizational trust and may also be experienced as interpersonal trust between two or more individual event leaders. The fundamental roles of both interorganizational and interpersonal trust are explored in the section below, starting with how community-focused event stakeholders experienced trust prior to the pandemic.

4.4.1.2 Interorganizational trust

Community-focused event stakeholders described three specific foundations of trust with their partners: (a) trust based on shared vision; (b) trust in a partner’s competency (reliability and expertise); and (c) trust in information sharing. The first way that trust can be manifested between event leaders is through a shared vision and understanding of the aims of the partnership. According to the City’s special events coordinator, working with others when there is no shared vision for an event “makes hard work harder.” The leader of Festival B described how trust allowed partners to work more effectively and be more creative together:

When the partnership isn’t fully trusting, you can’t do those innovative cool things because they’re going to put up red tape.... And that’s sometimes a hard conversation for a bigger organization and a lot more confusing (Festival B).

Being on the same page by having commonly shared goals and outcomes for the event, including clear communication of roles and responsibilities as noted earlier, is key to this type of interorganizational trust.

The second way that trust was exhibited between event partners was through trust in the partner's competency. For the City, when for-profit or not-for-profit event organizations are hosting their event at a City park or facility, City special events staff need to be able to have confidence that their partner "knows what they are doing" (City special events coordinator). This meant trusting that the event partner was adhering to guidelines and expectations and could be counted on to get the job done without incident. As the City's special events coordinator expressed:

You have to have the trust in them that they're gonna do the right thing because they're on city property. That's probably the biggest concern that we have is just to make sure that they're following everything that they need to do (City special events coordinator).

For recurring events, trust in an event partner's competence was reassuring and could become a basic expectation in the ongoing relationship, allowing the event's host organization to focus on other matters. The leader of Festival D described the benefits of interorganizational trust between longstanding partner of their annual sport event, saying:

People were so familiar with [our event] and with the great things that it brought to the community, that you can call a partner, and they say, "Yeah, we're there. Just don't worry about it. We got it. We're there. We'll support. We're here to help you." But had those conversations occurred and they dropped the ball – didn't show up or forgot or didn't execute to the level and sort of the standard that we were all expecting of what had previously gone on at [our event], then the trust would have been broken (Festival D).

A final way trust manifested between event partners was related to information sharing. As outlined above, community-focused event leaders acknowledged they were generally open to providing advice to newer organizations or offering referrals to suppliers. The event leader of

Festival C was willing to share information, as long as they knew the partner could be trusted with the information provided to them. They offered:

If they are having a hard time, [the requesting event organization will] say, “Who do you use for this?” And we’ll share what our pricing is and, whatever, if we can... Why not? We want them to be successful... I think the sharing and being able to trust them that they’re not gonna be doing anything against us is great (Festival C).

As community-focused event stakeholders shared examples of their interorganizational relationships, they often spoke about being aware of or intentional about why they established and sustained certain relationships. As the leader of Festival F described:

The businesses that we put the time into to build those relationships and build trust, those are the ones we’re going to kind of see continue to work with us as we go along and it’s going to be those like outreach efforts for us to try to find more of those businesses as they kind of come available (Festival F).

Another benefit of interorganizational trust was between community-focused event stakeholders. The City’s special events coordinator highlighted that, because she supported and engaged with many event partners with different organizational structures, she believed that being responsive to each event organization’s unique needs was essential for ensuring a trust-based relationship. This approach was especially true when collaborating with volunteer-led event organizations. The City’s special events coordinator described her relationship with one of the not-for-profit festivals in the following way:

[Festival] has been very open. They share their challenges with us. We try and assist with them. I’ll go out for lunch with them. Meet with them separately on their time.... if they wanna meet in the evening, I’ll go into the evening because obviously they’re all volunteers and they work during the day... We have to be flexible on our end because we understand that we’re paid and they’re not (City special events coordinator).

This approach to being flexible also implies the values of City event staff to be responsive to their community festival and event partners, and to “do the right thing;” these are dimensions of interorganizational relationships discussed in following sections.

Overall, community-focused festival and event leaders viewed both interorganizational relationships as an investment toward the success of their event, especially where a financial or in-kind resource transaction was involved. At the same time, these event leaders often shared that they valued and invested in interpersonal relationships with individuals in partner organizations. Interpersonal trust, loyalty, and shared values have not only practical benefits, but support goal alignment, mutual support, and sustainable interorganizational relationships. The following section will discuss these interpersonal interactions further.

4.4.1.3 Interpersonal trust, loyalty, and shared values

Community-focused event leaders acknowledged the importance of investing in interpersonal relationships as having a specific benefit to the event and the host organization, such as saving money or making paperwork easier. This approach was most frequently the case when working with event vendors or suppliers. For example, the event leader with Festival A described that having a longstanding trust relationship with a supplier meant that the supplier did not take an upfront deposit for a service. She explained:

You start to know them by name, you know their families... Because we're not-for-profit, keeping those good relationships are useful because normally people are really good at being like, "OK, well, usually we do an overage charge, but we won't for you" (Festival A).

The City's special events coordinator described the importance of working with a trusted individual within a partner festival organization:

[She is] very easy to get along with. Our goals are aligned in what we want out of the event... And because we're aligned well with it, we'll go out just for a drink, even just to chat. Which is, which is really, really nice. You kind of have to have that relationship to be able to trust in individuals (City special events coordinator).

Likewise, the event leader from Festival A described this interpersonal relationship in a mutually positive way, sharing:

I trust [her]. [She] trusts me. If she says, “I need [this] now... I will get it.” Some of that is because of trust and friendliness and getting along and always, you know, being supportive of each other. You know, if she is doing stuff on her end and needs something, I will never make her wait. And so, she has done the same. She reciprocates. It’s very, you know, “treat you how you treat me” now. We’ve had a great, great relationship (Festival A).

Over time, loyalty can become an important characteristic of a trusted interpersonal relationship between event stakeholders, especially in the case of regularly collaborating with vendors or suppliers for annual events. The leader of Festival A described her longstanding relationship with grassroots organizations and vendors:

[Vendors are] counting on me to keep going. I have multiple food vendors who will not do any other festival other than mine... they know I’m there for them, for everyone. And so, I think that’s really important and, in return, they’re there for me (Festival A).

This loyalty toward one another also demonstrated mutual support and reciprocity as key elements of the interorganizational and interpersonal relationships between event stakeholders. For newer event organizations, however, it took time to establish these dynamics. In the case of new partnerships, establishing a “win-win” dynamic can be an early way to establish trust and mutual support. For example, the leader of Festival E described a new partnership in the following way:

We worked with [the partner] to, like, really do something totally new that they weren’t totally comfortable with, but they knew that we had something special and that we were gonna bring a new audience to them, so I think that collaboration was just like, so positive, because it’s a win-win for everybody....So it’s like those kind of partnerships where it’s a clear win for both sides, I think (Festival E).

One event leader noted that a sustainable interorganizational relationship required an eye to establishing other interpersonal relationships within that partner organization, as a protective factor or risk mitigation in the event that one or more of the individuals leaves. The City’s special events coordinator describes intentional relational succession planning with one of the community not-for-profit festival organizations, saying:

She brings her teammates along now so they can also learn the process. So, we're trying to expand sort of that horizon that, in case something happens to her, they can continue... I think the training of individuals moving forward and what the expectations are going to be important for all groups (City special events coordinator).

Notably, several community-focused event leaders commented that forming these interpersonal relationships was natural or "just the way I am" (Festival A). This overall spirit of goodwill and collaboration can be characterized as shared values, as noted by the following sentiments:

"Basically, everything that we do relies on collaboration, so that's really how we have modeled our events" (Festival E); "I always say that life boils down to perceptions and relationships... that's gonna be a big focus of the work that we do over the next couple years as we grow the festival back up" (Festival B); and "We just kind of do our best to uplift each other and support each other along the way" (Festival A). Perhaps these shared values reflect that community-focused event leaders were inherently relationship-oriented and driven to work in a field that allowed them to use their natural tendency to value and build relationships with others. Of course, not all interorganizational and interpersonal relationships were positive all of the time. The following section will discuss when entitlement and obligation can negatively impact interorganizational and interpersonal relationships.

4.4.1.4 Entitlement and obligation

Community-focused event stakeholders were invited to share examples of when they could not trust a partner. Overall, the event leaders had few examples to share. While they acknowledged there were always situational conflicts, longstanding trust with a partner made it easier to brush off or move on from situations that were uncomfortable or involved some degree of conflict. There were, however, some examples of how an event partner's entitlement had consequences for an event organization. Festival F, a newer event organization, shared an example of vendors'

sense of entitlement to return to their events in the future, leaving their event organization to contemplate what their obligation was to the vendors. She shared:

We work with a variety of vendors that have a variety of products. We try to mix and match a little bit, give lots of different opportunities across the board, but there was definitely, like, a strong sense of entitlement on the side of some of the vendors we've worked with [from the outset] and that's having to really level-set expectations. It made us ask, "Do [we] have to give them space at our event? Like, [are we] obligated to do that?" And, you know, we took a step back and it's like, "No, we really don't... we've offered this person space at this event and this event, but no, we're not offering you space at all of our events. And here's why." ... And we still really ruffled a few feathers [from that], and there's some relationships that simply just did not bounce back from that (Festival F).

Another example of entitlement was shared by a City neighbourhood manager who discussed a group of residents who hosted a longstanding neighbourhood event feeling entitled to support from the City, and threatening to contact media or elected officials when they did not get what they wanted. The City's neighbourhood manager contrasted this resident group with the experience of collaborating with other grassroots neighbourhood-based groups that did not operate from such a place of entitlement and instead were patient and respectful. He shared the following juxtaposition:

There is a sense of entitlement, I guess you could say, or a sense of confidence or a sense of political escalation, right? Like, "We've been doing this event for 20 years, we need this done. If this doesn't happen, we're calling the mayor. We're going to the media." ... Sometimes it can escalate to like, this negative tension... That's not good relationships, right? But it happens.... And, yet, these other grassroots groups that don't have the connections, don't have the savvy... they're so patient and so gracious and, like, wanting to work with us and others.... With the other groups that are willing to railroad through, they're not as concerned about relationships. They just need to get their thing done, and whatever standing in the way of that is a problem for them (City neighbourhood manager).

The City's special events coordinator shared an example of a resident who went on social media complaining about the City not being helpful with their festival; in this case, she shared, "It was just the way that individual was, unfortunately. It [made] it a hard relationship." This finding

demonstrated that negative experiences can be due to challenging individuals, as well as challenging organizations or groups. Finally, a for-profit event organizer admitted to being aware of the benefits of having relationships with elected officials at their festival each year. They shared:

I do it for the political connections, not to say that I would ever call, you know, call [the Mayor] ... “Hey, [Mayor], the city’s not doing what they said they were gonna do, I need you to step in”...I would probably never do that. It’s just I want...I want everyone to like the event, right? (Festival C).

Although there is risk for event stakeholders to encounter negative relational interactions such as those outlined above, overall, this section has shared many positive instances of how stakeholders in the community-focused event and festival ecosystem were already working together prior to the pandemic. Longstanding relationships, in particular, were characterized by willingness of event partners to share resources without expectations of immediate returns, as well as increased likelihood to clearly communicate roles and responsibilities, and be flexible with one another. Interorganizational and interpersonal trust, loyalty, and shared values were outlined as being integral to the success of event organizations prior to the pandemic. Interpersonal relationships between event leaders yielded not only practical benefits, but supported goal alignment and mutual support. The following section will go on to discuss the impact of the crisis on these interorganizational and interpersonal relationships, starting with a description of how the event stakeholders engaged with one another during the crisis.

4.4.2 Collaboration during a crisis: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on interorganizational and interpersonal relationships

Community-focused festival and event leaders were asked to reflect on the way they interacted with other event stakeholders during the COVID-19 global health pandemic. The previous section described how, prior to the crisis, many of the community’s event stakeholders were

deliberate about investing in their relationships with others. During the pandemic crisis, these community event stakeholders were now needing to think about which partners and stakeholders could and should be engaged if their festival or event was going to survive. For some, the crisis represented opportunities to establish new interorganizational relationships. However, for the most part, community-focused event leaders remained engaged in existing relationships throughout the pandemic. This intentional focus on working together was the basis of collaboration. During the crisis, collaboration was most likely to happen in one of three ways: (a) collaborating differently with the same event partners during the crisis; (b) suspending an existing event partnership because of the crisis; or (c) collaborating with new event partners because the event changed during the crisis. These findings are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Collaboration between community-focused event stakeholders during the crisis

Collaborating differently with the same event partners during the crisis	New roles and/or interactions with existing event partners because of temporary changes to the event during the pandemic. This collaboration may include working together in more strategic or creative ways.
Suspending an existing event partnership because of the crisis	Due to the nature of the pandemic, the partnership may have been suspended temporarily. The partnership may or may not have resumed as events returned post-pandemic.
Collaborating with new event partners because the event changed during the crisis	New event partners were engaged, perhaps due to a temporary new format or location of the event. This new collaboration may or may not have been sustained as the event returned post-pandemic.

The following section will describe each of these types of interorganizational collaboration in the timeframe of during and post-pandemic. It will also discuss situations when an existing event partner didn't "survive" the pandemic. It will conclude by summarizing how community event stakeholders reflected on whether the crisis experience strengthened or weakened collaboration with other event leaders and event organizations.

4.4.2.1 Collaboration during a crisis: When community-focused event stakeholders worked with the same partners in new ways

The City's special events coordinator aptly described the most predominant form of event collaboration, especially in the early days of the pandemic, saying: "Instead of more partners, I think we just tried to figure out different ways to use our current partners." This approach was most evident for longstanding community-led festivals and events supported by the City. As noted in the earlier description of pre-pandemic event stakeholder relationships, these types of community-focused festivals and events involved well-established expectations of roles and responsibilities between the festival and the City, and included interpersonal relationships, as well. In addition, a characteristic of such longstanding community-led festivals was that they had established several enduring relationships with vendors and other partners. These relationships could be considered assets to these community event organizations in that they allowed for a smoother event planning process for their annual events and these ties may have served as a protective factor. In the face of disruption during the pandemic, the most prominent examples of collaborating in new ways with existing partners during the crisis were in working with event vendors, and with emergency and public health organizations.

When in-person events were on hold and as some events were transitioning to hybrid formats, existing audio-visual production vendors played a key role for some festivals. Festival B, for example, worked with its existing audio-visual production vendor to help broadcast a limited attendance in-person event to a wider community audience, and to assist with executing their new mobile event format. As the event leader from Festival B noted:

Helping us put together that mobile experience was a completely different experience than we had ever done before, and they were integral to that to make sure that we could provide a great experience with it (Festival B).

This cultural festival also had a multi-year sponsorship with a local television station. When it could not broadcast one of its main annual festival components during the pandemic, Festival B approached this partner to reimagine a celebration for the community using archived footage and incorporating new interviews. As a leader of Festival B recalled, “That was a cool relationship to see shift.”

For Festival B, many of its small cultural organization partners that normally hosted festival-related activities at independent venues were simply not able to do so because of pandemic gathering restrictions. These cultural partners were forced to shift to primarily providing take-out food services at their venues. As a result, Festival B found itself functioning as an information provider in two ways. First, it shared pandemic health and safety guidelines with these partners, helping them to understand what could and could not be done at the time. Festival B also shared information and messaging with the public about what was available, including promoting the take-out programs of its festival food partners. Leaders of Festival B recalled knowing that these event partners had limited organizational capacity so they were careful not to overwhelm them with demands to participate in the festival’s main online events; instead, Festival B offered them the opportunities to take part if they felt they could. A leader from Festival A echoed this experience of seeking to support its vendors who were from grassroots groups and associations, saying:

We did a bit of [Facebook] advertising for any of our food groups...that were selling from home or selling take out or carry away. So, we were still able to support our local groups, and we had, you know, featured artists and people who wanted to submit videos, like any of the little dance studios that had been participating, like their Christmas shows or whatever, if they wanted to submit them... [We were] still trying to create an environment of togetherness (Festival A).

During the crisis, it would appear these longstanding, pre-existing relationships were seen not as merely transactional; rather, because of the enduring nature of the partnership before the

pandemic, some of the festival organizations assumed a sense of responsibility or obligation to ensure their grassroots partners would be all right.

Several festival organizations, as well as the City, noted the benefits of the pandemic in elevating organizations' expectations and behaviours related to health and safety. Given the prominent role of public health guidelines throughout the pandemic experience, it was not surprising that several event leaders reflected on the strengthened connection between their festival and the local public health partner, where a purely transactional relationship pre-pandemic became more proactive and collaborative during the crisis. In particular, City staff took on a stronger role coordinating with regional public health authorities and then shared the information with its community event partners. In doing so, the City's special events coordinator reported having a much more meaningful relationship with public health, describing:

Generally, with public health, we meet with them at the beginning of the season. Let them know about our events and then we're pretty much good to go. And then we'll touch base with them. If they see anything wrong, they'll let us know and that type of thing. Other than that, ... once the pandemic hit, oh goodness, it was probably every two to three weeks that we would be talking to them to say, "OK, what's next? What can we do? What can't we do? How do we pivot?" and then they'll tell us ahead of time because they knew what was coming down the line (City special events coordinator).

Like public health, community-focused event organizations' relationships with emergency services such as police and fire also evolved through the crisis, leading to a more strategic and coordinated relationship post-pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, it was more likely that emergency and public health organizations functioned autonomously, and these services would engage with each festival or event organization separately. With the onset of the pandemic, there was a reported shift to a more centralized and holistic approach. The City's special events coordinator described this new way of working:

I think in part because we needed all of those resources to put on these events and because they wanted to help the community, they agreed to sort of work together as

opposed to us reaching out individually to everybody. So, we would have group meetings, and the police would say, “Well, we can help out here.” Not normally their job, but they’ll do whatever. Great, public health? “Yes, we can do that.” It was, yeah, coordinated effort.... With the fire department, there’s been a lot of changes there, too. They’ve wanted to streamline things now [that they understand better] ...So I think that the partners have really come together well (City special events coordinator).

As a final example, Festival F, a newer event organization, experienced the benefit of being brought to the table earlier for event partnership opportunities with the City and others, and in ways that may not have happened in the same way had the pandemic not happened. This event leader explained:

They [local business and other economic development partners] had a very vested interest in bringing people together and uplifting the spirit of the community and uplifting the businesses. So, there were a lot of connections being made that maybe otherwise wouldn’t have happened. Just out of, like honestly, necessity—it was, you know, do or die. And so, businesses, I think, were reaching out to more people trying to forge more partnerships because they had to (Festival F).

As an event organization, this leader took advantage of this moment in time, noting:

These opportunities landed in our laps, and we were like, “OK, let’s do it.” Whereas if we were being a bit more strategic and planful and those opportunities hadn’t landed in our lap, we probably would have waited until like the following year when all the restrictions had kind of, like, calmed down and everything was, you know, everything had lifted and there weren’t any, you know, mask and aids and closures and capacity restrictions and just extra layers to think about. We honestly probably would have weighed in until later if we didn’t have these other, you know, municipalities and businesses saying, “Hey, come out and host this event with us” (Festival F).

Overall, the opportunity to work in new ways with existing event partners during the crisis seemed to be a benefit to event organizations and to the broader community-focused event ecosystem, with enduring benefits post-pandemic that will be discussed in a later section. Next, examples of when event partnerships were suspended are shared.

4.4.2.2 Suspending event partnerships during the crisis

As outlined in previous sections, the COVID-19 global pandemic created immense uncertainty for event leaders, their partners and volunteers. This uncertainty may have led community-

focused event stakeholders to consciously or unconsciously reprioritize their resources and relationships. For example, the leader of Festival A described how, in the absence of an in-person event, several vendors simply became irrelevant for the short term. She recalled:

I don't need you right now because...we're not doing festivals, so I'm gonna focus on my stuff...aside from telling everyone "We're sorry, we're not doing the festival this year," there wasn't much communication at all, you know... I would say that, aside from reaching out to some artists to help us and, you know, just getting one or two volunteers, we really... everyone just sort of collapsed in on itself (Festival A).

Depending on the nature of the event, there may have been no real need to engage with a partner until the event resumed in its existing format, or at least in a format more closely related to its "normal" format. City staff, for example, described a relationship with a longstanding festival that took a very different direction in its pandemic activities by ceasing all of its traditional activities. While City staff knew the festival would ultimately return, they recognized there was not much need to be regularly connected with this festival organization during the crisis. As the City's special events coordinator recalled:

With [Festival X] it was very different... During the pandemic, [they] actually just did their own little thing at the restaurants. We stayed in touch with them. They didn't really want to do anything on site at all anywhere, other than in the restaurant, so we were status quo with them (City special events coordinator).

This approach allowed the City's Special Events team to focus its staff resources in other areas. As another example, Festival C described a multi-year partnership with a community group that provided event clean-up services for a donation each year. When the festival moved to a drive-through format in the first year of the pandemic, there was no need to engage with this partner because there was no garbage to clean up. However, the partnership resumed immediately once the in-person event format resumed.

A unique example of suspending relationships with event stakeholders during the pandemic took place in neighbourhoods, where small-scale events were generally led by

volunteer-led neighbourhood associations. The City's neighbourhood managers recalled acknowledging the limited capacity of these groups during such an uncertain time. This dynamic was especially prominent as in-person events and activities were beginning to open up in earnest, when not all resident neighbourhood associations had the same capacity to return to programming and events in their part of the community. A City neighbourhood manager recalled being careful to balance the City's mandate to serve residents with respecting the resident leaders' capacity to return to event delivery. She described:

I remember us, like when we were fairly certain that we were gonna reopen and stay open... that it was a little bit more staff driven to like "Hey, let's push a little bit here... Let's push with meeting. Let's push with what are you bringing back? What do you wanna see back in here? Because if you're not gonna offer anything for the community, we will, like, we'll do it directly." But we also didn't want to fracture those relationships, so it was it was a bit of a push-pull-like test to see who's ready to come back. We had some neighbourhood associations that were really ready and other ones that were not (City neighbourhood manager).

Given that City staff had already invested in these neighbourhood-based organizations (sometimes for many years prior to the pandemic), it was important to support residents' eventual return to program and event delivery. A City neighbourhood manager went on to share:

Where neighbourhood associations sort of articulated that they weren't ready to come back, the message was sort of resoundingly "When you are, we're here... We're not looking to take over your activities. We're gonna supplement for community because we do have an obligation to provide, but...when you're ready and willing to come back into the equation, we're here and we'll start having those conversations then and we'll see what transition looks like. So, if we've started programs and it should be over to you, then let's figure out what that looks like" (City neighbourhood manager).

Overall, it seemed that community-focused festival and event leaders were intentional about the way they put any partnerships on hold during the crisis. The next section shares examples of how new community event partners were engaged during the pandemic.

4.4.2.3 Collaborating with new event partners: When a community-focused event changed during the crisis

Mid-way during the pandemic, the provincial government introduced new pandemic-related grants for festivals and events; these were primarily tourism-focused as communities were trying to return to in-person activities and re-establish their economies. According to City staff, this funding opportunity resulted in a number of inquiries from organizations seeking to connect with local government to start a new festival or event. Although these did not result in any new events or partnerships at the time, the City’s administrator remarked:

I know the government tried to create some new festivals [and] event grants, so we had we had more [inquiries]. Inevitably, we had more kind of “tire kickers” in those timings of like people like expressed interest (City administrator).

For the most part, however, there were very few examples of how new partners were engaged during the pandemic. Perhaps community-focused festival and event leaders were so focused on adapting their event in response to the crisis, and then on navigating the constantly changing pandemic public health guidelines, that there was limited time or energy to consider or invest in new or creative partnerships. One exception was Festival B, which moved its kick-off event to a remote location with ample social distancing for the first year of the pandemic. The festival’s event leaders described how this new location led to an opportunity to engage a new sponsor. Since that time, the remote location was no longer used, but the sponsor remained engaged, although to a lesser degree than during the height of the pandemic. However, this example seemed to be more of a new partnership born of the necessity of needing a new location in response to public health restrictions, rather than of intentionally seeking the new partner for the sake of a new partnership.

This section describes how interorganizational collaboration between community event stakeholders was most likely to happen in one of three ways during the crisis: (a) collaborating differently with the same event partners during the crisis; (b) suspending an existing event

partnership because of the crisis; or (c) collaborating with new event partners because the event changed during the crisis. It seems that having well-established partnerships allowed event leaders to either engage with existing partners to pivot their events or to pause active partner engagement during the disruption without fear of damage to the partnership in the longer-term. The next section will consider the role of another factor that can promote or inhibit interorganizational collaboration during a crisis: the organizational capacity of community event stakeholders.

4.4.3 Organizational capacity of event stakeholders during the crisis: Consequences for interorganizational collaboration

In addition to relationships with other organizations, organizational capacity considers factors such as communication and information sharing, leadership practices and governance processes, resources, preparedness, and collaboration. If a community event partner had more organizational capacity at the time of the disruption, it may have been a more viable partner during the disruption. Other partners, though, may already have had limited organizational capacity and, therefore, had become more vulnerable to disruption by the crisis. They were simply fighting to survive, and engaging with partners may not have been a possibility for these organizations. Community-focused event leaders identified two primary scenarios when an event partner struggled during the pandemic. One scenario was that an event partner's organizational capacity was limited temporarily during the disruption, and this partner was slower to return or returned in a new way post-pandemic. A second scenario was that the event partner did not survive the pandemic at all. In the first case, Festival A had a long history of collaborating with grassroots cultural organizations to provide food or entertainment. During the pandemic, the leaders of Festival A discovered that some of these groups began to change their format. For

example, as larger cultural organizations that sold food at the event began to decline, some individuals or families from within these organizations disengaged to create their own small business as a vendor. As another example, physical distancing restrictions during the pandemic meant that cultural performers were unable to come together to rehearse; this ultimately led to some changes in dance or musical groups upon the in-person return to the festival.

While many longstanding community-focused event organizations were able to adapt during the crisis, several volunteer-led organizations unfortunately did not make it through the pandemic. Beyond the cultural vendors or performers described above, resident-led neighbourhood associations were especially vulnerable to the pandemic because of their already limited capacity. A City neighbourhood manager described the COVID-19 pandemic as the “nail in the coffin” for some groups:

The way we intentionally worked with neighbourhood associations in the past had been changing for a little while. So, then COVID and... for some of these groups, this is the nail in the coffin. Like, they were struggling before COVID and now this. Like, they won't recover from this, or these events won't be like they were. They were already contemplating “Do we continue on with these events?” and now COVID, like, yeah, it was sealed. Their fate. (City neighbourhood manager).

City neighbourhood staff also reported that some volunteer neighbourhood associations or other grassroots groups did not survive the pandemic. According to a City neighbourhood manager:

We saw a lot of groups that we worked so intensively before... pre-COVID with groups who wanted to put on events, and we were walking alongside of them and those same groups haven't returned. So, whether they've prioritized things differently, the volunteer committee fell apart. I'd say over the half of them have not (City neighbourhood manager).

As a result, the City reported that, post-pandemic, there was a need for the City to do more direct provision of neighbourhood-level events.

In the case of a longstanding, multi-decade volunteer-led holiday event, its volunteers simply no longer had the capacity to deliver the event during the pandemic. Because the City had

always played a supporting role for this event, and it was hosted in a City facility, there was long-term engagement from the City's Special Events team. These existing supports allowed for leadership to move entirely to the City during the pandemic. While the pandemic was not the cause of this shift, according to the City, the pandemic was again described as "the nail in the coffin;" that is, an already vulnerable volunteer event was changed irreparably by the crisis. While this annual event itself was preserved by now being operated by the City, the loss of close to 50 volunteers meant a significant change in the format of the event. As the City's special events coordinator shared:

[It's] not necessarily at the point where you're cutting a full event, but you're shifting elements within... you're cutting out an activation. It's very unfortunate. We used to have [several event components], but all that activity is gone. And it's just the way of the times now (City special events coordinator).

In contrast to groups with already-limited capacity before the crisis, other grassroots groups and organizations were able to adapt and survive. A City neighbourhood manager shared that some neighbourhood associations were strong before the pandemic, and now, "They picked up where they left off and moved on." In another case, the neighbourhood association members recognized they did not have the same capacity as they had prior to the pandemic. As a City neighbourhood manager described:

They were doing kind of a stop-start-continue reflective exercise where they were trying to address their capacity...they've got a solid board but limited capacity. And so they really did need to reflect on where they want to put their efforts and obviously they're sitting around this table because they all care about community, but they have to be mindful of what they're actually able to deliver on. And so they had some tough conversations with each other (City neighbourhood manager).

Another neighbourhood association was described as having high capacity prior to the pandemic, which seemed to protect its ability to maintain activities post-pandemic. According to a City neighbourhood manager:

We had a high trust relationship through the start of the pandemic, and we were able to carry that through and they were one of the ones that we were able to maintain the most frequent contact with because we were building a community centre. So we were in touch with them, so regularly keeping them in the loop about the development of the centre through the pandemic, and then what we saw when they returned was they just picked up where they left off and they're like, they're the ones that are doing just as many events as what they were doing...It's still continued, so they, just as soon as they were able to, they just like "We're flourishing again" (City neighbourhood manager).

A protective factor for neighbourhood and grassroots organizations during the crisis may have been their connection to local government. Another variable that could have impacted their capacity was the neighbourhood itself. When asked to reflect on why some neighbourhood associations were able to survive the pandemic while others were less successful, a City neighbourhood manager speculated that increased capacity was more likely in neighbourhoods that were not already "dealing with other sort of systemic or societal issues." It was suggested that when resident leaders are connected with leaders in other neighbourhoods, it was more likely that they had stronger capacity and may have been able to better adapt during the crisis.

Finally, while the community-focused festival and event organizations seemed to largely maintain interorganizational relationships with vendors and suppliers during the crisis, what was sometimes lost were the interpersonal relationships. For example, this scenario was reported when an individual contact at a vendor or supplier was no longer employed there after the pandemic, with potential negative consequences for the festival organization, such as increased workload or event costs. As the event leader of Festival A described:

I mean some of our stuff is standard, so... it doesn't matter who's our rep... they know exactly what they're doing, even if the person I dealt with last year is no longer with the company. [But in other situations] it's been complicated... not speaking to the person I've been speaking with forever and dealing with all new people and everyone treating me like it's the first day... So, it's not as amicable [of a] relationship. It costs a lot more. We have to budget for it a lot more. It takes a lot more work...so many new people, it was like learning... so many new rules, things that didn't make sense... so adapting to all of those, but yes, having everybody treat us like it was our first festival, whereas for them they were all new. So that was really weird for a lot of us (Festival A).

The next section will examine the unique circumstances of collaboration within local government during the pandemic, and how these intraorganizational relationships between City departments may have positively influenced the City's approach to community-focused events post-pandemic.

4.4.4 Working within and across City departments: Intraorganizational collaboration during the crisis

During the pandemic, City staff reported working more closely or in new ways with colleagues in other departments, most notably between its Special Events team and colleagues working in community centres. One concrete example of this increased intraorganizational collaboration involved opportunities to share physical resources (huts) from downtown-based events to neighbourhood-based events throughout the community. Another initiative that fostered new intraorganizational relationships was a City of Kitchener COVID-19 response planning team struck during the pandemic, where a committee of staff from various departments was tasked with reimagining seasonal activities in COVID-safe spaces and forms (such as family-friendly photography-based scavenger hunts). A final influence on intraorganizational relationships was movement of individual staff members between departments during the pandemic; notably, a local government administrator who had worked in Community Services moved to the Special Events department, maintaining relationships and familiarity with their work. Combined with his previous interpersonal relationships, this allowed him to refer partners to past colleagues where there may be a better fit for a program or event. Said a City neighbourhood manager:

I don't remember, pre-pandemic, those types of handoffs happening. I think there's a willingness amongst both staff teams to collaborate...[Before], we were very removed from each other and maybe the pandemic did have something to do with that.... there was just an opportunity for us to work with folks that we hadn't worked with closely before. So, I think that was probably like a hidden gem through this (City neighbourhood manager).

Another example of intraorganizational collaboration was shared by the City's special events manager. He identified working with the arts and culture department; since the production and staffing infrastructure was already in place for a City-led festival, there was exploration with the other department to engage local musicians as opening acts for other City events.

A significant opportunity for increased intraorganizational collaboration was in response to the growth in requests from grassroots cultural groups and organizations wanting to host new events coming out of the COVID-19 global health pandemic. According to City staff, this trend was beginning to signal some "gray areas" in departmental roles, responsibilities, and funding pathways. Noting that "It was starting to happen before the pandemic," one City neighbourhood manager highlighted two emergent challenges. First, not all City departments are resourced in the same way to provide grants or other resource support to grassroots events. Second, according to a neighbourhood manager, various departments could find themselves "competing against each other" when grants are awarded by one department, but the event requires access to space at a facility managed by another department. The City neighbourhood manager, however, reported that staff often "cobble together" resources, or find ways to "step up" to ensure the best possible experience for its partners.

Expanding upon this theme, other City staff identified the opportunity to better design a "seamless connection" across departments for the benefit of community partner organizations. At present, relationships with these community organizations are largely driven by the grants stream that they fell under. For example, an event may begin with a one-time Love My Hood grant, then work with a community centre, and evolve to a longer-term relationship with the Special Events department (with a funding agreement administered in another department altogether). As a City neighbourhood manager explained:

For the resident, that is somewhat concerning, right? That you're kind of being dropped around and now I gotta work with this person and it's a different process than [in the past]. So, it's definitely a gap that we're uncovering for sure. [The partner] —they don't care. They just see the City. So that's where I think us, as staff, we have to be very diligent to help them land somewhere (City neighbourhood manager).

While City staff may be formally limited by their scope or mandate and the resource capacity of the department, they acknowledged, “We're not gonna ignore people's calls” (City neighbourhood manager). This manager shared an example of a neighbourhood group that had been handed off to a new point person in another department with “less hand holding.” When the neighbourhood group failed to submit paperwork for their subsequent year's event, the event was in jeopardy. However, when approached by the residents, the previous contact person at the City made sure to assist them.

Weak communication between City departments was a challenge identified by some external event partners, as well, though participants acknowledged that in some cases it was due to staffing changes at the City. Festival F, for example, noted that “very disjointed communication” across departments left them “ping-ponged to everywhere” across multiple departments or people, and led to on-site challenges for their event. She shared the following example:

For the first couple of years, [the City was] purchasing Porta Potties for us at all of our events. And then at our final event last year, like, we found out days before that “Oh, no, no, we're not providing that for you—you're on your own.” So, then it was like a scramble to, like, get washrooms on site at the last minute because again, we assumed that it was just kind of status quo. And in the transition, their team didn't know that the last person had done this kind of consistently. [When] it's not documented, and there's no, like, actual policy around it, or turns out they weren't following the policy, and we're like, “Well, that's news to us” (Festival F).

While this festival leader acknowledged that staffing changes invariably happen, she noted some frustration when it came to event day:

There's been times that we've shown up to run an event and one of the two sides [at the City] will be saying like, "You're not allowed to do that." [We say] "We actually talked to this person, and they said it was fine" and [they say] "Well, that person doesn't know what they're talking about, so you're not allowed to do that" (Festival F).

When there were changes to personnel at one or both partner organizations, it could become even more complicated. Festival F's leader went on to share the following:

With a consistent person like myself [sic], I can step in and [say] "Let me set the record straight. This is what's happening, and this is where we're going, and this is the plan"... But the communication breakdown often doesn't lead to that happening, which then, I think, can erode relationships and erode trust over, kind of, the long term.... You're in this constant state of building trust, rebuilding trust, building relationships, rebuilding relationships (Festival F).

As discussed earlier, communication and established roles and responsibilities are important for positive interorganizational relationships, and for establishing trust. Clearly, having a consistent and longstanding relationship – not just with an event partner organization but also with consistent individuals within that organization – can be crucial to successful collaboration.

4.4.5 The impact of the crisis on collaboration: The mediating roles of longstanding interorganizational relationships and the shared experience of the crisis

The previous section described a myriad of changes in how community event stakeholders collaborated during the crisis. The following section explores two factors that may have mediated the impact of the crisis on collaboration. First, it will discuss the benefits of established interorganizational and interpersonal relationships for crisis recovery and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, it will outline how the shared experience of the crisis may have unified the community-focused event ecosystem.

4.4.5.1 Established interorganizational relationships

Established interorganizational relationships, especially between local government and its longstanding partners, contributed to quicker crisis recovery—even if there was some degree of

tension during the pandemic experience. Specifically, community-focused event leaders reflected on how having past experience with the event and a spirit of collaboration were integral when returning to the in-person event. This finding is captured in the following example, where the event leader of Festival D described the exchange with another community event partner coming out of the pandemic:

It was, “Hey, we’re bringing this back, are you in?” “Yes, we’re in. We’re happy to help. Great to hear everything’s back. What do we do to help make it better and keep this thing going?” (Festival D).

In one situation, City staff described how a longstanding relationship with a community festival ultimately allowed both parties to bounce back from a tense situation during the pandemic. When the festival wanted to return to an in-person event sooner than the City and public health was comfortable with, there were a lot of “hoops” to go through for all the parties involved, but the relationship ultimately recovered. As the City’s special events coordinator recalled:

[They] understood where we were coming from, but [they were] frustrated and we got frustrated. So, in that respect, the relationship kind of changed in that year a little bit, but we're back. We’re good now. We’re fine (City special events coordinator).

City staff also cited an example of how their longstanding relationship with a community-led festival helped them to adapt to new ways of working together for long-term benefit. Before the pandemic, City staff operationally supported the opening ceremony for Festival B. When the festival pivoted to livestream broadcast the opening ceremony from a new location, the festival organizers approached the City to assist them in new ways, including making connections to a new venue partner. As time passed and the community returned to in-person festival activities, the City and Festival B found themselves collaborating to explore additional City venues and discussing festival strategies, elevating the relationship from one of simple operational support to a greater strategic partnership. According to City staff:

I think that made us a little stronger now because now we're actually partnering up with them more. There's more of a trust now. So that one's strengthened more, and I think that'll work out better for all partners (City special events coordinator).

From their perspective, the leaders of Festival B also highlighted the positive shift in their relationship with the City as a result of the crisis; they described how this collaboration moved beyond the provision of spaces, logistical resources, and a grant. Post-pandemic, these festival leaders agree their relationship with the City evolved to mutual problem solving and an openness to support Festival B's efforts to modernize, evolve, and become more sustainable. For example, a Festival B leader described how they successfully proposed a vision for their festival to the City that was a departure from status quo. He reflected on the vital role of interorganizational trust between the two event partners, saying:

It's easy to trust when you're doing something that's the same old, same old.... [They] had to trust us that we had a vision that would work.... And for us, we needed to trust that the stuff we were asking for down there [at a new location] could be done by the City because they hadn't done an event down there of that scale (Festival B).

Festival B also described how their relationships with some longstanding cultural venue partners were under some tension and transition prior to the pandemic. Ultimately, the further disruption and magnitude of uncertainty that came with the pandemic was an unexpected positive influence on these somewhat tenuous relationships. During the crisis, the smaller partners became more open to using common messaging and shared resources; according to a leader of Festival B, this was "a big deal" and "a step in the right direction."

In this example, interorganizational trust was strengthened through collaboration during and following the crisis. However, the crisis also led other community-focused event stakeholders to experience one another in a more negative way, possibly with consequences for less interorganizational trust for the future. For example, a leader of Festival F described how an

interaction with a festival vendor over pandemic public health guidelines made her wary the vendor might not be trustworthy in the future:

For example, if a vendor had joined us on site for an event and at that time we were supposed to be masking, we would say, “Hey vendor, you know, as for the vendor info sheet we sent you, like, you gotta wear your mask” and then a vendor’s not wearing a mask, you know, that sort of thing is going to have a long-term impact on our relationship just because they weren’t willing to follow our policies and expectations (Festival F).

Another example where trust may have been challenged as a result of the crisis experience was shared by City neighbourhood staff. With ever-changing pandemic public health guidelines causing frustration and burnout amongst residents, City staff were concerned about its impact on the future relationships between resident groups and local government administrators. As one City neighbourhood manager recalled:

When we were sort of recovering from the pandemic, certain groups were like “We wanna move. We wanna move.” We’re like, “You gotta slow down a little bit” ... Yeah, we had to make some tough decisions that maybe everybody didn’t agree with. And so that can fracture trust too, because they’re seeing a need and we’re not supporting it, right? That’s how it came across to them (City neighbourhood manager).

Thus, during the crisis, local government staff had adopted a role of information sharing and trying to help its various event partners navigate the complex and changing landscape of public health guidelines set by another level of government. Now that this function was no longer required, there were lingering negative consequences for the relationship. The next section discusses how the shared experience of the COVID-19 global pandemic may have had a longer-term impact on interorganizational collaboration following the crisis.

4.4.5.2 Shared experience of the crisis

As discussed in an earlier section, increased willingness to share resources, less competition, and shared vulnerability highlight how the crisis created a more collaborative and mutually

supportive community event ecosystem. It seemed this collaboration yielded potential positive post-pandemic benefits, as well. As a City event leader reflected:

Maybe it's because of what we all went through the pandemic, there seems to be certainly more of a willingness on everyone's part to collaborate together.... I mean, we've all kind of reinvented the way we work since 2020 and how we do things and... it's a result of, just that you know, that maybe we need each other more than we thought to do some really cool things (City special events manager).

This shared crisis experience brought people together through their mutual vulnerability. It may or may not have been the result of having had existing relationships with others in the ecosystem, but rather the shared human experience of going through something so unprecedented while also trying to keep your festival or event afloat. Festival B recognized the benefits of this shared experience to build more support amongst event providers, noting:

I think the pandemic really illustrated just how vulnerable all of us are. And when you're put in that situation, you go through that shared experience together, and so many people barely scrape by, or some didn't, now everyone's, "Yeah, like, what can we do to help each other out?" Everyone was in a similar position to us coming out of it, and so that makes you want to work with them even more (Festival B).

The leader of another community-focused event organization that was not able to host their in-person event during the pandemic lockdowns remembered, "We had to find ways to stay creative. And support each other" (Festival D).

The event leader for Festival F emphasized the constant uncertainty and changing policy landscape for event providers during the pandemic served as a bonding experience that ultimately strengthened their interorganizational relationships with other event providers. She shared:

Back when there were COVID restrictions, there definitely were times that we've reached out to event partners, you know, like "Am I interpreting this right? Like, can I have an event right now, am I allowed to do that? Are you interpreting this the same way?" Just using each other as a support and a resource to better understand all of the legislation and information that was coming our way.... I do think there was the spirit of, like camaraderie, throughout the pandemic where people were willing to, you know, lend

an extra hand or share information, you know, be as helpful as possible because everybody was just kind of having a hard time and life was a little bit slower....And that, I think, just opened up people to, you know, sharing more, giving more, partnering, collaborating more. And I think it that just, like, the environment and the climate of it all lent well to working together when, previously, it might have just been easier to operate in our little silos (Festival F).

A unique circumstance was shared by the leader of Festival D, a community-focused sport event. He had joined his organization just prior to the onset of the pandemic and described having to establish trust with others during uncertain times. He observed, “It showed people’s true colours under pressure.” He recalled discussing sensitive items “With somebody that maybe I hadn’t really met or didn’t have any previous experience with.” He reflected that, at the same time, “It was good for [the partners] to figure out what I’m about.” This event leader ultimately considered the pandemic down-time as an advantage for relationship building, saying:

It stunk, but it actually did a lot of good for us... it’s really helped to be able to focus on some new things to how we work and... all that sort of stuff that coming out on the other side of it, much stronger. But it allowed for time to build relationships (Festival D).

A City administrator reflected on how, following the pandemic, he thought differently about the time it takes to establish new partnerships and initiatives. He shared:

I feel like the timeline of trust has really been condensed, and I’m not sure if that’s a direct result of the pandemic or not. Maybe as people value their time differently? Maybe we are just less trusting... but I do feel like people wanna kind of get to the point a lot quicker.... [In the past] there was a lot of, like, coffee meetings and a lot of ... beating around the bush kind of... but they weren’t wasted time, because you were developing a level of trust with that individual. But now, I’m feeling like, while those meetings still do happen, [we] are best to kind of get ahead of it and just lay out, “Hey, just so we’re on the same page, here’s what we’re able to provide,” and us talking about the weather for ten meetings isn’t going to get you more. And I think that there’s probably an appetite, a welcomeness to that on the part of the other stakeholders... But I feel like in kind of this, you know, post-pandemic world...you know the quicker we can get to an explanation of deal points, and a positive productive way, the better (City administrator).

At the time of the pandemic, some event organizations (especially grassroots and resident-led groups) were completely vulnerable to the disruption. Others had already been

recognizing the need to evolve. Participants in this study were selected because their event continued to exist two years after the pandemic, which suggested some degree of crisis recovery and resilience. The last section will respond to research question four: *What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?*

4.5 Recovery and Resilience of Events, Event Organizations, and Event Ecosystems:

Contributing Factors Following From the Crisis

The COVID-19 global pandemic challenged community-focused event and festival stakeholders to think and act differently in the face of crisis and disruption. As the leader of Festival B commented:

[The pandemic] really forced people to think in a different way and forced them to think outside the box and forced them to do things that they've been told that they were gonna need to have to do it in the next five years and they had to do it. Then it really forced people to persevere. So, some people you saw, they faded away, you know, that's what happened. Whether their business closed, or small festivals closed or whatever, but for others, they dug their heels in. They persevered, they worked together, and they accomplished some great things and are still here today to talk about it (Festival B).

Having shared their crisis experiences, including how they worked with other stakeholders in the community event ecosystem during this time, community-focused event stakeholders were invited to reflect on what they learned and how these experiences may influence their event today and into the future. Altogether, these themes offer insights into crisis recovery and resilience related to three elements: the festival or event(s), the event host organization, and the community's overall event ecosystem.

Figure 5 presents a multi-dimensional view of event management, event organization and community event ecosystem crisis recovery and resilience following a crisis.

Figure 5: Factors contributing to event, organization and ecosystem recovery and resilience following a crisis

Event management	Elevated attention to health and safety
	Volunteer engagement
	Use of technology
	Use of physical spaces and infrastructure
	Continuous adaptation
Event organization	Better understanding of audiences
	Reevaluating event outcomes and metrics
	Leveraging the disruption to advance other organizational priorities
	Prioritization of partnerships
	Organizational leadership and values
Community-focused event ecosystem	Interorganizational and interpersonal collaboration
	Shared vision for the community event ecosystem
	Leadership role of local government

The first level of event crisis recovery and resilience took place at the level of the event itself, focused on specific event management tasks and approaches related to health and safety, volunteer engagement, use of technology, physical spaces and infrastructure, and an overall commitment to continuous adaptation of event management practices. The second level of event crisis recovery and resilience was based in the event organization, where the event organization's paid and/or volunteer leaders reimagined the event's audiences and measures of success and prioritizing its event partners. Organizational strategies also involved the influence of the organization's leadership and values. Finally, the third level of event crisis recovery and resilience took place at a macro level of the whole community-focused festival and event ecosystem, where interorganizational and interpersonal collaboration, a shared vision of the ecosystem, and a clear leadership function for local government are key factors. At each of the

levels of the event, the event organization, and the event ecosystem, capacity—whether organizational or community capacity—was considered an overarching factor in resilience and recovery following the crisis. Organizational and community capacity are discussed below.

4.5.1 Organizational and community capacity: A foundation for resilience

Both organizational and community capacity are key constructs in resilience literature.

Organizational capacity includes factors such as leadership, governance, resources, and relationships (Barasa et al., 2018; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Godschalk, 2003; Patel et al., 2017).

Community capacity includes both the organized efforts of individuals, organizations and networks, as well as informal social processes in a community (Chaskin, 2001). For the community-focused festival and event ecosystem, community capacity captures the collective abilities and resources of all event stakeholders, including local government and other secondary organizations (such as emergency services and media) that did not participate in this study.

Earlier in the findings, it was identified that not all community-focused festival and event organizations had the same degree of organizational capacity. Grassroots cultural organizations (such as festival food vendors) and resident-led neighbourhood associations were more likely to have had capacity challenges prior to the pandemic that made them especially vulnerable to the crisis. As shared earlier, not all of these groups survived the pandemic, as the crisis was said to be the “nail in the coffin” for the group or organization. In contrast, other community-focused festival and event organizations—especially those longstanding ones with many years (even decades) of experience and established resources, volunteers, and connections with local government—were better able to withstand the crisis. Newer event organizations that may have been building their resources and capacity may have been more taxed by the crisis or may have been more creative or open to reaching out to partners for help. The degrees of organizational

capacity varied from event organization to event organization; further, their organizational capacities may not have been consistent throughout the various phases of the crisis (pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and emerging from/ post-pandemic). However, beyond the individual experiences of each festival and event organization, it is worth considering more broadly the collective ecosystem experience. For example, in response to the research question about interorganizational relationships, there were strengths brought to the entire ecosystem through new collaborations, and building on established trust, mutual support, and flexibility. Many of these dimensions existed prior to the crisis; as the leader of Festival E shared, they were part of the fabric of the community itself:

And if you need some help like there's always someone there that will connect you, which I think, really, like that's Kitchener. It's like the most connected city. Like we're a bunch of smart people and interesting and unique people... I think that at the end of the day, wherever I've lived elsewhere, it's like it hasn't been like this. There is something I think special to this area for sure (Festival E).

As such, both community and organizational capacity play an overarching role in crisis recovery and resilience. The following sections explore the three levels of resilience—event management, event strategy, and community event ecosystem strategy—beginning with a discussion of resilient event management practices.

4.5.2 Resilient event management practices: Beyond health and safety

Event management is the process of overseeing and coordinating all aspects of an event, from conception to completion. As a result of their crisis experience that necessitated adaptation, leaders of community-focused event organizations were left to reconsider many of their event management practices. For the event leaders in this study, some of the logistical considerations that have changed the way that they plan and deliver their event going forward include (a) an elevated attention to health and safety; (b) volunteer engagement; (c) the use of technology; (d)

the use of physical spaces and infrastructure; and (e) continuous adaptation. These themes are discussed in further detail below.

After two years of focused attention on physical distancing, masking, vaccinations, and hand sanitizing, event leaders viewed health and safety guidelines with a new appreciation. Today, specific pandemic public health expectations are increasingly fewer as time passes (for example, masks are only worn based on individual preference, not event mandate). However, some community event stakeholders reported their experiences with health and safety led them to shift the way that they work with vendors and volunteers, in particular. For example, Festival A reported that, out of an abundance of caution for their volunteers and volunteers' increased discomfort with roles such as handling garbage, these tasks were now completed by paid staff or service providers. The event organizer felt this change will be long-term, and bring new, go-forward costs to the annual festival.

Responding to changing volunteer preferences is part of a broader evolution of how community-focused event organizations engage with volunteers post-pandemic. As discussed earlier in this review, prior to the pandemic, there was already an emerging trend toward older volunteers moving away from longer-term volunteer roles, and younger volunteers (and a fewer number of them) volunteering less or looking for episodic volunteer roles. The changing demographic composition of the community that was simultaneously happening prior to the pandemic also contributed to a change in the make-up of the future pool of event volunteers. As the City's special events coordinator emphasized: "What the pandemic taught us about volunteers is we can't find volunteers anymore." An event leader from Festival B remarked that "People's lives changed during the pandemic, and they just didn't come back to their old life."

Thus, while the change in volunteers was a pre-pandemic risk to community-focused festival and event organizations, the crisis lit a fire under their need to think about volunteers in new ways. This rethinking was especially the case for Festival B; it regarded itself as “very fortunate” to have many of what it called “legacy volunteers” who contributed to the festival for a long time, ranging from 10 to 50 years. The event leader from this festival noted that many of these volunteer connections to their festival were enduring, but they could not rest on them. He shared:

We were very lucky because it takes more than a pandemic for them to disappear. But, at the same time, what it made us realize is, OK, we can't just rely on those legacy volunteers. We need to bring in new volunteers. So, it's thinking about our different roles and what are we actually offering, what are you gaining as a volunteer from these roles, from these opportunities? They might want to learn a new skill. So how can we engage them in that way so that we can bring in excited volunteers and give them something tangible and meaningful to do while they volunteer with us.... We need to build that next generation of legacy volunteers... I call it creating that new nostalgia, right? (Festival B)

Resilient event organizations like Festival B were forward-thinking about their volunteer recruitment, and also their training. Keeping in mind the changing demographics of the community, and the broader desire to continue to offer events that represent and engage all members of the community, some festival and event organizations were already building diversity, equity and inclusion into their volunteer recruitment and training post-pandemic.

During the first two years of the pandemic, community-focused event organizations grappled with the potential to use technology platforms to make an alternative format of their event available, either fully as an online event or later as a possible hybrid event with both in-person and online components. While some festival and event organizations entirely eliminated all online components post-pandemic, for others the experience continued to influence their thoughts about the use of technology as a creative mechanism for audience engagement. For example, an event leader for Festival E embraced the opportunity to think about the needs and

interests of their audience who may have been less interested in attending in-person experiences post-pandemic. The crisis helped her event organization to better appreciate that not everybody was “super social,” and remote and hybrid event components were likely worth maintaining for those who were less comfortable in public spaces and with in-person event experiences. Festival E’s event leader articulated the opportunity she saw for all event organizers in the use of technologies going forward, saying:

I think it forced us to think about events not in just, like, one day and one room... For me, it’s like the opportunity of, like, merging the digital with the real-life experience. So kind of trying to extend that event or enhance it using digital platforms or using other things to connect it to continue to build that story. That’s what the pandemic changed for me. Like different opportunities to connect with people who may need a little extra push to meet someone, I guess. And what can we do to help remove those barriers? (Festival E).

Beyond the use of new technologies for post-pandemic events, event organizers’ crisis experiences also inspired them to take “temporary” spaces and physical event infrastructure and make them part of the new inventory of resources available for community festivals and events. Specifically, City event organizers discussed how the pandemic escalated calls to expand events beyond the downtown core. They noted that while use of other parks throughout the community was being explored prior to the pandemic, the broader use of smaller neighbourhood-based parks and community centres during the pandemic was met with enthusiasm. For example, a City special events manager recalled that members of City Council wanted more use of community space, saying: “Oh yeah, this is really cool...we should continue this.” While City staff saw this shift as a positive, in that they could engage with more community groups looking to host events, they were quick to identify the need to match the use of these physical spaces with staffing capacity. They identified that this approach opened the door to new conversations with other departments, such as parks and community services. This example shows the benefits of increased intraorganizational collaboration that emerged from the crisis experience.

Some of the changes introduced to community festival and event formats coming out of the pandemic have been accepted as their “new normal.” For example, Festival A’s leader shared that the event reduced the hours of its two-day cultural festival to end slightly earlier on both days, to accommodate reduced numbers of volunteers during the pandemic. She remarked, “We would have never considered it, but it worked really well” and have since made this their new schedule for the event. A more prevalent example of pandemic changes now part of the post-pandemic event landscape was the City’s use of outdoor huts for more events in more locations going forward. Previously used exclusively for a single winter annual festival and left in storage for the rest of the year, during the pandemic, neighbourhood associations asked to use these physical resources to serve food or beverages at markets or other neighbourhood-based gatherings, especially given that community centres were closed during the height of the pandemic. Likewise, a mobile event infrastructure introduced during the pandemic was used to deliver mobile events at other times of the year. Interestingly, the City’s special events manager commented that not all of the events or event formats that were introduced in the pandemic needed to be continued following the crisis. Regarding one of their pandemic mobile, interactive events, he noted:

I know that there was a lot of interest for us to keep it going, like even post-pandemic, and I’m really glad we didn’t because it was something unique. It was something special (City special events manager).

As community-focused event leaders discussed their crisis event experiences, they repeatedly highlighted the constant need to adapt and be ready to change course based on new public health guidelines. After more than two years operating in that state of uncertainty, event leaders saw this adaptability as a new skill that will support their ability to be more resilient in the future. As the event leader from Festival B described:

I think that was a big thing from the pandemic, too. People had to learn on the fly and adjust and adapt and learn to be adaptable. “Learn to be able to pivot” was used way too many times during the pandemic, but it was true. People need to learn how to pivot and so that’s what the pandemic did for us. It made us realize, “OK, we don’t have the luxury of taking five years to figure out if something works, or taking two years to figure out something works... We need to learn in a year, right?” We need to take all the learning that we learn in a year and apply it to the next year right away because that that’s kind of the state most festivals are in. You have to be able to be adaptable (Festival B).

All told, the crisis undoubtedly influenced the ongoing event management tactics used by event organizations that survived the crisis. As outlined above, following the pandemic, resilient community event leaders adopted an elevated attention to health and safety; thought more strategically about volunteer engagement; were more intentional about the use of technologies, physical spaces and infrastructure; and embraced the need for continuous adaptation and flexibility for the future of their event. Beyond event planning and delivery, event leaders also engaged differently in how they approached event strategies and partnerships. These themes are explored in the next section.

4.5.3 Resilient event organizations: Strategies, partnerships, and leadership

Influenced by their crisis experience, many leaders of community-focused event organizations identified they were now thinking more strategically about their events. This included (a) a better understanding of event audiences, including audience segmentation; (b) reevaluating the event’s outcomes and metrics of success; (c) leveraging the crisis to advance other strategies for the event organization; (d) prioritization of partnerships; and (e) embracing organizational leadership and values. These themes are discussed in further detail below.

4.5.3.1 Better understanding of event audiences

The leader of Festival B described how their exploration of different sub-events online during the pandemic helped to better segment the event’s audience and to better understand new themes or activities that people were interested engaging with more in the future. Consequently, identifying

these more specialized event components opened their festival organization up to engaging with new delivery partners. He went on to discuss how these audience insights enabled them to engage with existing sponsors in new ways and to attract some new sponsors, as well:

I think during the pandemic we learned that we were reliant on others to get [our] message out there because we were so limited to what we could do, and it showed us the importance of third-party events or other people partnering with us to execute events. And so that's been a big focus moving forward, coming out of the pandemic for us is how can we partner with more people to create these events...or how can we create events that are gonna fit someone specific needs and connect them to the festival in a different way. We don't have the capacity to run all of those. So how can we partner with people to execute these events and make sure that they are, you know, world class experiences for people and that are gonna they're going to like it, engage it in and see the connection [to the festival] ... So, it's changed how we're able to approach some of our existing sponsors and change those partnerships (Festival B).

4.5.3.2 Reevaluating event metrics and outcomes

Several community-focused event leaders described how the crisis made them reevaluate what made their event successful, highlighting the pandemic showed them attendance numbers alone did not tell the whole story of the impact of a community event. For example, the City's special events manager explained the pandemic showed them firsthand that smaller neighbourhood-based events with 50 to 100 attendees could offer more meaningful interpersonal experiences for residents than a festival with thousands of attendees. He also highlighted how the pandemic experience heightened the City's attention toward measures of event experience, such as whether attendees feel safe and comfortable. Finally, beyond attendee numbers and experience, one City administrator reflected on how the number of community partners, stakeholders and promoters the City was working with could become a new measure of success in the future.

4.5.3.3 Leveraging the downtime of the pandemic to advance other priorities and initiatives

Community-focused event stakeholders described how they were able to successfully leverage the "down time" when they were unable to deliver in-person events, especially in the early phase

of the crisis. For the City, event staff were redeployed into temporary intradepartmental pandemic response teams with responsibilities including outdoor patio eateries, and neighbourhood and resident engagement in the face of prohibited public gatherings. The leader for Festival D was able to intentionally advance the organization's efforts around equity, diversity and inclusion, noting:

What the pandemic did in this case for us, it actually let me kind of step back as an organization, we had time on our side and be able to really start to move some things that were needed.... We would have gotten there, [but] I don't think it would have been there as fast as we did (Festival D).

Finally, the City's special events coordinator described their efforts to advance the sustainability infrastructure for community festivals and events, which had been on their list to do pre-pandemic, but they had not had any real dedicated time to advance this work.

4.5.3.4 Partner prioritization

While event leaders discussed the number of different types of partners they engaged with to deliver their event, the immediate disruption of the crisis had the advantage of making it clear who were their "priority partners." In the face of no public gatherings, and as event leaders were trying to develop alternative event formats, some partners such as food or craft vendors were not able to be engaged. Volunteers who had largely been involved in event logistics such as set-up, tear-down, or parking, were not needed. Even as the crisis moved into a second year where in-person components may have been possible, it remained clear with which partners there was urgency to engage with regularly, and those community event partners who were simply not as important during the disruption. As a City administrator described:

We've done such a good job of creating this, like, utopia, where everyone's important... [We learned] that there's only so many hours in the day... Even though we want to pretend that all the groups are the same and treated equal, you're not as important... and that's a tough that's a tough pill to swallow, right? (City administrator).

Longstanding partnerships meant there was generally enough interorganizational, interpersonal, or even intraorganizational trust established to be relatively confident the partnership could resume over time. Exceptions may have been sponsors, or volunteers, whose relationships with the event organization may have been more tenuous pre-pandemic. In the case of volunteers, the previous discussion of post-pandemic event management described the shift required to recruit and train volunteers. The crisis also inspired Festival C's event leader to think creatively, proposing a partnership with another event organization in the region to share volunteer resources across both festivals.

Resilient event organizations were already thinking differently about event strategy prior to the crisis. One feature of a resilient event organization was that it was not complacent; its ability to think with a future-orientation prior to the disruption served as a protective factor in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most pronounced example of this was Festival B; its event leaders described a process of Board, volunteer, and partner engagement about the future of the festival that had been initiated in the two to three years leading up to the beginning of the pandemic. They described this process:

Before the pandemic, we had already started to do the strategic planning looking at ahead of, you know, where this festival could go to meet the needs of the community. I think we had identified at that point in time that the community has changed a lot.... So, that direction had already kind of started before the pandemic.... We'd seen a shift in kind of our old model how we interacted with our partners.... We'd taken a look at you know, "How is that relationship? How's that changing?".... So, we had already started to move away from a lot of the old model at that point prior to the pandemic (Festival B).

The event leaders for Festival B also attributed their resilience to the volunteer leadership of the not-for-profit festival organization, notably longstanding volunteers, who leveraged their established relationships to modernize the event's connection to the local community. As a leader of Festival B described:

Those relationships kind of got us through the through the pandemic I would say, right? Having people that had been around for a while... with the energy and foresight to think about relationships, think about how important it was to come up with a strategic plan during those times so that we had a path moving forward are things that I value because they are things that we're relying on now.... we're benefiting from that work of past relationships that [our festival] had built and that's where the festival's lucky we've done a pretty good job building relationships within the community and building trust within the community and it's something we value is maintaining those relationships, maintaining the trust and continuing to build them up even more (Festival B).

4.5.3.5 *Organizational leadership and values*

Unprompted, some community-focused event leaders reflected on their own personal values and leadership style, commenting on how these core beliefs and managerial behaviour influenced the way they did their jobs and interacted with others, especially during the crisis. For some, this subject was especially relevant as they were new to the event organization prior to the pandemic. In many cases, event organizers recognized the need to act as responsible and compassionate leaders during uncertain times. They also reflected on how the crisis demonstrated when a partners' values were out of alignment or incompatible with their own. They shared how some of these experiences had impacted their post-pandemic event practices and relationships. The following section will explore these themes.

Several community-focused event leaders referred to their own style, values and approach, saying “Maybe that’s just my makeup and my personality” (Festival D) or “That’s how I’m built” (Festival A), and referencing that “I think this just comes out of my own passion and interest in terms of the scope of my work” (Festival E). Several community-focused festival and event leaders commented on doing the “right thing” when it came to sharing information and resources, often without the expectation of reciprocity. As the leader of Festival D noted:

There’s no expectations—if it’s right to do, it’s the right thing to do. We’re gonna do it, and I’m just not gonna have any expectations to come back the other way. And I think karma kind of looks after us a bit. I really do (Festival D).

In the context of increased polarization and conflict described earlier, it was evident that personal values had the potential to change existing partnerships. One community event organizer described working with a community partner who planned an event at the same time as a day of cultural recognition, and how this led to a negative change in their relationship. She shared:

And I reached out as a human, not even with my [event] hat. And I said, “You know, hey guys, you’re making a mistake, and I think you should change the date,” or “I think you should do something because this is not tasteful.” And that is something that backlashed and had an impact on our relationship with them and also rippled and had an impact on other relationships we have with other businesses because of this situation (Festival F).

The same event leader shared an example of a partner who was anti-mask and anti-vaccine, and how it led them to think differently about potential partners and sponsors. She commented:

[Before the pandemic], we had a decent pulse on, like, these are the businesses we should just initially avoid because we know that the jive isn’t there. [For others], we might not have known what their kind of values and beliefs system were like and how they clashed with ours. So, I think COVID... shed more light on those pieces (Festival F).

She described how this experience led them to establish and communicate their event and partnership policies related to shared values. The leader of Festival E described how valuing the contributions of its partners can sometimes influence the kinds of events in which it engages:

When you think about partnering with organizations that don’t necessarily have those aligned values and visions, those partnerships just don’t really work out. So, they may approach you with a cool idea, but when they realize that there actually has to be some [financial] transaction.... I think that people still have the mindset of creatives and artists are free. But I’m like, “OK, no, I need another answer. That’s not what I want.” (Festival E).

The leader of Festival D described his view that, during the disruption of the COVID-19 global pandemic, his organization had a responsibility to be a leader in the community:

As an organization, we really tried to make a conscious effort to be mindful of how we went into the community. We were also really aware that there are other, bigger things going on and people had bigger needs... people [were] losing jobs, people trying to figure out how to put food on the table. [We knew that] ... we have a platform here, and I wanted to make sure that we tried to use it for good and really try to help people (Festival D).

In the examples shared, values-based leadership was often connected to newer event organizations led by younger leaders, or with individuals who were new to the community or the event organization itself. Indeed, at various times before, during and since the crisis, some community-focused festival and event organizations experienced changes in staff or volunteer leadership. Whether a new leader disrupted routine, introduced new approaches and strategies, or established new interpersonal and interorganizational relationships, overall, new leadership was generally seen as an overall opportunity for the event and the event organization, and even the community. In one case, a new leader in an event organization was able to observe and support a front-line team that was close to burn-out from the crisis experience. In another, a board volunteer was intentional about seeking and establishing a trust relationship with the new leader of the organization, articulating:

It was really important to me to find someone I could trust and have a good relationship with.... I tried to be really as upfront and honest as I could with [them], about what [they were] getting [themselves] into potentially (Festival B).

Finally, a City administrator considered whether not-for-profit, volunteer-led organizations were at an advantage or a disadvantage at the time of the crisis. He mused that the nature of the volunteer engagement, and whether the organization had spent any time modernizing its volunteer pool, could be make or break factors during a disruption of any magnitude. As he reflected:

I think the nonprofit groups in a lot of ways are at an advantage because they're driven by you know, often volunteers and some of the resourcing that they get is kind of built into the, I'll call it, "goodwill" of the event itself. You've got, like, you know, super committed, super wonderful community volunteers and people who are just so giving up their time and energy. [In contrast], if you look to the community, to look at which groups are having challenges, it's the groups that, where either the demographic of the volunteers are now aging out... the resource flow of new incoming volunteers is not there...they've just reached a point where they can't continue (City administrator).

This section described how an event organization's overall ability to envision and implement event strategies and partnerships is a factor for its crisis recovery and resilience. Findings include better understanding of audiences, shifting metrics of success, leveraging the disruption to advance other organizational priorities, prioritization of partnerships, and organizational leadership and shared values. The closing section will discuss the final level of event crisis recovery and resilience: community-focused event ecosystem strategy.

4.5.4 Community-focused event ecosystem strategy: Collaboration, shared vision, and leadership of local government

The previous sections described how, in the face of crisis, resilient community event organizations and their leaders learned to adjust their event management practices, and also explored and adopted strategies and partnerships that could sustain and even expand their festival or event post-pandemic. A final way that community-focused event stakeholders responded to the crisis was through an increased connection between their festival or event(s), their event organization, and the larger ecosystem of community events. As they emerged from the crisis, leaders of community-focused event organizations were able to connect to the broader community event ecosystem in three fundamental ways, as follow: (a) through established and strengthened interorganizational and interpersonal relationships and collaboration amongst ecosystem stakeholders; (b) by seeing their own event and event organization through the lens of a shared vision of and appreciation for the social and economic value of community-focused festivals and events; and (c) via the leadership role of local government. The next section will build on the earlier findings presented about event stakeholders' interorganizational and interpersonal relationships during the crisis and establish how mutual support and shared experience of a crisis was significant for crisis recovery and resilience in the future.

4.5.4.1 *Interorganizational and interpersonal collaboration between community-focused event ecosystem stakeholders*

During and emerging from the crisis, community-focused festival and event leaders looked out for one another. Festival A's leader described its community partnerships as being a "circle of care" that got stronger as the result of its crisis experience:

I think that the good got better... it almost feels like a secret society... You have a group that is trying really hard to put something on for the community, to benefit the community. And so, every single person that works with you, and is polite to you and you're polite to them, and it creates almost like a weird little circle of a group and being good to people and having people be good to you. [This] really became even more important after the world became weird, and having those relationships of support and knowing that we had that support from everyone from all the vendors, from community, from police, from the City. It's good for us and it's good for them and.... The festival, in itself, is an entity, and the more people that take care of it and nurture it, the better it becomes (Festival A).

A leader from Festival B likened the pandemic and post-pandemic crisis recovery to what happened broadly in the hospitality industry, when restaurants came together so they could all survive. With this type of a strategic alliance in mind, several community-focused event leaders talked about the vulnerability of community festivals and events and the need to create a thriving festival environment in the region post-pandemic. As Festival B's event leader reflected:

It's really hard to do a festival right now. We're not seeing festivals start to grow, right? We're hearing announcements of festivals shutting down and I don't want that to happen in our region.... It's better for everyone because if another festival is doing better, maybe they get some resources that they now have that will be helpful for us during our festival, right? (Festival B).

The leader of Festival C believed that there was less competition amongst local festivals and events following the crisis. He attributed this to the new reality of reduced event attendee spending described in an earlier section, and reflected:

It's not like you're competing for dollars with [other festivals] because the dollars aren't really there from a public standpoint of the spend that they're gonna make at your festival, right? (Festival C).

The leader of Festival B shared that their festival organization is being intentionally proactive in offering outreach and support to smaller grassroots event organizations, saying:

I try to talk to people that are doing smaller festivals and get a sense of what they're doing. If there's anything we can do to support or there's any tips that I can share with them (Festival B).

As an example, this festival organization offered one of its mobile event resources to the Indigenous community for an upcoming event, noting "We just wanted them to have that opportunity to use a resource that we had" (Festival B).

Overall, it seems that pre-pandemic interpersonal and interorganizational relationships, especially amongst longstanding partners, strengthened an event organization's ability to recover from the crisis. Further, being situated within a larger community-focused event ecosystem created a shared experience that seemed to normalize the crisis experience. The next section will discuss another way that resilient event organizations were interconnected during and coming out of the crisis: through a shared vision for the role of community-focused festivals and events in their post-pandemic community.

4.5.4.2 Shared vision for the post-pandemic community-focused event ecosystem

Several community event stakeholders wondered whether, prior to the pandemic, we may have taken for granted the value of connection. As the City's special events manager recalled:

We were in our houses. We couldn't go outside. We had to wash our groceries. [It] was weird, and then we were slowly let out and we were slowly doing things, and we were slowly reconnecting, and I think the pandemic, for me, made us realize and value connection and relationships and some of the things that... we took, maybe, perhaps for granted (City special events manager).

Another event leader shared, "I know for me personally it made me miss things... I know for my family, made us not take things for granted anymore" (Festival D). A leader of Festival B

juxtapositioned our isolation during pandemic restrictions with the emergence of a return to in-person community events, saying:

During COVID, when everyone was sitting at home with nothing to do, we all were, you know, wishing we could get out there and connect with people, right, and events that allow you to do that. And it showed the first year after COVID, like 2022, the first full year back to kind of more normal. I mean, we had huge attendance and in the energy in the event was something I've never experienced, just because people are so happy to be out and kind of reconnecting with people, right? I think people might have taken [events] for granted before, but now I think they more recognize the value of those events now (Festival B).

If, collectively, we may have taken these social connections for granted prior to the pandemic, community-focused festival and event stakeholders expressed hope for a post-pandemic future where festivals and events serve as a foundation for social connection. They expressed a belief that our pandemic experience opened the door for a new (or renewed) appreciation of how community-focused festivals and events foster a sense of belonging and a sense of community, engaging residents in shared convivial experiences. As a festival sponsor enthusiastically shared:

Events as a whole, you know, create energy. They allow people to connect, they keep, they create vibrancy within a community. If you had no events in the community then... people wouldn't be drawn to your community (Festival sponsor).

A sport event leader from Festival D described a leadership imperative for community event organizations emerging from the crisis, saying:

Now, in the last few years, as we've come out of the pandemic, it's been the reconnecting, the social interaction... the smiles, the memories, all of that stuff. Like, I know it's really cliché, but it's so real! I think it was really important for people to reconnect, and if organizations had the ability to host some of these events, to bring people back together and to put smiles back on faces, we had to do it... to bring back the events to make us all you know, feel normal again (Festival D).

A community event leader from Festival B referred to festivals and events as “the right thing to do,” emphasizing:

It's the right thing to do because to me comes down to community, vitality, community vibrancy and we want our community to survive Waterloo region to survive. And so, we

need to make it a really great place to live, play, work, grow. All those things and people want interesting things to do and see and go to. ... And so that's where the cultural festivals are so important to the makeup of our community, vibrancy and placemaking (Festival B).

Community-focused event leaders were able to see beyond these “bigger picture” benefits of festivals and events for the community as a whole, and also extended these benefits to individuals who volunteer at events, and those who come together to partner in other ways to conceive of new events and initiatives. For example, according to the leader of Festival F:

We do hear from people all the time that, like, our events and especially for the volunteers on our team that, you know, they've made connections and friendships and relationships with people... So, I think it does a lot in the way of building community and giving people a sense of belonging (Festival F).

Festival E, another newer event organization, also highlighted how community-focused events can not only engage residents but can inspire new ways of working with others in the community. She shared:

Events just have a way of, like, re-sparking life into an area... you might not think about going because it's always there and there's no sense of urgency and you're just going to stay at home because it's easier and you're tired and you've been working 14 hours. But I think that the events, especially when they're free and inclusive and can bring all people like of all walks of life, that's when you get those really cool kind of partnerships or relationships that form (Festival E).

These views of events capture both the desirability of post-pandemic social objectives (such as a return to connection amongst residents), as well as economic development objectives (like portraying a vibrant community that appeals and attracts business and talent to the region).

Several event stakeholders spoke about how social and economic objectives are equally important for their community emerging out of the crisis; they expressed a desire to build back stronger, especially in light of an economic downturn and social and geopolitical uncertainties described earlier. A City policymaker reflected on the role of special events in Kitchener prior to the pandemic, and their importance post-pandemic:

Back then and now, events were a priority for the city and for council, for a multitude of reasons. Certainly, you know, one of them was from the perspective of economic development, you know, downtown development and so on.... Pre-pandemic, [events were] designed to complement the range of investments that we were making... it was seen as a tool to have to help both attract and retain talent going forward.... It was also part of our desire in terms of growing our arts and culture, seeing the music scene in particular, which it was a priority for a number of members of Council. And so, it all kind of fit together nicely, then COVID happens.... I would say in this post-COVID period, everything that was true pre-COVID is true and even more so (City policymaker).

“Returning to normal” to achieve these social and economic objectives post-pandemic may not be immediate, though. Several community-focused event stakeholders discussed how our overall return to public engagement has not been instantaneous or predictable for everyone. As the City’s special events manager recalled:

Certainly, there was that time that we all had, you know, kind of when we were coming out of the pandemic: “Should I go back? Should I just do this virtually?” (City special events manager).

The leader of Festival B commented on the wide range of people’s comfort—and discomfort—that was—and still is—felt after a return from public health restrictions. She explained:

It’s funny, there’s kind of a couple different things that have happened with how people think about events coming out of the pandemic, right? There are people that came out of it that were, you know, introverts or weren’t really the event type people before. And they’re like, “No, I just want things to stay the same.” And there’s people that sorely missed it and like rushed back to do anything they could. And then there’s probably the bigger chunk of people now that are more isolated than ever because they got out of being social during the pandemic and now it’s affected them in a number of different ways (Festival B).

Another factor that influenced people’s return to community was likely the trend of working from home that emerged during the pandemic and became the norm for many post-pandemic. Thus, our post-pandemic patterns of engagement and participation in community may be influenced by both changes in how we interact in community (such as more working from home), as well as changes in how much we desire to interact in community (which may put some residents at risk of social isolation and declining sense of belonging).

Community-focused event stakeholders were quick to advocate that post-pandemic festivals and events are integral to the well-being of residents. A City policymaker articulated:

If anything, whether consciously or subconsciously, I think our need for more of this [community events] is only grown as a result of the pandemic, as a result of, you know, the lack of sense of belonging that people are grappling with, the mental health needs and the role that some of this stuff can play in terms of supporting people through some of their some of their mental health issues. I think all of that has really only increased.... I think people are looking for positives in an increasingly complex and divided world... in a tech world where even if people are working from home, these kinds of added activities [like special events] are so important in terms of where people choose to live in and locate from a talent perspective (City policymaker).

The City policymaker's perspective was echoed by the City special events coordinator, working on the ground with local festivals and events in a post-pandemic community. She shared:

I think generally speaking, broadly speaking, people are more patient, they are more patient, they are more trusting, they understand that there is a bigger need, more than ever, to gather as a community, to come together as a community. I think when we weren't able to do it, um, you realize the value in it, in gathering together.... So, I think when we work with community... it's a shared kind of need to build something (City event staff).

The leader of a community cultural festival reflected on the role of music, culture and art in the return to community, and the shared responsibility to bring people and families back out into community life. She said:

To bring people together, to have joy and music and art and all of those other things... it appears to me to be very important to our city reps, to our city councilors, to our mayor. I would expect that's the same for festivals trying to get people back out. For us, we're a family festival, so trying to bring families back is important. For the city, I think it's important for people to just get out of their houses and be happy and do fun things (Festival A).

Community-focused event stakeholders also considered festivals and events as a way to ease the growing post-pandemic social divide. A festival sponsor discussed the importance of events in the context of access to community spaces and safe ways to interact with one another in community, saying:

We have very few places where you can actually meet strangers and understand they're not that strange, and community events are one of them. Whether it's a parade, whether it's a concert, whether it's a thing in the park, these are where humans interact, and that interaction is key to participatory democracy. And so all of the friction points that we see in society, I think their underlying root causes, we just don't spend as much time celebrating a "collective we" (Festival sponsor).

This festival sponsor went on to share that it will take time and effort to rebuild our sense of community. He offered:

Doing these types of community things is the medicine. And you're gonna have to over-invest in it, and you're gonna have to do it consistently, regardless of participation. Participation will build, but it won't be the first time you do it. You're gonna have to do it for a decade. Like, it's gonna take a mountain of engagement to get people back.... If I was the mayor, all I would be is the mayor of community events and joy, because if you just did that for a decade, you would be the best place to live. We'd have a lot better mental health and healthcare impact. You'd have a great economy because people wanna live there and yeah, you have a functioning democracy because we built a lot of trust in the community because we all got to know each other because we see each other at various community events.... At the end of the day, you wanna be efficient with your tax dollars, but these are really, really, really important things that we start doing more of as community or we're not gonna have a community (Festival sponsor).

As outlined in the previous section, many event stakeholders articulated that community-focused festivals and events were more important than ever in supporting a community vulnerable to the impacts of isolation and disconnection. At the same time, while reflecting on their crisis experiences, some community-focused event leaders reported that the halt in public gatherings, and the need to work creatively with other stakeholders during a time of such great disruption, gave them a new appreciation for their own event and its impact within the larger community-focused event ecosystem. As an event leader from Festival B reflected:

I didn't think about our event before the pandemic...I thought of it as just, you know, it's a great time for people to get together and commune and connect with community. But coming out of the pandemic, like, I saw it with the [mobile event], especially, just the importance of having that opportunity to celebrate. You got to see people come out and enjoy it. We saw people that were new to the city that don't really know what [our event] is. People who are new to the country, right? And so that was a huge thing that came out of the pandemic for us (Festival B).

Local government administrators and policymakers have a mandate to ensure the well-being of residents and the entire community through the direct provision or support to delivery of community services and resources. The role of special events and festivals, resident-led neighbourhood events and initiatives, and engagement of residents, community groups, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations are all fundamental to this core mandate. The next section explores the role of local government in rebuilding a successful post-pandemic community-focused event ecosystem.

4.5.4.3 The leadership role of local government in a post-pandemic community-focused event ecosystem

The role of local government in community-focused festivals and events is described from two points of view. First, local community-focused event stakeholders shared perspectives on how the City can provide operational and strategic support for events, event organizations and the overall community event ecosystem post-pandemic. Second, City administrators and policymakers reflected on how the crisis, in concert with some of the community's demographic changes discussed earlier, inspired them to work in new ways, with new event stakeholders, and towards new strategic ends. The following section explores these unique points of view, starting with community-focused event stakeholders.

Community-focused festival and event leaders viewed the role of local government in the community-focused event ecosystem as being both operational and strategic. Operationally, they wanted the City to continue to provide event resources and infrastructure (such as City-owned venues and grants) and to reduce red tape. Coming out of the pandemic, not-for-profit event organizations highlighted the increased value of City Special Event staff performing logistical functions that were difficult to rely on volunteers to perform, such as set-up of vendor areas.

These community event stakeholders suggested there would be value to small festivals to have a City-provided shared office space or other resource efficiencies. Finally, a newer event organization challenged the City to consider new opportunities post-pandemic:

I think that one thing that [the City of] Kitchener needs to think about is basically why are they still doing some things that they are doing and if it's because it's [always been] done, it's maybe not the right way to go. I think the future of Kitchener just relies on, like, basically removing red tape to have people gather in a way that they feel safe and connected to the city (Festival E).

Considering the strategic role of local government as the community event ecosystem emerged from the crisis, community-focused event stakeholders expected the City to provide leadership and a return to sense of normalcy for the ecosystem. They expected the City to inspire and set a vision for year-round community events that reflects the community's diverse and changing population; doing so should include supporting capacity-building for grassroots cultural and neighbourhood-based events and emerging event and festival organizations. A leader of Festival F, a newer event organization in the community, encouraged the City to have “the capacity and the foresight” to make connections between various event locations, resources, and organizations, saying:

I think it could be advantageous for them to think about... how can we make sure that these festivals are complementing each other? Like when [a festival] is at [Victoria Park], what's going to take place on Gaukel at the same time? Is it a random event? Is it a completely different audience than [festival in the park]? They're both such incredible spaces and they do have such a strong flow-through, that with some strategy they probably could pair events together and support like the forging of connections between different community groups and allow them to kind of, you know, uplift each other and co-promote (Festival F).

This birds-eye-view would be a unique, strategic contribution for local government to play. Another unique role for local government was advocacy with the corporate community to support local events, especially in a post-pandemic climate. According to the leader of a corporate organization that served as a sponsor for local festivals:

The City plays a really, really critical role on articulating what is the vision for cities. Are we just functional machines of practical service delivery for efficiency and low taxes? Or are we community builders? That's an interesting question for a city to grapple.... The City needs to advocate for it, and the City needs to sort of push the corporate participation side. "We're putting our money up. We're pushing this. You put your money up, too." And then I think, you know, they need to allow for an apparatus to be built, kind of either dispersed like, "Hey, where is everyone that wants to do events? We have money for you. We have a little logistical support. We have land assets, we have public realm, we will help you" (Festival sponsor).

This festival sponsor went on to suggest that, while the City should mobilize corporate sponsors and other stakeholders with a shared vision of events and the role that they play in community, the apparatus need not necessarily be led by the City. For its part, the City acknowledged the role of corporate support for special events post-pandemic. As a City policymaker described:

I think that the need for corporate involvement in partnership is greater than ever. We're seeing so many of these festivals and organizations struggling, and the economic times have made it, you know, some of them having to make some tough choices. But I also think we need to do a better job of putting the business case forward in front of them about why those investments are important (City policymaker).

Certainly, City administrators and policymakers alike appreciate the role of collaboration between local government, event organizations, and the wider community, including sponsors and residents. While sometimes they spoke about the community-focused events that were run by the City itself, most senior administrators had an eye to the comprehensive annual calendar of community-based events within the community event ecosystem.

Finally, while community-focused festivals and events were generally understood as a mechanism for resident engagement, City administrators and policymakers did make the connection with possible tourism benefits of these events. As a City policymaker described his vision for events in Kitchener, he highlighted possible tourism benefits, saying:

In an ideal world, in the summer months—both for our residents and from a tourism perspective—I would love to have a festival every weekend.... I think we're already a good way there, and there's a number of opportunities for us to build on. I think there is an opportunity to get more tourism business and make that happen (City policymaker).

This more holistic lens invited and inspired the City to explore new opportunities, and to respond to greater demands and expectations emerging from the crisis.

4.6 Designing a Resilient Community Event Ecosystem

A major opportunity in the development of a post-pandemic community-focused event ecosystem is the design of a City of Kitchener special events strategic plan in 2025. Led by the manager of Special Events, who is based in the Economic Development department, the special events strategic plan will establish a multi-year strategy to guide the City's investment in community-focused festivals and events. The following section draws primarily on the perspectives of City event stakeholders who were working at the front-line (staff), who were establishing strategy and resources (administrators and managers), and an elected official (policymaker). These local government stakeholders were working across multiple departments, including the Special Events department and the Neighbourhood Development and Volunteer Engagement Office.

In this final section of the findings, attention is given to three core areas of focus for the City's special events strategic plan, to ensure that it is resilient in the face of future crisis or disruption of any kind. First, a resilient community event ecosystem needs to consider strategies that modernize and strengthen its events and event organizations; it must consider affordability, inclusion, and geographic distribution of festivals and events, and practice thoughtful engagement and outreach when working with residents, especially newcomer and grassroots communities. Second, a modern, responsive and resilient community-focused event ecosystem must have vital resources and infrastructure, including venues, staffing, and investment by local government. Finally, local government plays a key leadership role to initiate and respond to new partners, and be flexible to new ways of collaboration, such as co-production of community-

focused festivals and events, and establishing network mechanisms to engage the ecosystem participants.

4.6.1 Establishing strategies that modernize and strengthen the community-focused event ecosystem

Prior to the crisis, City administrators and policymakers were exploring the need to think about events in a more comprehensive way. While Special Events is housed within the Economic Development department (focused on economic impact and activities in Kitchener's downtown core), the Neighbourhood and Volunteer Engagement team is based in the Community Services department (focused on resident engagement, including events and programs run at community centers, and outreach and collaboration with resident-led groups and organizations). The City's Special Events manager shared a key opportunity to think holistically about the integration of downtown-based festivals and events and those planned and delivered at the neighbourhood level. He outlined:

One of the conversations that keep bringing up is, are we or should we be bigger than [economic development]? Should we be more of a community service.... there are some really neat things that we could do out in the community.... we don't have the capacity to do it today, but I would love to see more and more and more community events that are not necessarily focused in the [downtown] core.... There's an importance for us to go to the people, as well (City special events manager).

This sentiment was reinforced by colleagues in the Neighbourhood Development and Volunteer Engagement Office; a City neighbourhood manager shared:

Our vision is, yeah, we wanna see more, more community events, more people coming together, more cross pollination of different ideas. Like, let's get out of silos and let's bring people together. Let's bring neighbours together.... I'd like to see kind of more of a coordinated vision and effort, I guess for us at the resident-led local level (City neighbourhood manager).

Connecting the impact of large, downtown Kitchener special events and festivals with the growing number of resident-led neighbourhood-based events and initiatives was also highlighted

by a City policymaker. Using the example of Neighbours Day, which inspires resident-led groups to host porch parties, BBQs and other celebrations within their neighbourhood all on a single day each June, the policymaker reflected:

Things like Neighbors Day, with live entertainment, you know, doing 100 concerts in the course of a day throughout the city, I mean, it's really sort of brought music and events to life. And so, even though that technically isn't considered and isn't done by the events team, it certainly adds and speaks to the importance of arts and culture and live entertainment into quality of life in the community.... Council has seen the benefit of it and the value in various neighbourhoods, in terms of how people come together (City policymaker).

As a City neighbourhood manager noted: "I think there's a need for small scale events. And then there's a need for city-wide events." Having different departments recognize the need for a more holistic vision for events regardless of size, audience, or location, presents an emerging opportunity for the City's special events strategic plan to offer a comprehensive and integrated view of events that encompass both social and economic development impacts.

Another positive trend as this work proceeds is the increased outreach to the City from residents and community organizations who wish to create and host new festivals and events. As the City's special events manager emphasized:

People have seen what can be done here. They want to put their own touch and culture on that.... our phone is ringing, and people are finding us, which is great.... there's always an appetite for more and more and more (City special events manager).

Local government event stakeholders enthusiastically described their vision for a community-focused event ecosystem that thoughtfully considers access and affordability and inclusion and representation. These were discussed as being especially important given the post-pandemic circumstances related to economics and sociocultural shifts described earlier. From her vantage point, a City neighbourhood manager noted:

I think there is a huge role for the City of Kitchener to make sure that there are inclusive and affordable opportunities for folks to connect formally and informally with neighbours and people that they wouldn't otherwise come across (City neighbourhood manager).

She went on to observe an increase in attendance at free neighbourhood events since the pandemic, and reflected on why that might be the case:

I don't think we're holding enough events, to be honest.... when we have these events, they're always packed. And so now, I think, we are removed enough from the pandemic that there's not as much fear... [residents] are looking to connect. They're looking for these opportunities and I think there's other factors that people are experiencing that are making travel difficult so they're not able to go and have vacations and experiences, and so they're looking for more of that in their own community (City neighbourhood manager).

A City neighbourhood manager described increased interest from cultural organizations and grassroots groups through their neighbourhood grants program, which are often accessed to support resident-led neighbourhood events. They observed how the number of neighbourhood grants has been evolving, saying:

Pre-pandemic, we were in a situation where a lot of the money was going to a couple wards in the city. The money was being gobbled up by larger, savvy organizations that know how to write an application.... Not a lot of diversity in the early days.... Now, post-pandemic, that's very much shifted. Thankfully so. Now... if you look at all ten of our wards and how much each one has gotten, the gaps have shrunk. So, more money is being evenly distributed throughout neighbourhoods, way more diversity, equity and inclusion stuff. We're funding indigenous-led initiatives. We're funding programs for Muslim girls. We're funding, you know, various different things for different groups (City neighbourhood manager).

City event stakeholders recognize the imperative to respond to the community's changing cultural composition. As a City policymaker remarked: "There's a recognition, you know, that our communities have changed... Like, you can't just do Oktoberfest because we were German at one point in time." One City neighbourhood manager enthusiastically described his vision to increase inclusion and representation in the community event ecosystem; he shared:

I wanna see more indigenous-led events. I wanna see more events focused for the Muslim community. I wanna see events focused about, you know, black empowerment and, you

know, our African Caribbean population downtown.... So yeah, just how do we see like greater variety and diversity and more thoughtful approaches? (City neighbourhood manager).

One of the considerations that the City must examine through its special events strategic plan is to design an approach to supporting grassroots community events that both expose the broader community to different cultures, but also respect the circumstances when a cultural community needs or prefers to host events and initiatives only for that community. A City neighbourhood manager shared the following example related to local Indigenous communities:

So, there's a difference between an Indigenous Sunrise festival or an Indigenous Pow Wow, where everyone's welcome and they can come and it's great. And then there's a difference between, like, an indigenous bull moon ceremony in that the City's funding, promoting, supporting, but it's only for a closed group.... I think to me it's a compromise of both. Personally, I don't feel comfortable, as a city [representative], only funding one group in closed isolation. I would feel more comfortable with a compromise to say, "OK, we're gonna fund that full moon ceremony. But in effort to bring it to community as well, would you be open to like doing something at the library Saturday morning?" [and the partner may say], "Yeah, sure. We can do that." So that's like the compromise of, like, private-closed-off versus open (City neighbourhood manager).

This City neighbourhood manager advocates that local government develop "customized, thoughtful approaches to events," saying:

We might have to have a more nuanced vision into the future.... We need to actually offer more kind of customized, thoughtful approaches to events and recognize that, you know what, maybe not everyone's gonna come out to this, and that's actually OK, like, we're OK with that. That whole idea of "events for everyone" and "events for a certain group," I think we're gonna reckon with that more in the future. And so how do we dissect and unpack that? (City neighbourhood manager).

As outlined above, coming out of the crisis, the City was faced with growing interest from cultural organizations wishing to bring festivals and events to the community. While these represent new opportunities for engagement, they also add new and increased pressures and demands on local government. As a City event administrator reflected:

I think it's all about supply and demand, right? In the past, I don't think there was as many players...I don't think there was as much pressure. Our community is growing quickly. There's an expectation to do more (City event administrator).

The following section will consider the City's overall resources and infrastructure for community-focused events, including venues, staffing, and investment by Council.

4.6.2 Defining and mobilizing vital resources and infrastructure to support the community-focused event ecosystem

Even when approached with a desirable idea for a new festival or event, the City may have to defer the conversation into a subsequent budget year because it cannot support all the requests. Beyond fiscal resources, local government does not always have the human resources to support all the requests. Again, the City's special events strategic plan will outline the resources needed to implement the vision for Kitchener's community-focused event ecosystem. Some of this work has been underway since the pandemic, through structural changes to three inter-related City portfolios, including Economic Development, Special Events, and Arts and Creative Industries. As a City administrator reflected: "I'm not sure if the pandemic caused this or not... I think the reason [for the restructure] is because the challenges and issues within those three areas are just being magnified right now."

Alongside organizational structure, a City policymaker reflected on the imperative for continued and even increased investment in community-focused festivals and events. He noted that all stakeholders—including residents, business and elected officials—recognize the social and economic benefits of community events, saying:

If anything, it's something that we continue to hear desires for us to even invest more in going forward, both from the business community from residents and obviously from Council, as well.... I hear it regularly and get emails from people about how important these things are... not only how they help instill a sense of community pride, but more importantly, how they help them as individuals, as families, in terms of sense of belonging... in terms of positive attitudes, all those kinds of things.... That's ultimately

what people are looking for. They want to have a safe place to live for them and their family. They wanna be able to do cool things together. And that's really been sort of the stuff that that we've tried to focus on and invest in and we'll continue to look for those opportunities (City policymaker).

From an investment point of view, the City policymaker speculated that local government may continue to make further financial investments into its special events infrastructure, suggesting:

It's still very early days in terms of [this year's] budget, but in preliminary conversations with my colleagues and so on, this is very much an area of priority going forward... next year I wouldn't be surprised if we further augment some of those investments (City policymaker).

Yet, continuing to add more money to create more events is not always feasible. Identifying cost-savings and resource efficiencies of existing events is also part of a sustainable community-focused event ecosystem.

City event leaders identified that the crisis offered them unexpected new insights into existing festivals and events, including City-led events. During the pandemic, community-focused event stakeholders had to review and dissect the specific elements of each festival, determining which components could or could not be maintained under public health restrictions. In retrospect, this presented an opportunity to streamline activities, and in doing so, to better understand the true needs and expectations of community-focused festivals and events emerging from the pandemic. A City administrator shared the following analogy:

There's a phrase, "The fastest way to understand how an engine works is to tear it apart." And that was truly what the pandemic was, right? It was tearing apart these events right, tearing apart the business, and then having to build it back up again.... For a very small moment in time, we were thankful just to have events back again [and] as we were building back events from scratch and up, I think what happened was some of the frivolous things, some of the "nice to have" but not really necessary things got cut out (City administrator).

This "silver lining" of the crisis helps the City to consider future resource and investment needs for its own festivals and events, and for the larger community-focused event ecosystem.

Another consideration related to infrastructure of the community event ecosystem is volunteers. As previously discussed, the trend toward declining voluntarism was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its special events strategic plan, the City has the opportunity to consider its role in volunteer infrastructure for City-led events, and perhaps for the entire event ecosystem. For example, the mandate for volunteer engagement shifted recently to the Neighbourhood Development and Volunteer Engagement Office. Another City event leader identified an opportunity to recruit special event volunteers for multiple festivals, by possibly hosting a “one stop” volunteer fair at City Hall. As he noted:

What are, like, the top five or top ten volunteer roles at an event? Like someone at the welcome table or at the start of the event, you know someone who’s like going around handing out water bottles or something, you know, different roles (City special events manager).

To date, however, he noted that the City is limited by its own organizational capacity coming out of the pandemic and this has not been able to be a priority yet.

A final—and perhaps most practical—consideration of the resource infrastructure of Kitchener’s community-focused event ecosystem relates to two factors: time and space. There are a limited number of venues and a finite number of weekends in late spring to early fall when Canadian weather is best suited to outdoor festivals and events. Thus, there are only so many opportunities to activate City-owned spaces such as parks and the downtown public square during peak festival season, which is roughly from May to October each year. A City event administrator described the role of local government in having “big picture” oversight of events in the community, especially when there are a limited number of preferred dates and venues. He described:

In events, when you talk about dates, the calendar is a pie... there’s only 365 days and you and I both know that Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sundays are worth more than Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays. So how you split up that pie gets a lot of attention and

a lot of focus. And I think that's the role that municipal government can play... And I think that is actually the value of government within events is that we can be as objective as we possibly can in dividing up dates, right? (City event administrator)

He went on to discuss how objectivity and transparency are essential for goodwill amongst event partners, and for the community at large. He noted:

I think the public can have trust and faith that the government is doing a good job because we have to manage these event producers in such a way that we're being transparent and fair and reasonable. We can't just cut out somebody for the interest of another party and I think that creates trust, right? I think that all is part of the bigger picture (City event administrator).

The following section will discuss two key factors that local government must consider when exploring new partnerships. First, what is the organizational capacity of the new partner, and can the organization be viewed as a trusted and reliable partner? Second, what are the opportunities for new festivals and events to emerge using models of co-production?

4.6.3 The future of partnerships: Mobilizing in new ways and with new partners to expand and modernize the community-focused event ecosystem

As described above, City staff recognized that a changing community and a changing community-focused event landscape requires new infrastructure for post-pandemic events. This infrastructure includes establishing more formal and transparent ways of working with event organizations, such as the development of standard operating procedures. According to a City event administrator, having greater transparency and structure is imperative for managing expectations and establishing mutual roles and responsibilities. This mutual clarity is essential for building trust between local government and its community event partners, especially in establishing new partnerships. As he described:

I do think that like jumping to the deal points quicker, us having kind of the same answer for each group, I do think creates that baseline of trust creates that baseline of, "Oh, here's what I can expect. Here's what's reasonable" (City event administrator).

When approached by the increasing number of grassroots cultural and resident-led neighbourhood groups wanting to host new festivals and events, City staff must consider the organizational capacity of prospective new partners. According to the City's special events manager, enthusiasm and good ideas are simply not enough to enter into a new community-focused event partnership. He reflected:

A lot of people have good ideas, as you know, and it's about, you know, how do you take that good idea and put it into an action plan that can work? People have no idea just what goes into doing an event (City special events manager).

The special events manager described being approached by community organizations that want to start large events, without them having a full understanding of the work that goes into building the event. As he noted:

Everybody always plans big, but it never works out and we try and tell them, "You've gotta start small and then work your way up".... They wanna just be big right from the start... and we're not agreeing on that part. We want it small, do it well and then you move on. So, with [a new event], we will develop a contract, and outline exactly who's doing what and what the expectations are and provide a budget as to who's doing what and who's paying for what. That way it's clear right from the beginning because we've had instances where we haven't done that and then it doesn't end up well for us (City special events manager).

He shared another way that the City is approached by community organizations with a concept for an event or festival: those that have unrealistic expectations that the City will do most—or all—of the work required to plan and deliver their event. According to the City's special events manager:

They don't understand what's involved. It's like, "Well, aren't you gonna do everything for us?" I don't think they understand necessarily what the city is there for more as a support as opposed to being the frontline making their event happen for them (City special events manager).

The City's special events manager shared that, often, grassroots organizations approach the City without an understanding of the policies and expectations required of them, saying they "Don't

understand why they have to follow the rules.” This attitude can create challenges when negotiating with new partners. He shared an example of City special events staff being met with resistance when they asked a community organization for its insurance prior to the event; he described: “They think we’re trying to be difficult... when we have to ask for insurance and it’s like, ‘Well, why do you need insurance, huh?’”

As outlined above, the City of Kitchener community-focused festival and event ecosystem is somewhat constrained by a limited scope and scale of human resources, facilities and spaces, and even preferred timing of weekends with good weather; thus, administrators acknowledge that the ability to take on more events in their pre-pandemic or “traditional model” is limited. In response, one of the new partnership opportunities identified by City staff is co-production of events. Several community-focused event stakeholders spoke to a co-production, co-promotion, or co-creation model as essential to the future of events in the community (note that the single term “co-production” will be used throughout). Festival E’s leader described co-production as an opportunity for authentic engagement in the community-focused event ecosystem as a whole. She described:

There’s a really...great audience of people that care if you go out looking for them...people like need connection...I think if you can tap into that in an authentic way - where you were listening to people - rather than, just being like, “Here’s the platter. Here’s what we built for you,” rather than listening to the needs of the community (Festival E).

City staff highlighted two different clusters of festival and event partners that can offer new opportunities for co-production in Kitchener. The first partner is event promoters bringing new opportunities to the community. The second opportunity is to increase co-production with local cultural organizations. Many at the City, including the City’s special events manager, are enthusiastic about this. He noted:

What we as a community need more of is to celebrate the diversity... If we can do more of that, I think that's a win for us. And I think it's a win for our community, for sure... there's always things to create and build, but without those relationships, we cannot diversify our portfolio, which is really becoming a priority for us (City special events manager).

In describing an emergent event collaboration with a cultural organization that was launching in summer 2024, he described the essence of co-production of a community-focused festival:

We're able to provide the infrastructure and the operational support, so in the most simple terms, they're bringing culture, we will bring logistics and, together, I think we'll create something very cool (City special events manager).

City event stakeholders acknowledged that, while co-production represents exciting new opportunities, it requires new ways of working that can require additional time and resources.

According to the City's special events manager:

When you're bringing in extra people, it's a lot of work. I mean, lots of conversation. Lots of ideas and "How do we go from here to here and make sure everyone's focused on the same page?" (City special events manager).

Finally, beyond expanding and modernizing the portfolio of festivals and events in the ecosystem through new partnerships and co-production, the special events strategic plan presents an opportunity to establish a more pronounced infrastructure for the community festival and event ecosystem. The City's special events manager acknowledged that there is not currently a formalized festival network in Kitchener, but he would welcome an opportunity to work in new ways. He shared:

I can't tell you how excited I would be to get all these stakeholders in the region and the city together to talk about, you know, how we do things where we do things. I would dare say at this point we don't do it well.... But, you know, the collaboration or competition? I think that there needs to be that festival network. There needs to be that connection so that even when we have groups that are coming to us that we can't, we have no more intake, that maybe it is Waterloo. Maybe it is Cambridge, maybe it is somewhere else other than Carl Zehr Square [in Kitchener]. Maybe it's a regional thing... But let's start those conversations (City special events manager).

City administrators and policymakers identified that the special events plan should articulate the interconnections with other communities in the region. Mapping of the community event ecosystem through the special events strategic plan eventually presents the opportunity to explore the intersection of community-focused events with event tourism. In doing so, additional partners would be engaged, including Explore Waterloo Region (the regional tourism and destination marketing organization) and RTO4 (an organization that uses marketing and destination management to build and support a competitive tourism region that encompasses Huron County, Perth County, Waterloo Region and Wellington County). Such engagement would also present further discussions with other local governments in the region (including the City of Waterloo, the City of Cambridge, the Region of Waterloo, and local townships) and organizations that plan and deliver community-focused festivals and events throughout these communities.

As one City administrator identified, being able to work more collaboratively at a regional level requires the City to have clarity on its own assets and what they uniquely bring to the regional events ecosystem. He noted that the pandemic helped to offer clarity on what really matters, saying:

Maybe when the opportunity presents itself, I say, “Hey, I know you have these assets within your scope. These are the assets I have within my scope. I’m pitching this event. I’m building it. If you’re in, that’s great. If you’re not, that’s OK too,” and I think that’s a really healthy way. And I do think that the pandemic, to tie back to the pandemic, I think the pandemic kind of allowed us to say, “That’s OK,” because it kind of reset.... I feel like sometimes we get really enamored with the big picture when I think if we start small and then understand where kind of our scope starts and ends, I think there’s some healthy boundaries to that (City administrator).

As they establish their special events strategic plan and rebuild a post-pandemic community-focused event ecosystem that responds to the current and future needs of Kitchener, City event leaders acknowledge that this plan will require a new way of engaging with current and

prospective event and festival organizations. The components of a resilient ecosystem outlined in this section can provide good guidance to this work. First, the overall ecosystem should be strengthened by investing in enduring interorganizational and interpersonal relationships, where collaboration is characterized by mutual support, trust, reciprocity, communication, flexibility, loyalty, and shared goals. Second, the ecosystem benefits from a shared vision of both the social and economic benefits of festivals and events for residents and the community as a whole. Finally, the leadership role of local government should be embraced.

4.7 Conclusion

The findings were presented according to three dimensions of time (pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and emerging from the pandemic/post-pandemic), and highlighted that “during the pandemic” was in fact several periods of time when constantly changing public health guidelines created considerable uncertainty for community event stakeholders. Given the exploratory nature of this study, it was important to first describe what happened with community-focused festivals and events in Kitchener during the years of the pandemic. Research question one asked: *How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?* These findings outlined how festivals and events were delivered during these phases, including virtual, drive-through, mobile, and hybrid event formats, and what considerations were involved as in-person festivals and events slowly re-emerged in the community.

Next, research question two asked: *What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?* These findings were shared, first describing a number of social and political trends that exacerbated the impact of the COVID-19 global health pandemic. These

included increased cultural diversity; a dynamic sociopolitical landscape; changes in attendee demographics, behaviours and expectations; inflationary pressures that created new costs to deliver festivals and events; and changes in resident capacity and voluntarism. The responses of community-focused festival event stakeholders to these contextual factors, alongside the return to post-pandemic events, were also described.

Research question three considered: *What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?* These findings outlined how community-focused festival and event stakeholders engaged in different types of interorganizational and interpersonal relationships throughout this period.

The final section responded to research question four: *What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?* The findings presented a framework of event management, event organization, and event ecosystem crisis recovery and resilience following a crisis. Resilient event management practices included elevated attention to health and safety, volunteer engagement, use of technology, use of physical spaces and infrastructure, and the need for continuous adaptation. Resilient event organizations understand their audience, have a strategic view of event outcomes and metrics, leverage disruptions to advance other organizational priorities, prioritize partnerships, and have organizational leadership and values that support its people during a crisis or disruption. Finally, a resilient community-focused festival and event ecosystem is characterized by interorganizational and interpersonal collaboration, a shared vision for the community event ecosystem, and a strong leadership role for local government. The

findings concluded by identifying strategic considerations for the City of Kitchener as it prepares to develop its first-ever special events strategic plan.

Next, chapter five will interpret and discuss the key themes that emerged from these findings. This discussion will be guided by the pre-pandemic literature on events and communities, by the propositions of event scholars early in the pandemic about what they expected to see because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, and by four recent studies of community events during the pandemic. In doing so, the next chapter will present a multi-dimensional framework for crisis response, recovery, and resilience of events, event organizations, and event ecosystems.

5. DISCUSSION

In spite of years of warnings about the fragility of festivals and events, the COVID-19 global pandemic was a wake-up call—one that may inspire reconfiguration and transformation of events (Getz, 2023; Higgins Desbiolles, 2020b; Kwiatkowski et al., 2023; McAuley & Nesbitt-Larking, 2022; Pernecky & Faisal, 2023; Rowen, 2020; Stevenson, 2023). This case study contributes to the field at this unique moment in time for events, for communities, and for event studies. By examining the experiences of event stakeholders in a mid-sized community before, during, and emerging from the pandemic, this research informs crisis response, recovery, and resilience at three levels: events, event organizations, and community event ecosystems.

This dissertation explores how community-focused event stakeholders in Kitchener's event ecosystem planned, adapted, and navigated their roles during the COVID-19 global health pandemic. It examines the factors that shaped event transformations during and after the crisis, with particular attention to the vital role of interorganizational relationships among stakeholders. This case study seeks to identify what supports the crisis recovery of events, event organizations, and the broader event ecosystem, and what factors may contribute to long-term resilience in the face of future disruptions of any scale or type. The previous chapter presented findings of the study according to its four research questions. The first two research questions explored event stakeholders' adaptation and innovation in planning and delivering events during the crisis (RQ1) and identified contextual factors that required these stakeholders to adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents (RQ2). These findings are largely descriptive in nature, validating early literature on pandemic event experiences in Australia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, and Scotland. The findings of the two subsequent research questions go beyond description, however. They probe exchanges between community event stakeholders, exploring

how interorganizational relationships supported crisis response, recovery, and resilience (RQ3), and seek to identify what elements of community-focused event ecosystems might contribute to long-term resilience (RQ4).

5.1 Outline

This chapter begins by describing how the findings of this case study support and augment the limited emergent literature about community-focused festivals and events and the COVID-19 global pandemic. Findings are also discussed compared with the predictions of event scholars who, early in the pandemic, speculated what might happen during and because of this unprecedented crisis for events. Next, a multidimensional crisis response, recovery, and resilience framework is presented. The framework showcases event management practices, event organization strategies, and community event ecosystem supports. Guided by literature from both event studies and management studies, this chapter discusses how the framework: (a) emphasizes the foundational roles of organizational and community capacity; (b) highlights how learnings from a crisis can be extended to future “on-the-ground” managerial responses; (c) recognizes the critical contributions of new and longstanding interorganizational, intraorganizational, and interpersonal stakeholder relationships within an event ecosystem; and (d) showcases the importance of shared vision and the vital roles of values-based leaders and local governments within a community event ecosystem. The role of social capital is discussed throughout. In doing so, it responds to the critiques outlined in the literature review in chapter two: that event studies is fragmented and theoretically immature.

5.2 Events and Communities in Crisis: What Did We Learn from the Pandemic Experience?

We are still learning about the experiences and consequences of the COVID-19 global pandemic. At the time of this study, there have been a limited number of published event studies about this

crisis and its impact on community-focused events, event ecosystems, and event stakeholders. Antchak, Gorchakova and Rossetti (2024) looked at the role and value of “balcony performances” as community special events organized during the first national lockdown in Italy; Stevenson (2023) offered an autoethnographic account of a community festival in London developed and staged in 2020 during the first pandemic lockdown; and Nguyen, Blaer and Pyke (2024) explored the socioeconomic impacts of small-scale events on community recovery, speaking to 43 businesses in Melbourne. While these studies broadly contribute to our understanding of communities and events during the COVID-19 global pandemic, there are four notable studies that most directly apply to the findings of the current study: Coles and colleagues (2022) studied events in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland; Davies and colleagues (2023) examined Scottish events; Dragin-Jensen and colleagues (2022) examined events based in Norway and Denmark; and Kwiatkowski and colleagues (2023) studied events in Poland.

Similarities and differences exist between these four studies and the current research. Like this dissertation research, all of these studies situated events as integral to the resumption of civic life and focused on events designed for residents. They, too, examined event-related processes and practices. With the exception of Dragin-Jensen et al., these studies included some examination of stakeholder collaboration, but did not probe at the dimensions of these interactions as the current research does. Coles et al. included local government “event officers” in their sample, while Davies et al. spoke only to event organizers who discussed what would be helpful from local government in their community. In contrast, the current research centres local government as a key part of the community event ecosystem. All these four studies recruited participants from large geographic areas and multiple communities, compared to the present dissertation research which used a case study of a single community event ecosystem. Only

Dragin-Jensen et al. adopted a case study methodology, although not of an ecosystem, but rather of the experiences of four different festival and sport events (run, notably, by for-profit or corporate event organizations). Kwiatkowski et al. sought to make conclusions about system level resilience, although this approach was based on experiences of stakeholders in multiple communities. Overall, the sample sizes of these studies were comparable to the present research (n = 13). With the exception of the four-event case study (Dragin-Jensen et al), snowball sampling in these studies led to samples of 14 to 22 event participants (some from multiple event organizations). These studies used interviews, focus groups and high-level surveys to capture pandemic experiences, whereas the present study used interviews only. Another unique feature of the sample for the present study was that all of the participants represented events that had survived the pandemic, which was not the case in the other studies.

All these studies, including the current research, describe the experiences of events during the pandemic, capturing how event practitioners shifted to online and then hybrid events, and introduced new event formats such as drive-through events and mobile event formats. Event elements focused on music, food, and arts and culture were prioritized during this transitional time. Event stakeholders in the current study shared similar challenges of having to learn new technologies and experiencing ongoing uncertainty and stress. The present research also affirmed that several of these formats did not have longevity beyond the crisis. For example, the amount of effort to create “event-in-a-box” activations had little return on investment for their considerable demands. Further, event leaders learned that while an online format could be undertaken, it simply did not create the same energy or “vibe” as an in-person format and was therefore deemed not worth repeating in subsequent years. Pop-up and mobile event formats, by

contrast, were highly regarded as creating unexpected fun and joy for residents, and some event organizations in the present study chose to maintain mobile activations post-pandemic.

This study also supported two key themes from the findings of Coles et al. First, the outdoors emerged as a previously under-appreciated resource for events. In the present research, physical distancing made outdoor parks and neighbourhood spaces a more creative and valued currency, especially in a Canadian context where weather can be a limitation outside of “prime” summer times. The present research also emphasized how a shift to using neighbourhood spaces aligned with the City’s growth in its neighbourhood development programs, including Love My Hood grants that support resident-led events and initiatives. Second, both Coles et al. and the present research emphasized a need and desire to better respond to increased cultural diversity in communities, something that had been identified prior to the pandemic. The findings of RQ2 highlighted that social movements related to Black and Indigenous communities that took place alongside the COVID-19 global pandemic made this shift more urgent and more visible.

Davies et al. called the pandemic response of the four events in their study “multifaceted” (p. 549). The present study offers an even more robust understanding of this multifaceted experience in three unique ways. First, rather than sampling event practitioners across multiple cities, conducting a case study of a single event ecosystem was a methodological choice intended to holistically explore event practices, partnerships, and strategies within a single geographic and relational community. At the same time, the present study isolates (as best as possible) what is happening at the level of the event, the event organization, and the community event ecosystem. While each of these dimensions are included in the other studies, these dimensions are all merged together as part of a generalized pandemic experience. This ultimately limited their

interpretations. In comparison, the present research could offer more focused practical conclusions, as well as clear recommendations for policy and practice presented in chapter six.

Another weakness of the published literature to date is that it can only describe the crisis response timeframe for events. These authors acknowledged that an “implicit shortcoming” in their studies is that they are unspecific about when, for how long and in what nature transformation will take place (Coles et al., 2022, p. 12). Likewise, Davies and colleagues (2023) admitted their research was also timestamped by covering the immediate period in the months following the lockdowns and the impacts as perceived by those involved. Both groups of event scholars recognized the need for replication studies to corroborate the main findings—and noted the value of international research to offer comparative perspectives and experiences would also be welcome (Coles et al., 2022; Davies et al., 2023). The present—Canadian—research addressed this gap, guided by Christakis’ (2021) temporal view that we could not even begin to consider ourselves “post-pandemic” until at least 2024. Thus, the current research documented the nuances of an unpredictable two-year crisis phase for event stakeholders, during which time they were constantly testing and trying new models (and eliminating what didn’t work), as well as the changes that emerged as these event leaders were emerging from the pandemic.

Finally, this study is unique in that it intentionally examined the sociocultural context beyond the COVID-19 global pandemic itself; in doing so, it squarely acknowledges that events take place in communities, and communities are increasingly complex (Ziakas et al., 2021). Kaplanidou and Potwarka (2024) encourage community event scholars to apply a PEST analysis for community events, such as sport events, by considering the prevalent political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological aspects that influence the strategic activities of an organization. To be sure, many community-focused festival and event ecosystems faced changes in these

dimensions long before the pandemic. For instance, Jordan (2015) described how demographic, economic and political changes in the European Union were presenting growing challenges for cultural festivals. Such literature reinforces how event organizations have always had to evolve and respond to changes in the community if they are to remain viable and relevant.

Alongside the disruption of the pandemic, the current study demonstrates that event stakeholders were contending with several other trends—some that had pre-existed before the crisis and were exacerbated or made more pronounced; others that were unanticipated. These factors included: increased cultural diversity; a dynamic socio-political landscape, leading to increased social apathy, economic disparity, and reduced social engagement; changes in event attendee demographics, behaviours, and expectations; inflationary pressures that created new costs to deliver events; and changes in resident capacity and voluntarism. Because this study adopted a multi-dimensional timeframe, it was able to establish that many of these contextual factors became part of the “new normal” of planned events. The findings illustrated that post-pandemic event managers must be wary of three issues as part of their future risk management and mitigation: (a) elevated safety and security demands; (b) appropriately responding to audience shifts; and (c) financial sustainability. While these changes demand ongoing and continuous adaptation, this study revealed that many of these changes were both inevitable and even welcomed by event stakeholders. This, too, is a theme that emerged in the other four studies. The next section further examines how the COVID-19 global pandemic was an accelerant for change for some events and communities.

5.2.1 Crisis as an accelerant for positive change in a community event ecosystem

Many event stakeholders in this study believed their crisis experience accelerated changes they either knew were coming or introduced an urgency to adopt new approaches. This drive for

change happened at all three levels: the event, the event organization, and the community event ecosystem. At the event level, event leaders admitted the crisis experience demonstrated what was not working or no longer necessary. That is, if an event element was removed and no one missed it, was it important in the first place? And, further, should you bring it back? In other cases, temporary changes to event formats brought new clarity and insights. For example, a pandemic drive-through food festival that could not serve alcohol was quickly reminded that alcohol sales were critical to its revenue model, and a cultural festival known for lively music and cultural performers and food vendors realized it could not recreate this festivity online.

Likewise, digital formats of events used as a temporary adaptation in the first year of the pandemic were quickly discarded once there was an opportunity to resume some form of in-person activity. In contrast to mobile event formats that were seen as desirable to retain post-pandemic, digital event formats were viewed as lacking vitality. As outlined in the literature review, events by their nature create the experiences of liminality and *communitas* (Green & Chalip, 1998; Chalip, 2006). Through *communitas*, shared experiences and meanings derived from an event can generate an intense feeling of group unity and solidarity. As Getz and Page (2016) noted, events are liminal spaces, when we may dress differently, act differently, play differently, and feel differently, fostering Falassi's (1987) notion of festivals as "time out of time." Sitting behind one's computer screen, in one's own home and without the physical presence of others does not present opportunities for these key features of event participation.

Another explanation for the limited success of online events (and hybrid events, to a lesser degree) may be drawn from theories of affective atmospheres and embodied co-presence. Anderson (2009) explored how the social relates to the affective and emotive dimensions of life; he views affective atmospheres as "a kind of indeterminate affective "excess" through which

intensive space-times can be created” (p. 80). A festival or community event can be very much viewed as an affective atmosphere, in that the event producer(s) create and arrange light, sounds, and symbols that enhance, transform, shape and intensify physical space (p. 80). While Anderson suggested that an affective atmosphere is impersonal (in that they belong to collective situations) and can yet be felt as intensely personal (p. 80), it is easy to understand how trying to achieve this affective atmosphere online would be much more challenging. Pink and Mackley (2016) extended this theory to home, mobility, and routines of movement. They suggest that encounters between people, materials and other elements of the environments of which they are part (e.g. air, light, warmth, scents) are ongoingly co-produced by inhabitants and are part of the environments of the home. During the lockdowns and social isolation early in the COVID-19 global pandemic, such co-production of online event experiences may have been quite appealing to those limited to home. However, once social mobility began to return, the desire to co-produce a home event experience was likely to be no longer preferred or desirable.

Within the community event ecosystem, the crisis immediately shone a light on event organizations vulnerable to disruption because of limited organizational capacity. These included grassroots cultural associations and resident-led neighbourhood associations. In more than one case, the crisis was cited as the “nail in the coffin” for the event organization. For example, a longstanding volunteer-led winter festival had been slowly transitioning to the City leading the event, and the pandemic accelerated this change in leadership. In contrast, event organizations with stronger organizational capacity leveraged the pandemic to accelerate change. For instance, prior to the pandemic, a longstanding cultural festival had initiated an exercise to reimagine the future of the festival, the event organization, and its partnerships. The crisis functioned as an urgent reset button, allowing this event organization to accelerate the execution of these changes.

City administrators and policymakers discovered new insights about the community event ecosystem as a result of the crisis. When pandemic shutdowns collided with the local government's mandate to support continued resident safety and well-being, City staff had to review and reevaluate priorities for their own city-wide and neighbourhood-based events and initiatives. The new premium on outdoor event space accelerated the City's need to move beyond its downtown public square and largest central parks to reconsider mid-sized neighbourhood parks as new event spaces during the pandemic and beyond. The crisis experience also gave local government administrators a unique vantage point to understand the capacity and future potential of their event partners in that "everything was more exposed" (City event administrator)—for better or worse. It also empowered them to work in more efficient ways. A City administrator remarked that the urgency of the crisis punctuated the need to "get to the deal quicker," where entertaining several general conversations in the build up to a prospective partnership agreement was simply no longer a desirable or viable approach. The City administrator used the following analogy:

We probably would have got there eventually. But it's kind of like Apollo 13, you know, like when they decide, like, finally to go around the moon to use the moon's negative energy to get them quicker out the other side to slingshot them, we totally did that with COVID. We took the negative and we sling-shotted ourselves back to the positive and just totally leveraged it (City event administrator).

In a post-pandemic environment where there were simultaneously greater demands on local government to host or support events and yet notably finite financial and human resources, the need to evaluate and reimagine local government special event resources was likely an inevitability also accelerated by the crisis.

These findings reinforce themes identified by Coles et al. and Davies et al. In these studies, event managers identified that, prior to the pandemic, some events had been taken-for-

granted (Coles et al., 2022, p. 9). The COVID-19 crisis led local government administrators to review the size, scope and orientation of events in their community, suggesting this was “a chance to strip away some of the layers of complexity that had been added to event management and governance over time” (Coles et al., 2022, p. 9). Like in Kitchener, event stakeholders in these studies were focused on greater social inclusivity as an emergent local priority, and identified opportunities to develop new strategies, including co-design with residents. They observed that local governments were now reappraising the suitability of existing event spaces and adopting a more creative approach to identifying alternative venues for local events. Several events officers reported efforts to align future events and programming more closely in support of placemaking and the representation of local geographies, cultures, histories and identities. In these communities, like in Kitchener, the pandemic served as a catalyst for making change; where previously many behaviours learned by those working in community events tended to develop through trial and error or sharing of best practices, the crisis initiated changes for greater efficiencies and innovations (Davies et al., 2023).

Interestingly, event stakeholders in this study were expecting to come out the other side of the crisis and return to “normal.” However, due to the complexity and duration of the pandemic, stakeholders in this community event ecosystem discovered that things did not and could not stay the same. As one festival leader reflected, “We were so grateful to have events back, but we learned that returning to normal actually isn’t good because there were things to improve on” (Festival B).

5.3 How Will We Be Better Prepared For Future Crisis? A Framework for Event Scholars and Practitioners

Dragin-Jensen et al. and Kwiatkowski et al. sought to draw conclusions about resilience during the crisis experience. Together, their models add value by presenting resilience along a continuum that recognizes the unique circumstances of the crisis and the event stakeholders. The models adopt a system approach aligned with system theory and consider how innovation can be an input and outcome of recovery and resilience. The context-based event ecosystem resilience (CEER) model espoused by Kwiatkowski et al., in particular, adds value by differentiating between both internal and external factors that can influence event resilience. While these models make worthy contributions, they are not drawn on the experiences of a single event ecosystem and thus fail to recognize the complexities of stakeholder relationships within a community. Further, their views were premature, failing to adequately account for the broader considerations of time and context that are the novel contributions of this study. In contrast to their models, the following section presents a multi-dimensional framework for events, event organizations, and community event ecosystems.

5.3.1 A multi-dimensional resilience framework for events, event organizations and community event ecosystems

A multi-dimensional framework was developed based on the study's findings, themes outlined in the literature review and the four post-pandemic studies of community events shared in this chapter. The framework highlights three progressive dimensions: (1) at the level of the event itself through event management practices; (2) at the level of the event's host organization through increased organizational strategies; and (3) via shared views, strategies and supports that are embedded within the entire community-focused festival and event ecosystem. These three levels influence and are influenced by the capacity of the host community and the organizational

capacity of the various event organizations in the event ecosystem. Figure 6 presents this framework, and the following sections discuss each element of the framework in further detail.

Figure 6: A multi-dimensional crisis response, recovery and resilience framework for events, event organizations and community event ecosystems



5.3.2 Community and organizational capacity: Protective roots, or easily weathered by the storm?

We know from the findings of this study, from existing pandemic research, and from our personal experiences that the COVID-19 global pandemic was an especially challenging time in every community. Dragin-Jensen and colleagues (2022) also reminded us that, even before the crisis, community-focused festival and event organizations were already vulnerable due to competition, financial vulnerability and changes in management, all of which were only exacerbated by the pandemic. These challenges were also compounded by the continued erosion of civic engagement, including changes in resident participation in communities.

This framework acknowledges the interplay of community and organizational capacities as inputs for better crisis response, recovery, and resilience. At the same time, community and organizational capacities are enhanced through thoughtful event management practices, strategic event organizations, and supportive event ecosystems. Chaskin's (2001) view of community capacity includes both the informal social processes in a community and the organized efforts of individuals, organizations, and networks. He proposed four characteristics of community capacity: sense of community, a level of commitment among community members, the ability to solve problems, and access to resources. In his view, community-building efforts include leadership development, organizational development, community organizing, and fostering collaborative interorganizational relationships among organizations (p. 296). In 2008, Chaskin expanded his analysis of community capacity to discuss community resilience; he situated community both as context (local environments providing a set of risk and protective factors that have an influence on the well-being of community members) and as the collective of actors that can exhibit resilience in themselves by organizing and acting in response to adversity (p. 65).

Resilient communities have a lot in common with resilient organizations. The literature review described the characteristics of resilient organizations: communication and information sharing; knowledge, skills and learning; shared resources; values, beliefs, and a positive outlook; leadership practices and engaged governance processes; preparedness; collaboration; and relationships and social networks (Barasa et al., 2018; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Godschalk, 2003; Patel et al., 2017). Further, the literature review also identified the interconnections between resilient communities, resilient organizations, and social capital.

In spite of these linkages in the literature, Ziakas (2024) recently maintained there is a "paucity" of research on community-capacity building for events (p. 72). An exception in event

studies is Mahon and Hyyryläinen (2019), who applied community capacity to acknowledge community as both context, and community as agent of change for rural arts festivals in Ireland and Finland. Ziakas (2024) noted that, most often, events and community capacity are discussed in the context of event leveraging and limited entirely to single large events. He encouraged a turn toward community capacity building within a broader and more systematic study of events in communities. This study's framework does so by representing how the capacity of the event ecosystem (community capacity) is comprised of event organizations with values-driven leaders who are willing to work collaboratively with others via deliberate interorganizational relationships (organizational capacity). Through shared vision and the leadership role of local government, community and organizational capacities are mutually reinforcing.

Organizational capacity emerged in the findings in three ways. Keeping in mind that event stakeholders represented events and event organizations that had survived the crisis, there was some degree of organizational capacity prior to the pandemic that allowed them to make it through while others did not. Second, participants fell into one of three groups: longstanding community festival organizations (both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations), newer event organizations (not-for-profit), and local government. These categories were not part of the sampling criteria but emerged in the data analysis as an indication of the organization's capacity; that is, longstanding event organizations had established more and stronger exchanges with other organizations (especially with local government), while newer event organizations had not. Finally, the community event ecosystem in the current research included two other types of event organizations that were much less likely to have established organizational capacity: the grassroots cultural organizations that typically engaged as food or artisan vendors at these community-wide festivals; and resident-led associations that also served alongside local

government staff as event leaders and event supports in neighbourhoods. These organizations were not direct participants in the study, they were referenced by the longstanding event organizations and the City as being frequent partners.

The connection between resilience and organizational capacity is supported by Kwiatkowski et al. CEER model. They described event organizations with “inherent resilience” as those that had been established for a long period of time, and had diversified business activity (p. 482). In this study, inherently resilient event organizations would be the longstanding event organizations. In contrast, newer or emergent event organizations did not have inherent resilience at the onset of the crisis. By their nature, they were more precarious by not having a stable infrastructure of funding or well-established relationships with local government and other event organizations. Likewise, grassroots cultural and neighbourhood event organizations, by their nature, had limited organizational capacity. As a result of differences in organizational capacity, this study found that many grassroots organizations never returned from the initial pandemic shutdowns (where it was the final “nail in the coffin”), some organizations adjusted (conducting “start-stop-continue” exercises), and others picked up where they left off (“status quo”).

Longstanding event organizations had deep relationships, institutional knowledge, and capacity. In contrast, newer or grassroots event organizations were often still finding their way, and establishing or seeking to deepen relationships with partners and sponsors. Further, as outlined in the findings, during and emerging from the pandemic, the City was approached by several new possible event partners, including multicultural organizations that represent the growing cultural diversity of the community. While some of these were viewed as “tire kickers” and others did not have a true appreciation for what event management entailed, other examples led to meaningful explorations of new partnerships. The newer event organizations reported

being open-minded and willing to collaborate in these new models, and some identified that it made them move faster or less cautiously than they otherwise would have in an effort to seize the opportunity. However, prior to and during the pandemic, it was clear that there were discrepancies in power and access depending on the nature of the organization and its capacity.

These power dynamics within the event ecosystem raise important questions about equity, gatekeeping, and institutional access, especially in a context where there was desire from culturally diverse groups and organizations to enter the community ecosystem. As outlined in the literature review, management theory uses the concept of legitimacy to describe the relationships between organizations and their environments. Organizations build legitimacy by conforming to the rules, norms, cultural values, and expectations that prevail within the broader social system (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995). Through organizational legitimacy, an event or festival organization can achieve solid standing amongst others. The newer and cultural organizations on the periphery of the event ecosystem were trying to “break in,” but their limited access to resources and less established relationships with local government left them vulnerable at the time of the crisis.

In his field theory (1993), Bourdieu defined society as an interweaving of fields, each with its own assets and specific operating rules. Within a field, there may be a struggle between the dominators of the field and new entrants. Those with more capital and advantageous positions within a field have greater opportunities and resources to succeed, while those with less capital and less advantageous positions face significant constraints and disadvantages. According to Bourdieu, the structure of social fields, with their inherent power dynamics, can perpetuate and reinforce existing inequalities. However, field theory also acknowledges the potential for social change, in that individuals can challenge existing power structures and inequalities by

acting collectively and transforming the rules and norms of social fields. Emerging from the pandemic, the uneven distribution of resources and relational assets between longstanding and newer event organizations had the potential to inhibit the resilience of the event ecosystem. Instead, it appears that the more longstanding event organizations, as well as local government, acknowledged that building back festivals and events post-pandemic would benefit from a redistribution of access to resources across all types of event organizations.

While longstanding organizations were described above as having “inherent resilience,” the finding that community event ecosystem partners saw the opportunity to work better together is aligned with “transformative resilience.” At the onset of the pandemic, policymakers in the European Union emphasized the imperative for transformative resilience (Giovanni, Benczur, Campolongo, Cariboni & Manca, 2020). They articulated that the duration and intensity of the pandemic was so extreme that it would be impossible to address it through absorptive capacities or a simple adaptation of the system. Rather, they argued that the pandemic represented the opportunity to “bounce forward” through adaptation and transformation. In their conceptualization of transformational resilience for urban ecosystems, Gotham and Campanella (2010) argued that resilient communities, cities, or regions do not just return to a pre-trauma state or the status quo, but have the capacity to reinvent themselves with new relationships, modes of organization, and networks (p. 10). In fact, systems of diverse organizations (such as longstanding, newer, and grassroots event organizations and local government) can be even more resilient, in that the overall ecosystem can be strengthened when each individual organization exhibits varying degrees of identity, cohesion, flexibility, and resources.

Gotham and Campanella (2010) reminded us diversity can serve as asset for system resilience, but we must not omit hierarchies of power, education, technology, language, culture, honor, beliefs and influence in our understanding of resilience (p. 15). While we might assume that resilience is inherently good for all, this suggests that resilience may, in fact, not be good for everyone. Though moments of disruption can catalyze positive changes for organizations, disruption and crisis can also invoke political, relational, or institutional shifts. For instance, the event organizations that were part of this study were, by design, those who had “survived” the disruption of the pandemic and still existed at the time of the research. Participants shared examples of how smaller, grassroots event organizations—including those reliant on older volunteers or neighbourhood-based resident associations—were already precarious prior to the crisis. Thus, resilience for all parts of a system may only be achieved if imbalances in resources and power are addressed.

From this ecosystem view, the complex relationship between community capacity and organizational capacity in a crisis was exhibited in this study when event stakeholders came to view their festival or event as being part of something larger for the community. As one of the festival leaders in the study described, she saw the festival as an entity, “where the more people that nurture it the better it becomes” (Festival A). This observation is supported by Jordan (2015) who argued that the local community can be a festival’s greatest strength or greatest weakness, depending on the type of festival and the make-up of the community. He suggested a key intersection between community and organization is the festival’s leader, whereby a lack of engagement by the festival leader with the local community will make a festival vulnerable to a lack of political support at the local level (p. 111). These connections between community and organizational capacities will continue to be explored later in this discussion—most notably the

roles of values-driven leaders and a shared community vision that are connected to ecosystem recovery, response, and resilience.

This section described the foundational role of capacity at the levels of the host community and the event organizations, and how they are interrelated. In the framework, community and organizational capacity surround the three levels of event management, event organizations, and event ecosystems. The following sections discuss these three levels of the framework in greater detail.

5.3.3 Resilient event management practices incorporate continuous improvement and lessons learned from a crisis

Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 global pandemic meant that every event organization had to introduce new event management practices. This reaction included elevated attention to health and safety for all, and new uses of technology for some. What was notable in the findings is how resilient event organizations maintained many of these “pandemic” event management practices post-pandemic. At the same time, the crisis motivated required resilient events to engage in new ways with volunteers and reimagine use of physical spaces and infrastructure, to respond to challenges that were already a point of tension prior to the crisis. Many event organizations applied a practice of continuous adaptation that will surely hold them in good stead in the face of future disruptions, large or small; this practice is aligned with the view of adaptation as resilience from the literature (i.e., Norris et al., 2008; Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). These practices also support the pandemic experience being an accelerant for change, as discussed earlier.

As they further to emerge from the pandemic, event organizations will need to be alert to and continue to adapt to declining voluntarism and changing patterns of resident engagement at events. The literature review outlined the positive relationship between social capital and

residents engaged as both attendees and as volunteers involved in event planning and delivery. Yet, as scholars like Putnam (1995, 2000) and Beck (1992) pointed out, sociological shifts in civic participation, individualism, and trust in collective action threaten volunteer recruitment and lead to fatigue amongst the fewer volunteers left to do the work. Event organizations unable to pivot to these shifts in voluntarism will consequently struggle with future organizational capacity.

5.3.4 Resilient event organizations are adaptive and strategically embrace change

A crisis can cause continuing existential and socio-economic impacts for event and communities; however, it also provides opportunities for creativity and innovation by re-imagining and reconfiguring the strategic purpose of event organizations (Ziakas et al., 2021, p. 1). Dragin-Jensen et al. discussed how “the interplay of resilience and innovation becomes a clear-cut necessity in the event and festival industry” (p. 13). In their view of event innovation in times of uncertainty, they proposed that event organizations move from a crisis response immediately characterized by reactive and unplanned changes, then progress toward adaptation and transformation through active, planned improvements and adjustments. Again, this view of adaptive resilience is originally from the broader resilience literature (i.e., Norris et al., 2008; Twigger-Ross et al., 2011), and is supported by the CEER model (Kwiatkowski et al.).

In the present study, event organizations embraced what they learned during the crisis, and used this knowledge to advance future strategies. Some event stakeholders reported the crisis was like hitting pause, allowing them to see with more clarity the practices that existed because they had always been done a certain way. Rebuilding from the bottom up once events resumed in person fostered new clarity about priority audiences and partners. It provided the time and space to evaluate what they were trying to accomplish (event outcomes and metrics). Finally, when

events were shut down altogether, resilient event organizations also embraced this time to advance other organizational priorities, such as focusing organizational attention on equity, diversity, and inclusion policies and sustainability practices.

Adaptive event organizations are those who can respond to changes in the sponsorship environment post-pandemic. Prior to the crisis, longstanding event organizations benefited from multi-year sponsor agreements; these were typically based on shared community values and broad corporate principles of social responsibility, and the longstanding nature of the relationships themselves were often based on interorganizational (and sometimes interpersonal) trust and reciprocity. Emerging from the pandemic, however, community-focused event organizations found sponsorships were also disrupted, with corporate partners now reviewing and resetting their priorities. More than ever, these event organizations were increasingly required to justify themselves in market terms, and exchanges with returning and new potential sponsors were shifting from partnership to transaction. As outlined in the neoliberal cultural policy literature, the move to such transactional exchanges reflect the “corporate violation of public culture” and the commercialization of cultural experiences like festivals (McGuigan, 2005, p. 235). While these trends pre-existed primarily in event tourism, seeing this shift at the community festival and event level foreshadows the financial viability of community-focused events and festivals as more precarious post-pandemic. Event organizations that are able (and willing) to meet sponsors in terms of market expectations will be more adaptive.

In their view of institutional isomorphism, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) theorized how, when organizations are dealing with uncertainty and constraint, it often leads to homogeneity in structure, culture, and output (p. 147). They described three isomorphic processes (coercive, mimetic, and normative) leading to this outcome. Institutional isomorphism offers a critical

interpretation of whether the pandemic adaptations of the event organizations were innovations, or whether they were conforming to perceived expectations or norms. While online formats were the only option in the first year of the pandemic, as public health guidelines began to lift, festival and event organizations chose similar event formats to take advantage of the outdoors, including mobile events and use of new outdoor locations. The majority of the event organizations had relationships with local government, a stakeholder that was highly motivated to offer ways for residents to participate in community life (even if in modified ways). This approach may have led to coercive isomorphism, in that local government expectations may have pushed certain behaviors. For newer organizations who were especially struggling with less organizational capacity, reaching out to established event organizations for information and efforts to piggyback their festivals with the timing and location of more established festivals to gain legitimacy would suggest mimetic isomorphism. Finally, as event organizations became more open to sharing information and resources, including proactive outreach to newer and grassroots event organizations suggests how professional norms within event networks shaped practices during and emerging from the pandemic (normative isomorphism).

5.3.5 Resilient event ecosystems have an embedded system of supports

This framework recognizes the holistic nature of events within communities and recognizes four dimensions at the community level: shared vision, interorganizational relationships, values-driven leaders, and the leadership role of local government. Such a holistic view is influenced by Ziakas' progressive thinking on event portfolios and event systems (Ziakas, 2010, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2019a, 2019b, 2021b, 2024), and is also aligned to the previous discussion of the interrelationship between community and organizational capacity that is an integral part of this

framework. The following section will explore these four characteristics of resilient community event ecosystems in greater detail.

5.4 Resilient Community Event Ecosystems

This study's proposed framework of crisis response, recovery, and resilience features four dimensions of a resilient community-focused festival and event ecosystem: (a) a shared vision for the community event ecosystem; (b) stakeholder relationships characterized by trust, loyalty, reciprocity, and mutual support; (c) values-driven leaders; and (d) the essential leadership function of local government.

5.4.1 Shared vision for placemaking events in our post-pandemic world

According to Stevenson (2023), "Festivals are powerful mechanisms to do, be, and feel community. There is more work to be done to understand the varied and cumulative benefits of staging community festivals and bring them into mainstream debates about community well-being (p. 419). The literature review shared how, prior to the pandemic, event scholars had established the integral role for community-focused festivals and events as tools for generating and maintaining positive benefits for individuals and communities (i.e., Coghlan et al., 2017; Derrett, 2003; Pooley, Cohen & Pike, 2005; Schwarz & Tait, 2007; Stevenson, 2019). It also outlined how, during the pandemic, event scholars hoped that the COVID-19 global pandemic would only reinforce this important role of community events; they suggested that we may develop a renewed appreciation for gathering together (Duffy & Mair, 2021), and that our collective consciousness of health and safety may discourage people from attending larger events post-pandemic (Davies, 2021; Miao, Im, Fung & Cao, 2021). In their pandemic research, Coles et al. noted that smaller attendee numbers and more affordable operational costs make these

community-focused festivals and events a greater asset for post-pandemic communities. They concluded:

One of the most unexpected findings, at least from a policy perspective, has been the role that smaller-scale events and performances—especially arts-related and outdoors—can play as a force for good in recovery at the local level.... While their contribution to economic revitalization may be modest (and unattractive to some policymakers as a result), they can play a notable - and not to be ignored - role in reviving social and cultural life in local communities (p. 12).

Because this study documents a community's experience before, during, and following the crisis, it begins to identify whether these predictions were supported. Keep in mind that the purpose of the study was not to examine residents or the larger impact of events and festivals in the community, but rather to explore the post-pandemic experiences of event leaders and policymakers.

One of the essential conditions for collaboration is a shared vision (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Event stakeholders in this study remained steadfast in their passion for events, and the positive impact events have for residents and for the community as a whole. They each discussed their vision for events emerging from the pandemic, suggesting shared values about the role of community-focused events in supporting residents and strengthening the social infrastructure and sustainability of the community. They recognized the roles of music, art, and culture in creating positive “energy” through festivals and events and lamented the loss of this energy while in-person events were put on hold. Emerging from the pandemic, many event stakeholders acknowledged they had taken for granted the contributions of their event, and reported a new appreciation for their event, their partners, and the whole community.

This recognition is well aligned with the literature on social infrastructure. Sociologist Klinenberg (2018) described “social infrastructure” as the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact (p. 5). Schools, parks, churches, and public libraries can all serve

to promote our social connection by making available physical space where people can come together; voluntary associations and community organizations also serve this function.

Klinenberg argues that the aim of social infrastructure is to get people to interact face-to-face both within communities and across group lines, creating bonds that ultimately strengthen the entire community. This argument offers a further response to the decline of civic life aptly described by Putnam (2000) in *Bowling Alone*. The notion of social infrastructure is especially relevant in the emergence from the COVID-19 global pandemic. Klinenberg examined the critical roles played by social infrastructure during and following extreme weather events, as examples of crisis and disruption; in these circumstances, he notes that “when hard infrastructure fails, it’s the softer, social infrastructure that determines our fate” (p. 15). As in-person events resumed, event leaders in this study believed they had a responsibility to reconnect residents and rebuild (and strengthen) the community’s social infrastructure, even despite increased complexities that emerged from the broader sociocultural shifts that happened alongside the pandemic itself. This enthusiasm will be an asset to the City’s ability to design its Special Events strategic plan, and in support of the recommendations for local government that are outlined in chapter six. In addition to having a shared vision, the framework presented in this study highlights a vital component of crisis response, recovery, and resilience at the event ecosystem level: stakeholder relationships.

5.4.2 The role of stakeholder relationships in supporting crisis recovery and resilience

Section two of the literature review focused on stakeholder relationships. It offered an extensive view of management constructs such as cooperation and collaboration (Wood & Gray, 1991), power (Mitchell et al., 1997), trust (Zaheer et al., 1998) and reciprocity (Powell, 1990). Within event studies, event scholars including Wallace and Michopoulou (2023) and Perkins and her

colleagues (2022) identified that different stakeholders will have different needs and approaches along a continuum of collaborative behaviours; they suggested one of the most informal and low risk interorganizational relationships for event stakeholders is cooperation to maintain core values and shared objectives. The CEER model by Kwiatkowski et al. proposes that, in a community ecosystem, the number of event organizers cooperating with other organizers or enterprises before and during the pandemic are indicators of inherent and adaptive resilience, respectively (p. 496).

The present study extends this finding, identifying how event stakeholders interacted with one another in one of three ways during the crisis: (a) collaborating differently with the same event partners; (b) suspending an existing event partnership because of the crisis; or (c) collaborating with new event partners because the event changed during the crisis. During the pandemic, they were able to assess which of their relationships took priority, allowing them to focus limited resources where they mattered most. They recognized that establishing new partnerships generally took too much effort in the crisis. This finding supports Kwiatkowski et al. who documented inconsistencies in cooperation between event planners and found that, during the height of the pandemic, collaboration with others simply did not work, leading some event companies to withdraw from ongoing and future collaboration to focus entirely on their own survival.

In the present study, event stakeholders also identified knowing which of their existing partnerships were strong enough that they could be put on hold without risk, allowing them to take an intentional step back from the partner to again direct limited resources to what was most important during the crisis. Overall, event leaders drew on what was known and familiar, allowing them to adapt and deploy existing resources in new and sometimes more creative ways.

This finding supports Granovetter's (1985) view of embeddedness, in that we typically show a preference for interacting with those who are known to us. At the same time, the willingness to engage with others is also connected with organizational capacity discussed earlier in the framework. That is, if a partner had more organizational capacity at the time of the disruption, it may have been viewed as a more viable partner during the crisis.

Pre-pandemic declines in our civic culture and social contracts had been established and popularized by Putnam (2000) and others. Magnification of this decline in civic engagement emerging from the pandemic—including post-pandemic fatigue or apathy—may be evidence of what Beck (1992) described as “reflexive modernization.” In his view, the unfamiliarity and ambiguity of a crisis or disruption can incite social stress and anxiety, disruption to the order and function of civic institutions, and reduced social interactions, serving to further exacerbate pre-pandemic declines in civic culture. Altogether, these declines have the potential to significantly threaten the long-term sustainability of community-focused festivals and events. But, at the same time, there may be glimmers of hope. The City reported having increased outreach from grassroots and cultural organizations during and emerging from the pandemic. While “traditional” (pre-pandemic) volunteers and partners may be declining, the new landscape of post-pandemic festivals and events has the potential to perhaps reflect the composition of communities and resident expectations in new—and perhaps even better—ways.

In the absence of new partnerships, scarcity of resources may lead event stakeholders to behave in ways that are either more competitive or more collaborative. Prior to the pandemic, Moore (2020) found reductions in festival funding, exacerbated by national austerity measures in the UK, necessitated more collaboration, reciprocity, and trust. Recall, as well, that Ziakas, Antchak and Getz (2021) predicted that, if such collaborative practices did not exist prior to the

crisis, to adapt, event organizations may choose an adaptive response characterized by greater collaboration and sharing of information and resources. The following sections discuss how trust, reciprocity, loyalty and obligations influenced the crisis response and recovery of event organizations and their leaders. Three types of stakeholder interactions are considered: (a) established interorganizational relationships; (b) intraorganizational relationships; and (c) interpersonal relationships.

5.4.2.1 Interorganizational trust, reciprocity, loyalty and obligation: The benefits of established relationships in a crisis

de Klerk and Saayman (2012) described how leaders of successful festival organizations tend to be entrepreneurial thinkers who rely on trust with their vendors and other stakeholders. The findings of this study support this view, emphasizing how established relationships between longstanding event stakeholders characterized by trust, reciprocity, loyalty, and mutual support served as a mechanism of organizational capacity that supported crisis response and recovery. By their nature, newer event organization leaders were in the process of building trust and shared experience with other event stakeholders in the ecosystem, including the City. These leaders of newer event organizations were very open to collaboration, acknowledging that they had more to gain by connecting with more established event organizations on matters such as mutual timing and adjacent locations in the community. Interestingly, newer event organizations seemed to have more casual views of partnership; for example, for two such organizations, the cross-promotion of another event on social media was viewed as a partnership.

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were three types of established longstanding interorganizational relationships: between longstanding festival and event organizations and the City, between longstanding festival organizations and their partner vendors

and grassroots organizations, and between longstanding festival organizations, the City, and regulatory-type stakeholders such as emergency services or public health. Some of the longstanding interorganizational relationships were transactional in nature (i.e., emergency services needing to ensure that there was an evacuation plan, or public health inspections for festivals serving food). In contrast, the longstanding relationships between festivals and smaller or grassroots groups were more relational, characterized by a sense of responsibility or obligation to protect and support smaller partners. In most of these scenarios, often there was a consistent contact person at each organization. In addition, the annual nature of these festivals—using the same location and format year after year—meant these established relationships and predictable exchanges led to clear roles and responsibilities, communication, and mutual expectations. As the City’s event coordinator noted, “It’s easy to trust when it’s routine.” She shared that, even in the face of disruption by the crisis, any tension that may have emerged when the event format changed was able to be bridged because of the established relationship with the event organization.

Prior to the crisis, established event organizations were generally willing to share with newer and non-profit organizations. Although some stakeholders acknowledged that helping another organization could have immediate or short-term benefits for them (i.e., referring to a vendor who would then treat them more favourably), they believed that helping smaller organizations was less threatening and benefited the whole community event ecosystem. If they were asked to share information about their own partners, such as providing a list of cultural food vendors to another event organization, they were loyal to these smaller organizations first, citing their established trust with them.

Prior to the pandemic, these exchanges were reactive or responsive – that is, when approached, an event organization would be willing to share information or resources with another event organization under the right circumstances. These exchanges became more intentional or proactive during and emerging from the pandemic. For example, established event organizations reached out to newer organizations proactively to share information about their mobile event format and offer support. In other examples, established event organizations shared that, in the face of crisis, they knew they needed to support their more grassroots cultural partners by providing information, shared resources, and promotion of the smaller partners. This recognition did not seem to be due to obligation, but rather a sense of responsibility or loyalty to take these organizations under their wing, knowing that supporting the more vulnerable events and event organizations would support the whole community event ecosystem. There did not seem to be an expectation of return to the event organization itself, but the return was perceived to be toward the overall community event ecosystem.

While there was not a formal event network in Kitchener, the shared crisis experience strengthened existing social ties between many of the stakeholders in the community’s event ecosystem. As they shifted to proactively supporting more vulnerable event organizations and sharing information and resources, these stakeholders were mobilizing as an informal community of practice motivated by shared vision and mutual support. As the leader of Festival B said, “We’re all in the same boat.” The shared experience of the COVID-19 global pandemic—and the constant uncertainty and shifting public health guidelines that made planning exponentially more challenging—engendered a shared vulnerability that brought them closer to one another. As one event leader described, they were part of a “secret society” and when they had people wrap around them, “The good got better” (Festival A).

Many of these interorganizational relationships were stronger emerging from the crisis. There were two main examples of this outcome. First, the nature of relationships with the City and many of their established event organizations began to shift from more transactional to more strategic. Both the City and its more longstanding partners admitted they were able to level up a shared vision or evolve an event format because they already knew how to work with one another, and because they all wanted to keep improving for the benefit of the community. Another demonstration of stronger interorganizational relationships as a result of the crisis was that some event organizations started reaching out to other event organizations to explore new collaborations. For instance, one event organization had received grant money to host a first-ever kick-off event, and invited the City and others to co-produce it.

There was a unique interplay of interorganizational relationships, organizational capacity, and crisis response, recovery, and resilience at the neighbourhood level. The City has an ongoing mandate to maintain the well-being of its residents. Prior to the pandemic, programs, services, and resident engagement opportunities such as events were hosted in neighbourhoods and community centres and were planned and delivered in collaboration with grassroots resident-led neighbourhood associations. During the pandemic, the City was able to assess which of these resident groups were likely to be struggling due to limited organizational capacity pre-pandemic. It also knew which ones would be more likely to be resilient and ultimately emerge from the crisis. This understanding allowed City staff to honour the autonomy of these higher capacity groups, and give them space for recovery, saying “When you’re ready, we’re ready [to help]” (City neighbourhood manager). With the lower capacity groups, City staff were more hands-on in replacing work that the resident associations had previously led, knowing that recovery may

be less likely or even implausible. The next section will discuss ways that the pandemic fostered intraorganizational collaboration between local government departments.

5.4.2.2 Intraorganizational relationships: Looking inwards to foster new collaboration

While the single term “local government” is used throughout this discussion, the description of the case in chapter three outlined that there are a number of City departments engaged in community festivals and events. There were straightforward, tactical interdepartmental exchanges involved for planning and execution of City-led and community-partner-led events (such as the Special Events team working with bylaw, parking, or garbage collection). There were administrative complexities, such as multiple City departments interacting with and providing grants to external event organizations and neighbourhood groups. Prior to the pandemic, City staff acknowledged there were opportunities to work better together across these various departments. City staff had the view of “doing the right thing” for the customer, even if it was not their department’s responsibility, but external event organizations reported negative experiences when departments failed to communicate with one another. City staff identified the greatest opportunity for interdepartmental collaboration was in supporting diverse residents and neighbourhoods, including reflecting the community’s multi-cultural communities in its annual festivals and events and ensuring that all residents feel welcome to participate.

As discussed earlier, the pandemic served as a catalyst for change to accelerate interdepartmental collaboration. There were four key ingredients to this shift. First, the formation of a temporary interdepartmental pandemic response team had colleagues working together in new ways. This approach strengthened pre-existing intraorganizational relationships and created new ones. Second, resources were shared across the organization in new ways during the pandemic; for instance, given the necessity of using outdoor spaces during the pandemic,

outdoor huts that were previously used once a year for a winter event were repurposed to neighbourhoods for use during winter and spring activities. Third, there were a number of new requests from the community to host events during and coming out of the pandemic. While many of these requests presented very real opportunities for the City, they were working with the same resources, which required inventiveness on the part of staff. Finally, as in other organizations during the pandemic, staffing changes meant the movement of event-related staff between departments. This shift enabled new viewpoints and openness to new intraorganizational exchanges. This openness may have also been influenced by pre-existing interpersonal trust and reciprocity that carried into new working relationships when one staff member changed departments. The role of interpersonal relationships is explored in the next section.

5.4.2.3 Investing in interpersonal connections: The role of personal social ties in interorganizational relationships

Interpersonal connections between event stakeholders played a role in interorganizational relationships. For instance, the City's special events coordinator talked about going out for a drink or out for lunch with some leaders in external event organizations. She shared that these personal connections were not only enjoyable but also made the working relationship stronger. Another longstanding event leader highlighted that, while working with vendors and other event partners over an extended period of time, she would get to know them personally, learning about their family circumstances, for example. These personal social ties served as an advantage in the interorganizational relationship in that this additional level of connection between the individuals made the working relationship easier (Festival A).

Management scholars have explored the interrelationship between interorganizational trust and interpersonal trust (Gulati & Sytch, 2008; Zaheer et al., 1998). Further, relational

longevity has been found to enhance the levels of trustworthy behaviour in an exchange relationship (Stinchcombe, 1986). In these circumstances, individuals serve as the boundary spanners between the two organizations. Prior interaction and repeated exchanges create familiarity, and with time, the boundary spanners develop open and seamless communication, understanding of each other's motives, and confidence in their integrity. These positive, self-reinforcing cycles can become institutionalized over time, where an organization is willing to identify with and favour this partner over another. This dynamic is referred to as the "shadow of the past;" in times of risk or uncertainty, these long-lasting histories of interaction provide unparalleled opportunities for strengthening interorganizational trust (Gulati & Sych, 2008, p. 168). Unfortunately, the pandemic uprooted some of these interpersonal connections in a number of ways. For example, in some cases, a vendor organization like a delivery company did not survive the crisis, and the festival had to initiate a brand-new vendor relationship. In other cases, while the festival worked with the same vendor, the individual vendor employee never came back and the two individuals never saw each other again, eliminating years of established interpersonal and interorganizational trust.

The framework presented in this chapter emphasized the role of stakeholder relationships for successful crisis response, recovery, and resilience in a community event ecosystem. This section discussed the complexity of these relationships, noting they may take place at one or more levels: interorganizational, intraorganizational, and interpersonal relationships. It emphasized how event stakeholders were able to draw on established trust and reciprocity to support their crisis response and recovery, how loyalty and obligation made event stakeholders wrap around those with less organizational capacity, and how mutual support during the shared crisis motivated them to exchange information and resources more proactively and with new

partners. This chapter will conclude with a synthesis of the role of social capital as a foundation for crisis response, recovery, and resilience for events and communities. The next section will examine another key element of the framework at the level of the community event ecosystem: values-driven leaders.

5.4.3 Leadership, values and the essential human infrastructure of events

In times of great turbulence, festival leaders are the pathfinders who establish new ways of working (Jordan, 2015, p. 107). Getz (2023) was curious about the type of leader and organizational culture required for post-pandemic event organizations, suggesting that leaders who are creative in terms of programming might not necessarily be competent in management, thereby placing the organization at risk when crises arise (p. 640). Abson and colleagues (2024) argued that event scholars should adopt a more “nuanced view of leadership,” where leadership can be enacted by anyone and is more than just a singular behaviour or natural skill (p. 170). Stergiopoulos and Wrathall (2021) drew on Australian event practitioners’ early interpretations of the pandemic to emphasize connectivity, meaningful experience design, adaptive capacity and education and practitioner well-being as core for event practitioners in future crisis.

Jordan’s (2015) view of festival leaders during challenging times was published five years prior to the onset of the pandemic. Drawing on Jonker, Saayman and de Klerk (2009, p. 387), he noted that festival leaders often have an entrepreneurial mindset in that they are driven, resourceful, explorative, focused on personal benefits and have strong communication and organizational skills. Regardless of the form, longevity or size of their festival, such leaders have a common interest in the quality of their event and a clear vision for why the festival should exist. While this clarity may change over time as the festival strives to remain relevant, effective leaders are able to draw in partners and supporters by expressing this vision through words and

actions. Jordan (2015) asserted that when such “visionary” leaders exist, festival and event organizations are flexible and able to quickly and effectively react to social, political and economic change (p. 107); he added that making long-term decisions in such a climate needs very steady nerves and a clear sense of direction (p. 113). Despite the volatility and constant uncertainty of the COVID-19 global pandemic, these event leaders exhibited a strong work ethic, and a spirit of “we did our best under the circumstances” (Festival B). Some event leaders implied they did not have a choice, saying that the pandemic “forced us” to think in new ways, and “forced us” to persevere (Festival B). As the leader of Festival D remarked, the crisis “showed people’s true colours under pressure.” In this study, two event leaders showed decisive leadership by not hosting their annual event during the pandemic at all; these were a not-for-profit organization that primarily provided social services to vulnerable communities in addition to their annual summer festival, and a sport organization that needed to prioritize the safety of their players. This example demonstrated leaders’ ability to prioritize the overall needs of the organization beyond the implications of not hosting the festival. Beyond the health and safety of their organization’s various stakeholders, these event leaders also expressed concern for the well-being of the larger community, and for the reputation of their organization, if they were to host a “superspreader” event. Here, event leaders’ decisions were also likely influenced by norms and sanctions.

While Jordan’s view of festival leadership speaks to leaders’ skills, vision, and relationships, the findings of this study also captured how many of the leaders within these festival and event organizations were driven by their personal values. They described their crisis responses as the right thing to do. They did not view their behaviours as any different from their core way of leading, saying “That’s just the way I am” (Festival A). Values shaped crisis

responses that were compassionate toward themselves, their teams, and their partners.

Interestingly, leaders of the newer event organizations in this study were younger and seemed to be more personally invested in their interactions with other stakeholders and the overall success of their events. They shared examples where their personal values guided what they would or would not tolerate, such as ensuring that vendors followed masking guidelines and respected values related to equity and inclusion at their event. If a stakeholder went against these values, they claimed doing so would fracture trust, thereby compromising the overall relationship by reducing or eliminating the likelihood of future exchanges.

That values and leadership emerged as a strong theme in the findings is aligned with one of the conclusions made by Coles et al. In their pandemic research, they emphasized the role of front-line event staff who support, manage, and regulate events on a day-to-day basis, calling them “essential human infrastructure.” With an emphasis on local government event staff, the authors conclude that “through attributes of understanding, empathy, compassion, creativity, innovation and problem-solving, their perceptions, assessments and decisions are pivotal to translating conditions and making change happen” (p. 12). These scholars went on to suggest that failing to attend to the lived experiences of front-line event staff is an “especially unfortunate omission” in the context of the pandemic:

After all, it is individuals who are immediately, directly and themselves, often corporeally confronted by crisis conditions both in their personal and professional lives... they are pivotal to how crises and catastrophes are interpreted, understood and acted on, for instance in communications to internal and external stakeholders. From a functional perspective, they are especially well-placed to be able to articulate how (local) processes and practices are impacted by, and modified as a result of, episodes. Furthermore, they play key roles in determining how and when it is safe to resume events, and of what type, scale and scope (Coles et al., 2022, p. 4).

As Abson and colleagues (2024) attested, there is a need for further investigation into how leadership is shared among event networks in the public and private sectors, especially to better

understand how shared leadership in the form of collaboration, accountability, responsibility, and capability adapts to changing organizational and environmental conditions.

In this study, and in most communities, local government is the stakeholder that not only holds longstanding relationships with festivals through annual or multi-year funding agreements but may also initiate or be approached to engage with new event and festival partners. The leadership role of local government is explored in the following section.

5.4.4 Leadership role of local government

The literature review outlined that, prior to the pandemic, event scholars had identified the unique role of local government administrators and policymakers as “catalyst, convenor, and facilitator” (Misener & Mason, 2006, p. 45). Foley and colleagues (2012) urged local government to “intervene sensitively” if it is to lever the desired benefits from its communities (p. 97). Hall (1992) argued local governments can secure significant, long-term benefits by investing in smaller, albeit more embedded community events (p. 99). Coles et al. suggested that, while the role of local government in events management is relatively well-understood in pre-pandemic times, it has been “largely overlooked during the pandemic” (p. 4). Three studies, however, documented this vital role of local governments in post-pandemic events and communities. Nguyen and colleagues (2024) concluded that a program of small-scale events, designed by local government to facilitate community recovery, was effective in enhancing a sense of community, (re)connecting people, improving mental health, strengthening family togetherness, and promoting diversity and inclusion. Coles et al. suggested a legacy of the pandemic has been to challenge the way in which events are thought about and managed in local government, including changes to event formats, placemaking functions and consideration of the role for “interventions and support in maintaining and rejuvenating social relations” (p. 11-12).

Based on their study of the pandemic experience, Davies et al. asserted that local government has the opportunity to re-evaluate their role in supporting community events in policymaking and resourcing (p. 550). They highlighted local government as an important catalyst in developing places and by extension social sustainability, especially if they align policy on placemaking with actual support for community events which deliver those outcomes. Coles et al. even concluded that, if events are vital to recovery following the COVID-19 global pandemic, there is a need to focus support on retaining, training and upskilling local government events officers as “agents of change” (p. 12).

All of these studies, however, were based on stakeholders from multiple communities. In contrast, the current research adopted a single case study methodology to examine a single event ecosystem and therefore a single local government organization. In addition, this study also adopted a multi-dimensional timeframe, documenting the role of Kitchener’s local government as an enabler of festivals and events before, during, and emerging from the COVID-19 global pandemic. The findings captured how the City established a more mature and strategic view of festivals and events for the community, launching a Special Events strategic plan that will establish a multi-year strategy to guide the City’s investment in community-focused festivals and events. Alongside this strategic plan, City administrators have identified lessons learned from the pandemic that will establish or renew special events guidelines, practices, and infrastructure. In doing so, the City is responding to how the pandemic has shone a spotlight on pressures for City physical space and financial and human resources. Chapter six will present recommendations that can be adopted by local government administrators and policymakers in mid-sized cities in North America and beyond.

5.5 Social Capital: A Foundation for Crisis Response, Recovery, and Resilience for Events and Communities

Moore (2020) pointed out there are limited examples of festival case studies which incorporate social capital theory into their analysis. In their review of studies on networks and events from the Event Management journal from its inception (2000) until 2023, Ratten and Fernandez (2024) concluded, “Much is still unknown about crisis management and resilience management by event managers, particularly in terms of whether social networks helped alleviate event problems” (p. 10). The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 drew on three key approaches: Portes’ (1998, 2000) view of instrumental social capital; Glover and colleagues’ (2021) endogenous and exogenous views of social capital, and dimensions of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Woolcock, 2001). The theoretical framework considered the sources, motivations and outcomes, and how these may have changed before, during, and emerging from the COVID-19 global health crisis. In addition to this temporal view, this study responded to a methodological gap to sample event stakeholders based on how long ago the event organization was established, or its longevity (Moore, 2020). In doing so, this theoretical framework also reinforced the interplay of social capital and capacity building (both organizational capacity and community capacity). Altogether, this study presents a multi-dimensional, temporal exploration of social capital. Further, by prioritizing the experiences of event stakeholders, it uniquely applies social capital to the production (rather than consumption) of events.

Prior to the pandemic, sources of social capital were marked by whether or not an event organization had established social ties with others in the event ecosystem. Longstanding event organizations had already established interorganizational relationships with the City, and with

their vendors and partners. This represents an endogenous pathway of social capital. The benefit of these relationships was a high degree of trust, reciprocity, and loyalty, manifested as easy communication, and clarity of roles and expectations. These interorganizational relationships may also have been enhanced by interpersonal relationships that further fostered trust and reciprocity between event leaders. However, prior to the pandemic, longstanding event organizations had fewer established relationships with other event organizations within the ecosystem. They had prioritized their relationship with the City, but had not seen any benefits to engaging with other event organizations, especially newer festivals that had less to offer them. In contrast, newer event organizations were still trying to establish or strengthen these social ties. Longstanding event organizations were responsive to requests for information, but were not proactive to offer it. However, the COVID-19 global pandemic represented an exogenous shock that shifted the ecosystem relationships.

During the initial phase of the crisis, established relationships allowed longstanding event leaders to turn to their existing network for support; notably, they reported that they did not have the bandwidth to engage with new partners. This supported Granovetter's (1985) view of embeddedness as a tool for resilience. At the same time, these longstanding event organizations did not worry about any repercussions of temporarily abandoning relationships with established partners who were not relevant or integral to the immediate crisis response. As the crisis persisted, however, the shared experience of this exogenous shock made all event stakeholders more appreciative of and deliberate about interorganizational relationships as part of their crisis response and recovery. This phenomenon was manifested in several ways. Established event organizations expressed a sense of loyalty and responsibility toward their existing smaller vendors and partners with limited organizational capacity, and engaged with them in more

proactive ways. They also were more willing to proactively reach out to share resources with newer and emergent event organizations post-pandemic. This finding is in line with the exogenous pathway of social capital (see Glover et al., 2021) insofar as event leaders probably viewed other event leaders as part of their imagined community.

While social capital existed in some interorganizational relationships prior to the crisis, it was apparent that an event network did not exist within the ecosystem. However, the experience of the pandemic demonstrated a willingness to come together in new ways. By looking out for and lifting up organizations that had limited organizational capacity, the City and its more established festival and event leaders were seeking to build overall capacity of the community and the community's event ecosystem. This effort was influenced by the presence of values-centred leaders within the ecosystem; these leaders believed that, in a time of crisis, less competition and more collaboration was the right thing to do. Finally, the duration and nature of the crisis itself – especially the shared uncertainties and frustrations interpreting constantly shifting public health guidelines – motivated event leaders to value sharing information, resources, and overall mutual support. Ultimately, this led to an informal community of practice in the ecosystem. While this did not exist before the COVID-19 global pandemic, it planted seeds for greater intentionality for a network of event stakeholders in the event ecosystem beyond the crisis.

5.6 Conclusion

Events are deliberate social occasions that can sustain and transform cultures, communities and social systems (Chalip, 2006; Mair & Whitford, 2013; Richards, 2015b). The unprecedented scale and duration of the COVID-19 global pandemic has invited renewed scholarship about the significance of community-focused festivals and events and how events can remain resilient and

sustainable in modern times. This chapter has framed the findings of a case study of the experiences of stakeholders in the City of Kitchener event ecosystem alongside the findings of four top related research studies in the event literature so far (Coles et al., 2022; Davies et al., 2023; Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022; Kwiatkowski et al., 2023). While the present study is in line with the findings of these studies, it presents a Canadian perspective on the COVID-19 global pandemic experience and goes beyond the previous studies by adopting a broader timeframe and consideration of sociocultural context that offer a more holistic exploration of community event stakeholders' experiences.

As Getz (2023) asserted, “A big lesson everyone should have learned by now is that events, their organizations, venues, and stakeholders—even the communities that support them—are in some fundamental ways fragile” (p. 637). This case study contributes to this new body of knowledge and practice by presenting a framework for crisis response, recovery and resilience. This multi-dimensional framework captures lessons learned and inspirations for action at the levels of event management, event organizations, and event ecosystems, and established the foundational roles of both community and organizational capacity. The final chapter will summarize conclusions and contributions from this research, consider limitations and areas for future inquiry, and offer recommendations for policy and practice.

6. CONCLUSION

Without question, the duration and magnitude of the COVID-19 global pandemic profoundly impacted events and communities. Month after month, public health guidelines limited or altogether prohibited social gatherings. Whether cultural or heritage celebrations, sport, music and food festivals, or neighbourhood-based picnics and street parties, these festivals and events that were an integral and familiar part of the annual fabric of a community were put on hold, cancelled, or modified as virtual experiences. When we were unable to gather at community events, our ability for social connection was disrupted, too.

On the front-line of these unprecedented disruptions were event stakeholders—those who plan, deliver and support festivals and events in their community. Some event stakeholders were for-profit event organizations and corporate sponsors; many were volunteers, non-profit organizations, and resident-led neighbourhood associations and cultural groups; and still others were local government administrators and policymakers. While some events and event stakeholders did not make it through the pandemic, many who survived say the crisis made them stronger. Understanding the experiences of those who successfully adapted, pivoted, and reimaged can teach us not just about crisis recovery for events, event organizations, and event ecosystems, but also about how resilient they may be in the face of the next inevitable crisis.

6.1 Inspiration For This Dissertation

As an event practitioner, I experienced the COVID-19 global pandemic first-hand. My colleagues and I learned about online and hybrid event formats, interpreted public health guidelines, and worked extensively with various stakeholders in and outside our organization to provide information, manage expectations, and offer leadership in a prolonged period of uncertainty. During this same time, as an event scholar, I wondered about the long-term

consequences of the pandemic for the future of events and communities. My curiosity was inspired by two things early in the pandemic. First, the book *Crisis Management and Recovery for Events: Impacts and Strategies* was released by Ziakas, Antchak and Getz in early 2021. As discussed in the literature review, Donald Getz is the pioneer of event studies, so I was interested in his point of view during this unprecedented moment. The book's lead author, Vassilios Ziakas, was also someone whose extensive scholarship on event portfolios prior to the pandemic had greatly appealed to my interests in event systems, strategies and communities.

As the book was written while the early and perhaps most uncertain phase of the COVID-19 global pandemic was unfolding in real time, these scholars were drawing on their knowledge of event studies and crisis response literature to speculate what might happen. I wanted to apply their predictions to a community and see if they were right. Two of the authors' propositions especially influenced this research. First, these scholars defined that crisis response was happening simultaneously at three levels: events, event organizations, and host communities. Second, they proposed that an event portfolio—a strategic network with a shared vision for events in a host community—could serve as a tool for crisis response and resilience at these levels. Whether or not the host community had a formal event portfolio, these scholars believed its principles (such as joint problem solving and sharing of information and resources) could guide a community through this crisis. Further, if such stakeholder relationships had not existed before the crisis, a community's event stakeholders might be drawn to work together by desire or by necessity during the crisis, establishing future system opportunities beyond the crisis itself.

Inspired by the book, I reached out to Ziakas, who joined me for a Zoom call in April 2021. In this conversation, he reinforced that COVID-19 was a unique time to study communities and events, saying that a moment of crisis is “the perfect time for communities to

innovate.” We discussed how studying the intentions and actions of event stakeholders during this time could yield unique insights into coping, adaptability, and resilience of events, event organizations, and event ecosystems. We agreed that pandemic and post-pandemic event research would offer new contributions about the meaning and value of events in civic society. For instance, we might see new event formats and systems emerge, and realignment of resources, policies, and investments that support residents in communities of all sizes. Finally, we wondered how event stakeholders would process and understand change, including whether they believed that “things will go back to normal” —and if that was even possible (Ziakas, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

The culmination of the book, this conversation, and my simultaneous front-line experiences as an event practitioner, I felt strongly that the best way to explore these questions would be through the study of experiences of event leaders in a single event ecosystem. This decision shaped the design of a case study of community-focused festivals and events in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. The COVID-19 global health pandemic, while not the focus of the study, served as an example of a crisis for community events. This dissertation explores how community-focused event stakeholders in Kitchener’s event ecosystem planned, adapted, and navigated their roles during the COVID-19 global health pandemic. It examines the factors that shaped event transformations during and after the crisis, with particular attention to the vital role of interorganizational relationships among stakeholders. This case study seeks to identify what supports the crisis recovery of events, event organizations, and the broader event ecosystem, and what factors may contribute to long-term resilience in the face of future disruptions of any scale or type. To guide this inquiry, the following four research questions were posed:

1. How did community-focused event stakeholders adapt and innovate in planning and delivering events during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What factors influenced community-focused event stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did stakeholders adapt to meet the shifting social needs of residents?
3. What changes emerged in the relationships among community-focused event stakeholders, and how did these relationships support resilience and recovery during the pandemic?
4. What elements of community-focused event ecosystems contribute to long-term resilience, and how can these insights inform future crisis preparedness for events?

6.2 Summary of the Dissertation

Chapter one introduced how this research responds to four key gaps in the literature. In contrast to event tourism, it seeks to understand the crisis response, recovery, and resilience of community-focused festivals and events that have primarily social goals. It contributes to our understanding of events and communities during a critical time for event scholarship, when critical event scholars call out issues of equity and representation, and when climate change and political unrest are threatening the very sustainability of events. It responds to a gap in theory, in that examination of event stakeholders and the interorganizational relationships between them have been framed by theories that are fragmented and immature. Finally, while there has been limited emergent pandemic literature about events and communities, to date there is an imperative to go beyond description and offer a multi-dimensional view of the crisis response and recovery experience.

In the second chapter, the literature review showcased three themes: (a) the foundations, significance, and study of community-focused festivals and events, including the potential

impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic on events, communities, and the field of event studies; (b) the integral role of event stakeholders in a community event ecosystem and various theoretical views of interorganizational relationships; and (c) the crisis response, recovery and resilience literature prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, including what event scholars believe this crisis might teach us about events, event organizations, and community event ecosystems. Social capital was presented as the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter three outlined the qualitative case study methodology selected to address the study's four research questions. It provided a description of Kitchener's community event ecosystem that situated the context and stakeholders for the study. Key findings from the research were presented in chapter four. Chapter five discussed several themes that emerged from the findings; this discussion considers the pre-pandemic literature on community events, the predictions and propositions made by event scholars who were writing early in the pandemic, and the emergent literature that has been published—so far—post-pandemic.

This final chapter begins by identifying four contributions of this research. It reiterates why a qualitative case study was the best methodological choice during such an exceptional time in event scholarship. Next, it acknowledges the limitations of the research and suggests areas for future inquiry. Three recommendations for policy and practice are presented that identify expanded leadership opportunities for local governments post-pandemic. The chapter concludes with reflections on how reflexivity has been an asset for this research.

6.3 Contributions of this Research

This research makes four key contributions to the field of event studies: (a) continuing to establish the importance of placemaking festivals and events in communities; (b) adopting a multi-dimensional timeframe and holistic view of events and communities; (c) learning from the

lived experiences of event stakeholders; and (d) engaging with social capital theory as a contribution to a theoretically fragmented field. These contributions are discussed below.

6.3.1 Community-focused festivals and events: The integral role of placemaking and social impact in our post-pandemic communities

The literature review highlighted how early event scholarship was heavily weighted toward the study of mega and non-mega sport events and an emphasis on event tourism. Additionally, prior to the pandemic, studies about crisis recovery and response for festivals and events were based on natural disasters and largely focused on event tourism and the negative economic impacts of the crisis. This study adopted Stevenson's (2020) definition of community events: local community and neighbourhood-based placemaking festivals and events designed primarily for residents. In doing so, it contributes to the literature on community events in four key ways. First, it adds to the growing body of research that focuses on the social impact of festivals and events. Second, it is part of the emergent literature documenting what happened during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Third, this study sought to understand the impact of a crisis on community-focused festivals and events rather than event tourism. Finally, this research recognized the complex sociopolitical factors that were happening alongside the COVID-19 global pandemic. The need to consider this broader context for events was influenced by critical event scholars who situate festivals and events as embedded within the political and social structures of communities. The opportunity to adopt critical event theory in future research is discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.2 Multi-dimensional timeframe and holistic view of crisis response and recovery

The discussion chapter noted that literature on events and the pandemic experience began being published in 2021 and beyond. While offering useful description of the crisis response and

speculations about the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, by virtue of the timing of their data collection, these early studies are limited by capturing only the crisis response, without an ability to extend this discussion to recovery and resilience. In contrast, this study looked to Christakis' (2021) multi-phase view of COVID-19, where pre-pandemic was before March 2020; pandemic was considered March 2020 to the end of 2023; and post-pandemic is viewed as after 2024. Event stakeholders in Kitchener were asked to consider not only their pandemic or crisis experience, but also to (a) compare this crisis experience to the pre-pandemic times, and (b) draw on their emergent post-pandemic experiences as an indicator of the more enduring consequences of the crisis. Reflections across three points in time offered a richer understanding of stakeholder experiences and uniquely captured pre-pandemic factors such as organizational capacity and established interorganizational relationships that contributed to resilience. A further strength of this study was its holistic perspective. Guided by Ziakas and colleagues' (2021) view of event crisis response and recovery, the multi-dimensional framework presented in chapter five comprises crisis response and recovery dimensions for events (elevated attention to health and safety; use of technology, physical space, and infrastructure; continuous adaptation; and volunteer engagement); event organizations (better understanding of audiences; prioritization of partnerships; reevaluating event outcomes and metrics; and leveraging the disruption to advance other priorities); and event ecosystems (values-driven leaders; shared vision; interorganizational and interpersonal relationships; and leadership role of local government).

6.3.3 Learning from the front lines: Why prioritizing the experiences and perspectives of event stakeholders is critical to understand crisis response, recovery, and resilience

Much of event design, production, and delivery happens through a complex network of stakeholders, an interdependent collection of teams, and “pulsating organizations” that expand

and contract as event design and delivery progress (Abson et al., 2024, p. 170). Michopoulou and colleagues (2023) asserted that theoretical and applied conceptualizations of event creativity, innovation and resilience fail to recognize the complex interplay of internal and external dynamics involved in planning and delivery of events, especially during times of uncertainty (p. 477). Influenced by my role as an event practitioner, the current study was designed to prioritize these front-line learnings—especially during such an unprecedented time—as crucial for our understanding of the crisis. Indeed, as Coles and colleagues (2022) concluded, “Events cannot be a force for good, and nor will the pandemic have the transformative nature its advocates intend, if there are not committed, passionate and capable people to make change happen” (p. 13).

6.3.4 Social capital: A theoretical contribution in a theoretically fragmented field

Social capital theory is well suited to the study of community-focused festivals and events (Moore, 2020). Indeed, the use of social capital as the theoretical framework for this study extends Ziakas’ (2019a) view that social capital is the “lifeblood” of events and communities (p. 146). Festivals and events are inherently social, both in the attendee experience (consumption) and the stakeholder planning and delivery (production). Much of the event studies literature that has engaged with social capital theory has examined the perspective of event attendees (i.e., Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Devine & Quinn, 2019; Wilks, 2013) or local communities (i.e., Murzyn Kupisz & Działek, 2013; Raj & Vignali, 2010). In contrast, this study makes two unique contributions. First, in seeking to understand the crisis response and recovery experiences of event stakeholders, it applies social capital to the discussion of event production, rather than event consumption. A second key contribution is application of social capital to interpersonal and interorganizational relationships between event stakeholders over three time periods of pre-, during-, and post-crisis.

The literature review presented in chapter two recognized the wide range of theories adopted by event scholars, and highlighted network and social capital theories as especially important for stakeholder relationships within an event ecosystem. Because most theories, frameworks, models and concepts in event studies have come from other disciplines, they were not initially designed to study events and may therefore miss insight on the unique nature of events, their multi-layered contexts, multi-factorial processes, as well as multi-faceted characteristics and needs (Ziakas, 2024, p. 19). As Ziakas (2024) recently championed, now is the time to “approach the study of events in a fresh way, which must be integrative, multidimensional, interrelational, and transdisciplinary” (p. 26). He called for transdisciplinary approaches that will ultimately generate distinct, event-focused theory and principles explaining unique event phenomena, including event design, bidding, collaboration, networking and partnership-building, leadership, impact assessment and evaluation. As Foley and colleagues (2012) noted:

Theoretically, there is a cogent argument to be made for events and festivals working as the “social glue” of communities by aiding capacity building and through cementing a sense of place identity.... [yet] there remain significant question marks over the longevity of the positive outcomes secured and the nature of the beneficiaries thereafter. That is why attention needs to be paid to the most effective mechanisms for turning theoretical benefits into practice-led initiatives (p. 93-94).

The findings of this study contribute to this bridge between theory and practice by using social capital to highlight the role of interorganizational relationships as a key feature of a practical framework for crisis response, recovery, and resilience for events and communities.

This section described the four main contributions of this research: (1) continuing to establish the importance of placemaking festivals and events in post-pandemic communities; (2) adopting a multi-dimensional timeframe and holistic view of events and communities; (3) learning from the experiences of event stakeholders; and (4) highlighting social capital as a

theoretical contribution to event and community crisis response, recovery, and resilience. The following section briefly reiterates how the case study was the best methodology to contribute to the emergent research on post-pandemic community events. It proceeds to discuss limitations of the study and identify areas for future inquiry. Finally, it shares reflections on personal, interpersonal, and contextual reflexivity.

6.4 Exploratory Research During an Unprecedented Time: Case Study Methodology, Limitations, and Areas For Future Inquiry

Wallace and Michopoulou (2019) believed that qualitative research can most effectively enable event researchers to understand stakeholder relationships and interaction-related phenomena. In their pandemic research, Davies and colleagues (2023)—whose research team included event practitioners—emphasized how qualitative methods are most appropriate explore the complex relationship between stakeholders who are managing community events and impacts on the communities (p. 541). Because community events have never experienced a disruption of this magnitude, and because the COVID-19 global pandemic took place over a long and complex period, I take the position that all post-pandemic event research is inherently exploratory research. This study also situated the crisis experience alongside other social, political and cultural contexts that could not be isolated from the impact of the pandemic itself. In so doing, it reinforces Flyvbjerg’s (2006) view that case studies help us to “close in” on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice (p. 235).

Event scholars cannot and should not assume that all events and all communities experienced the pandemic in the same way. Therefore, case study methodology is especially appropriate to advancing our understanding of the complexities of crisis response, recovery and resilience. As noted above, the case study supported consideration of multiple dimensions of the

crisis, including not only of what happened during the crisis, but also the circumstances that existed before and emerging from the crisis. Given its ability to be both pragmatic and flexible (Hyett, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2014), a case study was undoubtedly the most appropriate methodological choice to explore the four research questions in this study.

In response to critiques that past event research generally focuses on a single event sector, such as only sport events (i.e., Ziakas, 2024; Moore, 2020), a strength of this study's case selection was that it sampled from a variety of sport, arts and culture, and heritage events and festivals in a single community. In addition, it went beyond the recent pandemic event studies that examined experiences of event stakeholders representing more than one community in a single study. In contrast, the current research offers a more comprehensive view of an entire community event ecosystem. However, there were two main methodological limitations of this study: participant recall bias and the sample composition. These are described in the next section.

6.4.1 Limitations of this study

Because event stakeholders in this study were asked to recall experiences up to five years before the time of data collection, the results could be limited by participant recall bias. Recent literature has considered the impact of recall bias in the context of pandemic-related research; for example, Sprengholz, Henkel, Böhm and Betsch (2023) highlight the “complex nexus of attitudes, memories and behaviours” surrounding the COVID-19 global pandemic, and encourage researchers and policymakers to pursue a better understanding of these connections (p. 593). Recall bias in this and other COVID-19 research may also be compounded by the stressful nature of the crisis experience itself.

A second limitation of the research was that the sample was impacted by eligible participants' willingness to take part in the study. The methodology described in chapter three

outlined that eligible participants were event stakeholders engaged in community events that existed before the pandemic and still exist at the time of data collection. The participant recruitment process was described, noting that a few of the event stakeholders who were contacted either did not respond or declined to participate in the study. They included the local downtown economic development organization and an annual resident-led neighbourhood festival—two perspectives that would have yielded additional important insights and points of view. There were also two City staff at the level of event coordinator who had since moved on to roles in other departments at the City; although they declined participation in the study, it is expected that these individuals would have held front-line relationships with local festival organizations during the pandemic, and their reported experiences would have further enhanced the study. Finally, it would have been ideal to have had each participant be in the exact same job and event organization across the three pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic timeframes. However, the five-year timeframe, the real-world nature of events and communities, and the fluid and unpredictable nature of the pandemic itself meant this consistency was largely impossible. The next section will suggest areas for future research on post-pandemic community-focused festivals and events, event organizations, and event ecosystems.

6.4.2 Areas for future inquiry

This study inspires four areas for future investigation: (a) the attendee perspective of post-pandemic community-focused festivals and events; (b) the role of representation, equity and diversity in post-pandemic community-focused festivals and events; (c) application of social network analysis as a methodology to map the intersections of stakeholder relationships in a community event ecosystem; and (d) further study of event portfolios, especially those that are

informal, focused on community events versus event tourism, and might occur in mid-sized cities. Each of these areas will be discussed below.

6.4.2.1 Attendee/resident perspective

Attendees have an important role in community events and their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic will be part of the emergent literature on events and the pandemic (Davies et al., 2023). However, event attendees (event consumers) were not the focus of the current study. Rather, the research questions for this study prioritize event stakeholders responsible for planning, resourcing, and executing events within the host community (event producers). In this study, these event producers were working within local government, for-profit event organizations, and not-for-profit organizations. However, by adopting an ecosystem lens, the perspectives of residents as event attendees would offer a more comprehensive view.

Resident point of view is especially valuable given the literature on the resident role in and benefit from placemaking (i.e., Coghlan et al., 2016; Platt & Ali-Knight, 2018), as well as the role of resident engagement in such events for generating bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Misener & Mason, 2006). The findings identified the City of Kitchener events infrastructure separates the role of special events from neighbourhood events. This implication became clearer in the data collection process, in that City staff were identifying resident engagement as a unique dynamic of neighbourhood-based events generally not present in the Special Events department. As such, a further study could be conducted, speaking with resident organizations that had successfully received “Love My Hood” neighbourhood event grants, resident participants of the City’s annual “Neighbours Day” city-wide event, and the resident-led neighbourhood associations that plan events in community centres throughout the city. This exploration would be a rich companion to the current research.

Because this study also examined the community's sociocultural context, it was able to document evolving shifts or trends that were happening because of the crisis or that were exacerbated by the pandemic. In particular, the findings captured the substantial changes in the demographics and cultural make-up of the community, as well as stakeholders' expressed desires for more representation in the event ecosystem. Further, the participants referenced their relationships with many vendors and performers who represented cultural communities at their festivals. The City also highlighted the increased number of grassroots and cultural organizations and residents who were interested in starting their own events. In the current study, these stakeholders did not meet the sampling criteria. However, their perspectives and experiences would be valuable for further investigation.

6.4.2.2 Critical event theory

A strength of this study was a research question that explicitly explored the broader sociocultural factors influencing the community event ecosystem. RQ2 was aligned with the view of critical event scholars who describe the “messy, overlapping, social and cultural nature” of events (Jepson & Clarke, 2016, p. 67). Despite this recognition, event scholars and practitioners often fail to adequately consider these realities in their work. As Calver and colleagues (2023) asserted, attention to matters of equity, diversity and inclusion in event studies research is “peripheral at best and almost invisible at worst” (p. 18). The literature review in chapter two outlined that, prior to the pandemic, critical event scholars pointed to neo-liberal threats to the sustainability of events and the sector as a whole, citing issues such as cost, competition, and negative environmental and social impacts of events (e.g., Rojek, 2013; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016). In their pandemic research in Australia, Nguyen and colleagues (2024) highlighted that the COVID-19 global pandemic intensified inequalities and had a disproportionate negative

impact on the health, well-being, and financial security of newly arrived and marginalized communities (p. 4). Ziakas and colleagues (2021) believed that the COVID-19 global pandemic would exacerbate this “erratic” and “unsustainable” state of the event sector and called for new ways of thinking about events and communities as part of the post-pandemic recovery (p. 2).

As noted above, this study did not include the perspectives of event attendees. However, the event organizations in this study frequently noted they were seeing more diverse event attendees, and that attendee behaviours were shifting to spend less at the festivals. This study also identified the growing desire of event administrators and grassroots cultural organizations alike to collaborate in new ways for community festivals. Although it was beyond the scope of this research to interrogate further, critical event theory would be an asset for further consideration of power, control, access, and privilege in the context of representation, equity and diversity in who attends, who does not attend, and who is involved in the planning and delivery of post-pandemic community-focused festivals and events.

6.4.2.3 Social network analysis

Guided by RQ3, this study explored interpersonal and interorganizational stakeholder relationships, interrogating dimensions such as trust, reciprocity, shared values, and mutual support. However, this analysis could have been complemented by social network analysis (SNA). As outlined in the literature review, one of the theoretical influences in event stakeholder studies is network theory. As a methodology, SNA can include both qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the structure and function of one or more networks (i.e., Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Provan & Milward, 2001). SNA can study the entire network structure (a bird’s eye or sociocentric view), identify prominent actors, and composition of clusters within the network (Nooraie, Sale, Marin & Ross, 2020).

Jarman (2016) makes the case for SNA as an event studies methodology, noting that “Where stakeholder analysis risks treating organizations and institutions as unified and homogeneous groupings, SNA helps reveal the personal connections that underpin the connections between competitors and collaborators” (p. 303). SNA has been applied in event studies by scholars including Jarman, Theodoraki and Ali-Knight (2014), Adongo and Kim (2018), and Yaghmour and Scott (2009). However, there has been limited attention to the different types of event-based network structures, the mechanisms that enable their optimal operation, and the underlying processes for facilitating community capacity building through events (Ziakas, 2024). In the future, SNA could add value for further inquiry into mid-sized community event ecosystems, such as Kitchener. By their nature, mid-sized cities have a smaller number of event organizations, and SNA might demonstrate fewer, albeit stronger network ties in mid-sized cities focusing on festivals and events for their residents. Given the significance of interorganizational relationships as a dimension of the crisis response, recovery and resilience framework presented in this research, SNA could support new insights into better understanding and nurturing these relationships.

6.4.2.4 Event portfolios

This study did not assume that an event portfolio exists in Kitchener, either formally or informally. Based on the findings, prior to the pandemic, an event portfolio did not exist; rather, Kitchener’s event ecosystem would be characterized as what Ziakas (2024) described as an “amorphic event set.” In contrast with informal and formal event portfolios, the amorphic event set represents the vast majority of communities. It is the most laissez-faire, encompassing an annual calendar of events distributed sporadically or irregularly; there is no focal connection between event stakeholders, which results in a haphazardly assorted events program (p. 33).

During and emerging from the pandemic, however, the findings of this study indicated that event stakeholders began to move towards new ways of working together. While this might be considered a community of practice, this could represent an early formation—or willingness to form—an informal event portfolio network. At the same time, the findings outlined that City staff are starting to think about the community event ecosystem in a more holistic way post-pandemic, including the development of its Special Events strategic plan.

While the case examined in this case study is not an event portfolio, there are merits in continuing to consider the event portfolio in future post-pandemic research about events and communities, specifically given the potential for event portfolios to serve as “agents of change” (Ziakas, 2019a, p. 130). The framework of crisis response, recovery, and resilience presented in chapter five identified three aspects of ecosystem level supports that are aligned with the principles of an event portfolio: the leadership role of local government, a shared community vision, and interorganizational relationships. While event portfolios were initially imagined in the context of large cities with primarily economic development event tourism goals, if the event portfolio literature is to continue to evolve, it must situate the principles of event portfolios in mid-sized cities like the one in this case study. In each of these communities, local government has a mandate to ensure positive social impact for its residents, post-pandemic, and likely in more resource-constrained environments. If, as in the case of Kitchener, there is increased desirability to use festivals and events to promote social inclusion, belonging, and sense of community, there are incredible opportunities ahead to apply the event portfolio framework to this endeavour. The following section presents recommendations for practice and policy, outlining a unique moment for local governments to provide leadership.

6.5 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study recommend three progressive areas of action for local governments: (1) to adopt a holistic view of the event ecosystem; (2) to establish an organized network of event stakeholders; and (3) to leverage and invest in all types of stakeholder partnerships that maximize opportunities for the entire community event ecosystem. These recommendations are not exclusive to the City of Kitchener (though especially timely for it as it embarks on its Special Events strategic plan in 2025). Rather, these recommendations are relevant for local governments across North America and beyond (noting there are varied contextual considerations depending on geography, such as models of local governance, policy, and investments). These recommendations are especially directed toward mid-sized cities; in contrast with large urban cities that typically have a primary focus on event tourism, mid-sized cities are most likely to prioritize placemaking and community development festivals and events primarily directed toward residents.

6.5.1 Recommendation 1: Adopt a holistic view of how residents engage with festivals and events in the community

The view of event portfolios espoused by Ziakas and colleagues was first developed in the context of “eventful cities,” or large urban centres focused on tourism and economic development goals. However, there are also benefits for mid-sized cities with community and social development goals for events. Even if an event portfolio never exists, an introductory step is for local governments to adopt a holistic view of how residents might engage with community-focused festivals and events. This mapping exercise should include two components. First, a user-centric comprehensive view should outline all possible current user (resident) event interfaces including neighbourhood events, large City-run festivals, grassroots cultural events,

and festivals led by not-for-profit and for-profit entities. Events should be mapped using a calendarized approach to understand peaks and valleys in event programming throughout the year. In communities with non-annual, known one-off events, a multi-year view is also encouraged. Second, local government should undertake a mapping of all existing interdepartmental event-related goals, resources (human, physical and financial) and accountabilities. This approach should include an inventory of all venues (both indoor and outdoor), as well as mapping all pathways for financial grants and in-kind resources provided to event and festival organizations in the community. The development of this holistic view must engage elected officials and policymakers; these stakeholders will ultimately serve as champions who endorse and approve strategic investments discussed in the subsequent recommendations.

6.5.2 Recommendation 2: Establish an organized network of event stakeholders

The findings of this study demonstrated that a resilient community event ecosystem is best achieved through supportive interorganizational relationships, a shared vision, values-driven leaders, and the leadership role of local government. It also identified that the shared crisis experience inspired event organizations to mobilize as an informal community of practice. Once local government administrators have adopted a holistic view of the community's events and local government resources (recommendation one), they are encouraged to establish an organized network of event stakeholders, inviting event organizations and their leaders to participate more deliberately in the success of the community event ecosystem. This approach may take a number of formats. At its most sophisticated, the network may be a formalized governance structure with terms of reference, documented agendas and minutes, and quarterly meetings. At its most simple, local government administrators might host a single, facilitated half-day brainstorming or kick-off meeting that invites all interested parties to an initial

discussion, and the format of subsequent engagement can emerge more organically after the first meeting. Participants should include leaders of for-profit and not-for-profit event organizations, including those with whom local government may not already have an existing relationship. The network's encompassing composition should aim to reduce the inherent fragmentation that often exists in communities by including sport, arts and culture, and other types of events and festivals. Membership should include umbrella organizations related to economic development, sport hosting, and destination marketing. Department leaders from local government should participate as resources to the network.

While the format, structure and composition of this event network should respond to the unique characteristics of each community, what is key is that an intentional leadership function of local government is established. When married with the holistic view of festivals and events outlined in recommendation one, this network can be used by local government to develop community-wide objectives and establish new accountabilities. As these outcomes would be part of a strategic plan for events, it is recommended that local governments establish an organized network of event stakeholders prior to or alongside the development of a strategic plan.

This network will create synergies across event organizations, thus building both community and organizational capacities core to the framework presented in this study. A network structure would facilitate shared resources and education such as leadership development, volunteer engagement, grant writing and sponsorship skills, for example. Such training would not have to be unique to event organizations but could be available through not-for-profit organizations focused on training and capacity building. In addition to training, over time a network model could also encourage sharing of resources across event organizations, such as administrative support or volunteer recruitment and training. Such functions are aligned with

the principles of event portfolios, such that inter-organizational associations boost collaboration and reciprocity to strengthen joint decision-making and problem-solving (Ziakas, 2024, p. 90). Overall, an event organization network facilitated by local government would also serve as a space to produce social capital by cultivating relationships of trust, mutual recognition or obligation, and mutual support among event organizations. While Jordan's (2015) view of festival leadership in turbulent times suggested that engaging with the policy-making process was generally not high on event leaders' agendas, the findings of this study suggest otherwise. In fact, the complexity of the post-pandemic event landscape, possible fears of organizational vulnerability due to financial pressures, and a renewed appreciation for local events in communities may mean more active engagement of event stakeholders post-pandemic. Such engagement may inspire new partnership opportunities, discussed in the final recommendation below.

6.5.3 Recommendation 3: Leverage and invest in partnerships that maximize opportunities for the community festival and event ecosystem

Recommendations one and two encourage mapping of local government event-related goals and resources and establishing a network of event stakeholders. These actions provide an important baseline infrastructure for local governments to establish realistic budgets and resources that reflect the complexity of modern events. This comprehensive view should incorporate appropriate and adequate mechanisms to encourage, support and respect cultural representation across community festivals and events, and to build capacity for more grassroots event organizations to imagine and deliver creative and representative events. The findings of this study also suggest that there is a role for local government to act as a catalyst to engage sponsors on behalf of the community event ecosystem. In doing so, local government administrators could

engage with other system-level partners that act as brokers for community investments, such as Community Foundations, to inspire and mobilize investment (financial but also volunteers) from the public sector. This collaborative investment could foster the sustainability of smaller festival and event organizations, create a more resilient event ecosystem in the face of disruption and increased complexity, and facilitate positive outcomes for residents and communities.

Overall, the imperative for local governments to establish new partnerships should be grounded in principles of co-creation and co-production of events. Event scholars like Richards (2019) have noted that, in response to the “experience economy,” co-creation means engaging with event attendees as co-creators of events, responding to a growing desire for novelty, individualism and added value. Co-creation is also at play when cultural organizations and resident-led associations come forward proactively with new event ideas, as outlined in this study. At the event design and delivery level, Jordan (2015) suggested that opening up to motivated, enthusiastic and interested communities may be a way for festivals to develop new income streams and audiences, to meaningfully engage with newcomer communities, and to offer legitimacy that will convince policymakers, sponsors, and residents to support them into the future (p. 115).

This view aligns with urban planning, where co-production models can offer new ways to advance more inclusive community participation. For instance, Rosen and Painter (2019) encouraged planners and local practitioners to go beyond traditional government decision-making models to adopt adaptive, long-term participation models that ultimately shift greater power, resources, and influence toward communities. Ziakas (2024) extended co-production to value co-creation, a construct adopted by management scholars including Pera, Occhiocupo and Clarke (2016) and Gyrd-Jones and Kornum (2013). In a business context, they described

stakeholder ecosystems as a complex set of subcultures configured to encapsulate the network nature of relationships. While individual stakeholders have unique identities, conflicting values and agendas, and differing objectives, they come together within an ecosystem to collectively merge, aggregate and magnify different enactments of value (Ziakas, 2024, p. 51). Engaging residents in these processes of co-production and value co-creation can develop social capital.

Drawing on the proposed framework of crisis response, recovery, and resilience presented in chapter five, these three recommendations for local governments aim to strengthen and modernize event management practices, event organizations, and the entire community-focused festival and event ecosystem. In doing so, the recommendations embrace the critical and foundational roles of community and organizational capacity building, which can have broader benefits for residents and the community. Overall, these investments and practices—even when introduced incrementally—will foster resilience in the face of future disruptions of any kind, magnitude, and duration.

6.6 Reflexivity and Autobiographical Reflections

Reflexivity, which can be described as an act, capacity, or practice to self-critique one's own biases that may influence the construction of knowledge, is an important means for meeting standards of goodness or quality within qualitative research (Duffy, Fernandez & Sene-Harper, 2021). In fact, leisure scholars Duffy, Fernandez, and Sène-Harper (2021) asserted that: "If it is utilized holistically, [reflexivity] remains one of the most viable practices to bring strength and clarity to the messiness of leisure research" (p. 449). While this study allowed (and encouraged) me to reflect on my personal and professional pandemic experiences, I underestimated the personal impact of "reopening" the conversation about the pandemic experience.

As an event practitioner during the COVID-19 global pandemic, I cancelled events, adopted new technologies to host events online, and developed hybrid events. I relentlessly monitored COVID-19 trends and tried to predict what event activities would be acceptable weeks and even months in the future. There were many, many contingency plans. I ordered lots of hand sanitizer, carefully constructed seating plans, and developed vaccination protocols. I led a team, provided guidance, and regularly updated partners and colleagues who had many questions of their own. It was not an easy time, and I discovered that it was not simple to decouple my experiences as a practitioner from my scholarship.

During data collection, I intentionally did not reveal much about my own professional experiences, other than to offer that I had also been leading events during the pandemic. Doing so helped to create a connection of shared experience between myself and many of the participants. While I may have unknowingly introduced some bias, I felt it was valuable for me to be able to ask for clarity or further detail in parts of an interview because I was familiar with the work and the pandemic experience. Participants' personal investment in their work was vivid. One person even cried. I could see—and feel—myself in this reaction. Yet, it was not until I was deeply engaged in the thematic analysis, immersed in the transcripts, that I found myself personally impacted in unexpected ways. Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis is flexible, organic, and evolves through the process, and therefore I felt safe to be thoughtful, deliberate and systematic while applying my unique vantage point as an event practitioner. Absorbed in participants' recollections of constant change and frustration I, too, was brought back to my own difficult experiences. The transcripts, themes, and quotes kept reminding me that it had been hard, personal, and sometimes even emotional labour—at a time when our personal lives were disrupted and unsettled, too.

I am not sure I would have appreciated all of this without this dissertation. As Dupuis (1999) reminded me, it is important to account for the role my “human self”—including my emotions and personal experiences—played throughout the research process. Interestingly, in some of the emergent post-pandemic event studies literature, other scholars are reflecting on their personal connections to events and the pandemic, including those who are also practitioners like me (i.e., Davies et al., 2023). I am proud to share in contributing to a stronger body of research by being transparent clear about my positionality as both an event practitioner and scholar.

6.7 Conclusion

This study contributes to event scholarship at a pivotal time for the field. In contrast to event tourism, this research situates placemaking events as a tool for intentional, community-based social action following a crisis. By establishing a multi-dimensional timeframe and holistic view of crisis response, recovery, and resilience, this study presents a robust framework of event management practices, event organization strategies, and supports for community event ecosystems. In learning from the first-hand experiences of event stakeholders, the study acknowledges the relational nature of event production in a community event ecosystem. In doing so, it reinforces social capital as a key theory to understanding event and community crisis response, recovery, and resilience. As cities prepare for an uncertain future, this study demonstrates that community festivals and events—when supported by thoughtful leadership, strategic partnerships, and inclusive ecosystems—can be powerful tools of resilience and renewal. The next crisis is not a matter of if, but when. With the insights offered here, event stakeholders are better positioned to respond.

REFERENCES

- Abson, E., Norman, M., & Schofiel, P. (2024). Event leadership matters: Why a shared approach might be the answer to improved working practices in events. *Event Management*, 28, 169–175. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599523X16950749084376>
- Achrol, R.S. (1997). Changes in the theory of interorganizational relations in marketing: Toward a network paradigm. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(1), 56-71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02894509>
- Adler, P.S. & Kwon, S. (2002). Social capital: Prospects for a new concept. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 17-40.
- Adongo, R., & Kim, S. (2018). The ties that bind: Stakeholder collaboration and networking in local festivals. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(6), 2458-2480. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-02-2017-0112>
- Aldrich, D.P. (2012). *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226012896.001.0001>
- Aldrich, D.P. & Meyer, M.A. (2015). Social capital and community resilience. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(2), 254–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764214550299>
- Ali, R., & Balme, C. (2022). Festivals in the COVID age of crisis. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 32(3-4), 336-341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2022.2117804>
- Ali-Knight, J. (2023). Events innovation and resilience during uncertainty: Reflections from the festival city! *Event Management*, 27, 631-635. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948695314>
- Anderson, B. (2009). Affective atmospheres. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 2(2), 77–81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2009.08.005>

- Anderson, P. (1999). Complexity theory and organization science. *Organization Science*, 10(3), 216–232. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.10.3.216>
- Andersson, T. D., & Getz, D. (2008). Stakeholder management strategies of festivals. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 9(3), 199-220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15470140802323801>
- Antchak, V., & Pernecky, T. (2017). Major events programming in a city: Comparing three approaches to portfolio design. *Event Management*, 21, 545-561. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X15053272359013>
- Antchak, V., Gorchakova, V. & Rossetti, G. (2024). The value of events in times of uncertainty: Insights from balcony performances in Italy during the COVID-19 lockdown. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 27(1), 87-104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2022.2046117>
- Arai, S., & Pedlar, A. (2003). Moving beyond individualism in leisure theory: A critical analysis of concepts of community and social engagement. *Leisure Studies*, 22, 185-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026143603200075489>
- Arcodia, C., & Whitford, M. (2008). Festival attendance and the development of social capital. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 8(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1300/J452v08n02_01
- Ambrecht, J., Lundberg, E., Andersson, T. D., & Mykletun, R. J. (2021). 20 years of Nordic event and festival research: A review and future research agenda. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 21(1), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2020.1823245>
- Ateljevic, I. (2020). Transforming the (tourism) world for good and (re) generating the potential ‘new normal’. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 467-475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1759134>

- Azara, I., Pappas, N., & Michopoulou, E. (2021). Revisiting value co-creation and co-destruction in events: An overview. *Event Management*, 27(2), 157–162.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599521X16367300695672>
- Babiak, K. (2007). Determinants of interorganizational relationships: The case of a Canadian Non-profit sport organization. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21, 338-37.
- Banks, M., & O'Connor, J. (2021). A plague upon your howling: Art and culture in the viral emergency. *Cultural Trends*, 30(1), 3–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2020.1827931>
- Barasa, E., Mbau, R., & Gilson., L. (2018). What is resilience and how can it be nurtured? A systematic review of empirical literature on organizational resilience. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 7(6), 491–503.
<https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2018.06>
- Barker, A., & Smith, A. (2020). Parks in a pandemic: a glimpse into the future?
<https://archive.discover society.org/2020/04/29/parks-in-a-pandemic-a-glimpse-into-the-future/> April 20, 2020
- Beck, U. (1992). Risk society: Towards a new modernity (M. Ritter, Trans.). Sage Publications. (Original work published 1986).
- Bendor, J., & Swistak, P. (2001). The Evolution of Norms. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 106(6), 1493–1545. <https://doi.org/10.1086/321298>
- Benjamin, S., Dillette, A., & Alderman, D. H. (2020). “We can’t return to normal”: committing to tourism equity in the post-pandemic age. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 476-483.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1759130>
- Berkes, F., & Ross, H. (2013). Community resilience: toward an integrated approach. *Society &*

- Natural Resources*, 26(1), 5-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2012.736605>
- Billings, R., Milburn T., & Schaalman, M. (1980). A model of crisis perception: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25, 300-316.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2392456>
- Blackshaw, T., & Long, J. (2005). What's the big idea? A critical exploration of the concept of social capital and its incorporation into leisure policy discourse. *Leisure Studies*, 24(3), 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0261436052000327285>
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Wiley.
- Bluhm, C. (2023, November 21). Personal communication.
- Boukas, N., & Ziakas, V. (2013). Impacts of the global economic crisis on Cyprus tourism and policy responses. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 15, 329–345.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.1878>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Distinction*. Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (R. Johnson, Ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Burt, R.S. (1992). *Structural Holes, The Social Structure of Competition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Calver, J., Dashper, K., Finkel, R., Fletcher, T., Lamond, I., May, E., Omerod, N., Platt, L., & Sharp, B. (2023). The (in) visibility of equality, diversity, and inclusion research in events management journals. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2023.2228820>

Center for Culture, Sport and Events (June 22, 2022). Localism: Reevaluating the Future of Culture, Events and Tourism [webinar]. University of the West of Scotland.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9A8EK3kh6k>

Chalip, L. (2006). Towards social leverage of sport events. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 11, 109-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775080601155126>

Chaskin, R. J. (2001). Building community capacity: A definitional framework and case studies from a comprehensive community initiative. *Urban Affairs Review*, 36(3), 291-323.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10780870122184876>

Chaskin, R.J. (2008). Resilience, community, and resilient communities: Conditioning contexts and collective action. *Child Care in Practice*, 14, 65–74.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13575270701733724>

Chen, G., Yu, B., & Potwarka, L. (2024). Fostering social capital through community events. *University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension*. 1957.

<https://scholars.unh.edu/extension/1957>

Christakas, N.A. (February 2, 2021). Opinion: Why the pandemic won't be over until 2024.

CNN Opinions, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/opinions/2021/02/03/covid-19-pandemic-end-lon-orig-bks.cnn>

City of Kitchener (November, 2023). *We Are Kitchener: Kitchener's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan*.

City of Kitchener (October, 2020). *Make It Kitchener 2.0: A Strategy to Guide Economic*

Recovery & Growth. <https://www.makeitkitchener.ca/make-it-kitchener-2.0-page/make-it-kitchener-2.0-update-file>

Claridge, T. (September 30, 2018). Can social capital be measured? Is any measurement valid?

Social Capital Research. <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/can-social-capital-be-measured/>

Claridge, T. (December 13, 2020). Social norms and social sanctions: An aspect of the relational dimension of social capital. <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/social-norms-and-social-sanctions/>

Clarke, A. and Jepson, A. (2011). Power and hegemony within a community festival. *International Journal of Festival and Event Management*. 2(1), 7-19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17582951111116588>

Coghlan, A., Sparks, B., Liu, W., & Winlaw, M. (2016). Reconnecting with place through events: collaborating with precinct managers in the placemaking agenda. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 8(1), 66-83. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-06-2016-0042>

Coleman, J.S. (1988). *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Coles, T., Garcia, G., O'Malley, E., & Turner, C. (2022, January). Experiencing event management during the Coronavirus pandemic: A public sector perspective. *Frontiers in Sport & Active Living*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.814146>

Columbo, A. (2017). Music festivals and eventfulness: Examining eventful cities by event genres and policy agendas. *Event Management*, 21, 563-573. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X15053272359013>

Comfort, L. K. (2005). Risk, security, and disaster management. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8, 335-356. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.081404.075608>

Coombs, W.T. (2019). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (5th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Cots, E. G. (2011). Stakeholder social capital: a new approach to stakeholder theory. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 20(4), 328-341. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8608.2011.01635.x>
- Crowther, P. (2014). Strategic event creation. In L. Sharples, P. Crowther, D. May & C. Orefice (Eds), *Strategic Event Creation*. Goodfellows, Oxford, 3-20.
- Cutter, S. L., Barnes, L., Berry, M., Burton, C., Evans, E., Tate, E., & Webb, J. (2008). A place-based model for understanding community resilience to natural disasters. *Global Environmental Change*, 18(4), 598-606. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.07.013>
- Davies, N., Robbins, L., Baxter, D., Viol, M., Graham, A., & Halas, A. (2023). Investigating the recovery of community events in Scotland, post-COVID-19. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 14(4), 537-558 <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-03-2023-0024>
- Davies, K. (2020). Festivals post COVID-19. *Leisure Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1774000>
- de Klerk, S., & Saayman, M. (2012). Networking as key factor in Artpreneurial success. *European Business Review*, 24(5), 382-399. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09555341211254490>
- Denyer, D. (2017). *Organizational Resilience*. BSI and Cranfield University.
- Derrett, R. (2003). Festivals and regional destinations: How festivals demonstrate a sense of community and place, *Rural Society*, 13(1), 35-53.
- Derrett, R. (2008). How festivals nurture resilience in regional communities. In J. Ali-Knight, M.

- Robertson, A. Fyall, & A. Ladkin (Eds.), *International Perspectives of Festivals and Events: Paradigms of Analysis*, Elsevier: Amsterdam, 107-124.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080914374-9>
- Devine, A., & Quinn, B. (2019). Building social capital in a divided city: The potential of events. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(10), 1495-1512.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1639721>
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>
- Dovers, S. R., & Handmer, J. W. (1992). Uncertainty, sustainability and change. *Global Environmental Change*, 2(4), 262-276. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-3780\(92\)90044-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-3780(92)90044-8)
- Downtown Kitchener Business Improvement Association (2025, February 1).
<https://downtownkitchenerbia.ca/>
- Dragin-Jensen, C., Kwiatkowski, G., Hannevik Lien, V., Ossowska, L., Janiszewska, D., Kloskowski, D., & Strzelecka, M. (2022). Event innovation in times of uncertainty. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-07-2021-0063>
- Dredge, D. (2006). Networks, conflict and collaborative communities. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 14(6), 562-581. <https://doi.org/10.2167/jost567.0>
- Dredge, D., & Whitford, M. (2011). Event tourism governance and the public sphere. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(4-5), 479-499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2011.573074>
- Duffy, L.N., Fernandez, M., & Sene-Harper, A. (2021). Digging deeper: Engaging in reflexivity

- in interpretivist constructivist and critical leisure research. *Leisure Sciences*, 43(3-4), 448–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1830903>
- Duffy, M., & Mair, J. (2018a). Festivals and social capital. In M. Duffy & J. Mair (Eds), *Festival Encounters: Theoretical Perspectives on Festival Events*. Abingdon: Routledge, 95-104. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315644097-9>
- Duffy, M., & Mair, J. (2021). Future trajectories of festival research. *Tourist Studies*, 21(1), 9 – 23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797621992933>
- Dupuis, S. L. (1999). Naked truths: Towards a reflexive methodology in leisure research. *Leisure Sciences*, 21(1), 43–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/014904099273282>
- Elster, J. (1989). Social norms and economic theory. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3 (4), 99–117. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.3.4.99>
- Etzioni, A. (1964). *Modern Organizations*. Prentice-Hall.
- Evans, M., Marsh, D., & Stoker, G. (2013). Understanding localism. *Policy Studies*, 34(4), 401-407, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2013.822699>
- Ferlander, S. (2007). The importance of different forms of social capital for health. *Acta Sociologica*, 50(2), 115-128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699307077654>
- Finch, D.J., Legg, D., O'Reilly, N., Wright, S. & Norton, B. (2021). A social capital view of an Olympic and Paralympic Games bid exploration process. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 21(2), 302-321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2020.1748082>
- Finkel, R., McGillivray, D., McPherson, G., & Robinson, P. (Eds.). (2013). *Research Themes for Events*. Cabi. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781780642529.0000>
- Finkel, R., Sharp, B., & Sweeney, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Accessibility, Inclusion, and Diversity in Critical Events Studies*. Oxford, UK: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351142243>

- Finkel, R., & Platt, L. (2020). Cultural festivals and the city. *Geography Compass*, 14, 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12498>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245.
- Foley, M., McGillivray, D., & McPherson, G. (2011). Events policy: The limits of democracy. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 3(3), 321–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2011.589168>
- Foley, M., McGillivray, D., & McPherson, G. (2012). Events and social capital: linking and empowering communities, p. 89-101. In M. Foley, D. McGillivray & G. McPherson (Eds.) *Event Policy: From Theory to Strategy*. Routledge.
- Folke, C., Carpenter, S. R., Walker, B., Scheffer, M., Chapin, T., & Rockström, J. (2010). Resilience thinking: Integrating resilience, adaptability, and transformability. *Ecology and Society*, 15(4), 20. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-03610-150420>
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139192675>
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: Free Press.
- Gajjar, A., & Parmar, B. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on event management industry in India. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 20(2), 37–43.
<https://doi.org/10.34257/GJMBRFVOL20IS2PG37>
- Getz, D. (2023). Thoughts on resilience and innovation in events today. *Event Management*, 27, 637–641. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599523X16817925582096>
- Getz, D. (2012). Event studies: Discourses and future directions. *Event Management*, 16(2),

- 171-187. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599512X13343565268456>
- Getz, D. (2010). The nature and scope of festival studies. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 5(1), 1-47.
- Getz, D. (2007). *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy For Planned Events*. Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315708027>
- Getz, D. (2005). *Event Management and Event Tourism* (2nd ed.). New York: Cognizant.
- Getz, D., & Andersson, T. D. (2016). Analyzing whole populations of festivals and events: An application of organizational ecology. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 8(3), 249–273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2016.1158522>
- Getz, D., Andersson, T.D., & Larson, M. (2007). Festival stakeholder roles: Concepts and case studies. *Event Management*, 10, 103-122. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599503108751676>
- Getz, D., & Page, S. J. (2016). Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 52, 593-631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.03.007>
- Giovannini, E., Benczur, P., Campolongo, F., Cariboni, J., & Manca, A.R. (2020). *Time For Transformative Resilience: The COVID-19 Emergency*, EUR 30179 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Gittell, R.J., & Vidal, A. (1998). *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital As A Development Strategy*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452220567>
- Glover, T.D. (2006). Social capital within leisure contexts: From production and maintenance to distribution. *Leisure/Loisir*, 30 (2), 357-367.
- Glover, T.D. (2020, November 4). COVID-19 means we need a “winter strategy” to keep us outside and in touch. <https://uwaterloo.ca/recreation-and-leisure-studies/news/q-and-experts-covid-19-means-we-need-winter-strategy-keep-us>

- Glover, T. D., & Hemingway, J. L. (2005). Locating leisure in the social capital literature. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37(4), 387-401.
- Glover, T.D., McNaughton, J.F.P., & Mock, S.E. (2021). Inside out: The role(s) of leisure in the endogenous and exogenous pathways to social capital. In T.D. Glover & E.K. Sharpe (Eds.). (2020). *Leisure Communities: Rethinking Mutuality, Collective Identity and Belonging in the New Century* (168-169). New York: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854928>
- Glover, T.D., & Sharpe, E. (2021). Introduction: Are leisure communities really communities? In T.D. Glover & E.K. Sharpe (Eds.), *Leisure Communities: Rethinking Mutuality, Collective Identity and Belonging in the New Century* (1-14). New York: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854928>
- Glover, T.D., & Stewart, W. (2006). Introduction to special issue: Rethinking leisure and community research: Critical reflections and future agendas. *Leisure/Loisir*, 30(2), 315-327.
- Godschalk, D. (2003). Urban hazard mitigation: Creating resilient cities. *Natural Hazards Review*, 4(3), 136-143. [https://doi.org/10.1061/\(ASCE\)1527-6988\(2003\)4:3\(136\)](https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)1527-6988(2003)4:3(136))
- Goodman, R. M., Speers, M. A., McLeroy, K., Fawcett, S., Kegler, M., Parker, E., Smith, S.R., Sterling, T.D., & Wallerstein, N. (1998). Identifying and defining the dimensions of community capacity to provide a basis for measurement. *Health Education & Behavior*, 25(3), 258-278.
- Gotham, K. F., & Campanella, R. (2010). Toward a research agenda on transformative resilience: Challenges and opportunities for post-trauma urban ecosystems. *Critical Planning*, 17 (Summer), 9-23.

- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 481–510. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228311>
- Green, B. C., & Chalip, L. (1998). Sport tourism as the celebration of subculture. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(2), 275-291. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383\(97\)00073-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(97)00073-x)
- Gulati, R., & Sytch, M. (2008). Does familiarity breed trust? Revisiting the antecedents of trust. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 29(2-3), 165-190. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mde.1396>
- Gyrd-Jones, R. I., & Kornum, N. (2013). Managing the co-created brand: Value and cultural complementarity in online and offline multi-stakeholder ecosystems. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(9), 1484-1493. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.02.045>
- Hall, C. (1992). Adventure, sport and health tourism. In B. Weiler and C. M. Hall (Eds.), *Special Interest Tourism* (141–158). Bellhaven Press.
- Handmer, J., & Dovers, S. (1996). A typology of resilience: Rethinking institutions for sustainable development. *Industrial and Environmental Crisis Quarterly*, 9, 482–511.
- Harrison, H., Birks, M., Franklin, R., & Mills, J. (2017). Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-18.1.2655>
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2020b). The “war over tourism”: Challenges to sustainable tourism in the tourism academy after COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29, 551–569. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1803334>
- Holland, J.H. (1992). Complex adaptive systems. *Daedalus*, 121(1), 17-30.
- Holling, C. S. (1973). Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, 4(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.es.04.110173.000245>

- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Health and Well-being*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.23606>
- Inkpen, A. C., & Beamish, P. W. (1997). Knowledge, bargaining power, and the instability of international joint ventures. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(1), 177-202.
- Jaeger, K., & Mykletun, R.J. (2013). Festivals, identities and belonging. *Event Management*, 17, 213-226. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513X13708863377791>
- Jamieson, N. (2014). Sport tourism events as community builders: How social capital helps the “Locals” cope. *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*, 15 (1), 57–68.
- Janiszewska, D., Hannevik Lien, V., Kloskowski, D., Ossowska, L., Dragin-Jensen, C., Strzelecka, M., & Kwiatkowski, G. (2021). Effects of COVID-19 infection control measures on the festival and event sector in Poland and Norway. *Sustainability*, 13(23), 13265. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132313265>
- Jarman, D. (2018). Festival community networks and transformative place-making. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 11(3), 335-349. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-06-2017-0062>
- Jarman, D. (2016). The strength of festival ties: Social network analysis and the 2014 Edinburgh International Science Festival. In I.R. Lamond & L. Platt (Eds.). *Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research*. Palgrave MacMillan, 277-308. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0_14
- Jarman, D., Theodoraki, E., Hall, H. & Ali-Knight, J. (2014). Social network analysis and

- festival cities: An exploration of the concepts, literature and methods. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 5(3), 311-322.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-11-2013-0034>
- Jauhiainen, J. S. (2021). Entrepreneurship and innovation events during the COVID-19 pandemic: The user preferences of VirBELA virtual 3D platform at the SHIFT event organized in Finland. *Sustainability*, 13(7), 3802. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13073802>
- Jepson, A., & Clarke, A. (2013). Events and community development. In Finkel, R., McGillivray, D., McPherson, G., & Robinson, P. (Eds.), *Research Themes for Events*, (6-17). Cabi. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781780642529.0000>
- Jepson, A., & Clarke, A. (2016). Creating critical festival discourse through flexible mixed methodological research design. In I.R. Lamond & L. Platt (Eds.), *Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research*. Palgrave MacMillan, 59-83. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0_4
- Jonker, E., Saayman, M., & de Klerk, S. (2009). The role and attributes of entrepreneurs at South Africa's largest arts festival, *Pasos, Revisita de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 7(3), 381-392. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2009.07.027>
- Jordan, J. (2015). Festival leadership in turbulent times. In C. Newbold, C. Maughan, J. Jordan, & F. Bianchini (Eds.), *Focus on Festivals: Contemporary European Case Studies and Perspectives*. Goodfellow. 107-117. <https://doi.org/10.23912/978-1-910158-15-9-2660>
- Kaplanidou, K., & Potwarka, L.R. (2024). *Sport Events and Community Development*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003452744>
- Kelly, D. M., & Fairley, S. (2018). The utility of relationships in the creation and maintenance of

- an event portfolio. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 36(2), 260–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-11-2017-0270>
- Kilduff, M., & Tsai, W. (2003). *Social Networks and Organizations*. Sage.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209915>
- Kinsella, A. (2022). Game on in Waterloo Region: Major sporting events are returning and so is sport tourism. Explore Waterloo Region. <https://explorewaterloo.ca/2022/04/game-on-in-waterloo-region/>
- Klinenberg, E. (2018). *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown Publishing Group.
- Koliou, M., van de Lindt, J.W., McAllister, T.P., Ellingwood, B.R., Dillard, M., & Cutler, H. (2020). State of the research in community resilience: progress and challenges. *Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure*, 5(3), 131-151.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23789689.2017.1418547>
- Kwiatkowski, G., Ossowska, L., Strzelecka, M., Dragin-Jensen, C., Hannevik Lien, V., Janiszewska, D., & Kloskowski, D. (2023). Building a resilient event sector in times of uncertainty. *Event Management*, 27(4), 481-498, <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948695071>
- Kulig, J., Edge, D., Townshend, I., Lightfoot, N., & Reimer, W. (2013). Community resiliency: Emerging theoretical insights. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 41 (6), 758-775. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21569>
- Lamond, I.R., & Platt, L. (Eds.). (2016). *Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research*. Palgrave MacMillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0>
- Larson, M. (2002). A political approach to relationship marketing: Case study of the Storsjöyran

- Festival. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4 (2), 119–143.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.366>
- Lehto, X. Y., Kirillova, K., Wang, D., & Fu, X. (2022). Convergence of boundaries in tourism, hospitality, events, and leisure: Defining the core and knowledge structure. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480221108667>
- Lin, N. (2001). Building a network theory of social capital. In N. Lin, K. Cook, & R. S. Burt (Eds.). *Social Capital Theory and Research* (pp. 3-31).
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315129457-1>
- Liu-Lastres, B., & Cahyanto, I. (2021). Building a resilient event industry: Lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*.
- Madray, J. S. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on event management industry. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology*, 5 (3), 533–535.
<https://doi.org/10.33564/IJEAST.2020.v05i03.089>
- Magis, K. (2010). Community resilience: An indicator of social sustainability. *Society and Natural Resources*, 23(5), p. 401-416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920903305674>
- Mahon, M., & Hyyryläinen, T. (2019). Rural arts festivals as contributors to rural development and resilience. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 59(4), 612–635. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12231>
- Mair, J., Ritchie, B.W., & Walters, G. (2016). Towards a research agenda for post-disaster and post-crisis recovery strategies for tourist destinations: A narrative review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(1), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2014.932758>
- Mair, J., & Weber, K. (2019). Event and festival research: A review and research

- directions. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 10(3), 209-216.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-10-2019-080>
- Mair, J., & Whitford, M. (2013). An exploration of events research: event topics, themes and emerging trends. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 4(1), 6-30.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/17582951311307485>
- Mandell, M.P., & Keast, R. (2008). Evaluating the effectiveness of interorganizational relations through networks: Developing a framework for revised performance measures. *Public Management Review*, 10(6), 715–731. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030802423079>
- Matarrita-Cascante, D., Trejos, B., Qin, H., Joo, D., & Debner, S. (2022). Conceptualizing community resilience: Revisiting conceptual distinctions. In M.A. Brennan, R. Phillips, N. Walzer, & B.D. Hales (Eds.), *Community Development for Times of Crisis*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003212652-4>
- McAuley, J.W., & Nesbitt-Larking, P.W. (2022). Imagining the Post-COVID-19 polity: Narratives of possible futures. *Social Sciences*, 11, 346,
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11080346>
- McClinchey, K.A. (2008). Urban ethnic festivals, neighborhoods, and the multiple realities of marketing place. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 25(3-4), 251-264.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10548400802508309>
- McClinchey, K.A. (2017). Social sustainability and a sense of place: Harnessing the emotional and sensuous experiences of urban multicultural leisure festivals. *Leisure/Loisir*, 41(3), 391-421.
- McComb, E. J., Boyd, S., & Boluk, K. (2017). Stakeholder collaboration: A means to the success

- of rural tourism destinations? A critical evaluation of the existence of stakeholder collaboration within the Mournes, Northern Ireland. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 17(3), 286–297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358415583738>
- McGuigan, J. (2005). Neo-liberalism, culture and policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 11(3), 229-241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630500411168>
- McGillivray, D. (2020, April 7). Festivals, events and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340-363.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/226550>
- Miao, L., Im, J., Fung So, K.K., & Cao, Y. (2022). Post-pandemic and post-traumatic tourism behavior. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103410>
- Michopoulou, E., Azara, I., & Pappas, N. (2019). Events in a changing world: Introductory remarks. *Event Management*, 23 (4/5), 491-494.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599518X15403853721510>
- Michopoulou, E. E., Pappas, N., & Azara, I. (2023). Event innovation and resilience during times of uncertainty. *Event Management*, 27, 477-480.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599523X16836740487997>
- Miles, L., & Shipway, R. (2020). Exploring the Covid-19 pandemic as a catalyst for stimulating future research agendas for managing crises and disasters at international sport events. *Event Management*, 24(4), 537-552.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599519X15506259856688>
- Misener, L. (2013). Events and social capital. In Finkel, R., McGillivray, D., McPherson, G., & Robinson, P. (Eds.), *Research Themes for Events*, (18-30). Cabi.

- Misener, L., & Mason, D.S. (2006). Creating community networks: Can sporting events offer meaningful sources of social capital? *Managing Leisure*, 11, 39-56.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13606710500445676>
- Mitchell, R.K., Agle, B.R., & Wood, D.J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review*, 22 (4), 853-886. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259247>
- Mohanty, P., Himanshi, & Choudhury, R. (2020). Events tourism in the eye of the COVID-19 storm: Impacts and implications. In S. Arora & A. Sharma (Eds.), *Event Tourism in Asian Countries: Challenges and Prospects* (1st ed.): Apple Academic Press.
- Moore, G. (2020). Social capital through arts festival governance? The case of Lightnight Liverpool. A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities.
- Morgan, G. (1986). *Images of Organization*. London: Sage
- Morgan, N., & Pritchard, A. (2019). Gender matters in hospitality. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 76, 38-44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.06.008>
- Nahapiet, J. (2009). The role of social capital in interorganizational relationships. In S. Cropper, C. Huxham, M. Ebers & P. Smith Ring (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199282944.003.0022>
- Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 242-266.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/259373>
- Nakagawa, Y., & Shaw, R. (2004). Social capital: A missing link to disaster recovery.

- International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 22(1), 5–34.
- Newton, K. (1997). Social capital and democracy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40(5), 575-586. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764297040005004>
- Nooraie, R.Y., Sale, J.E.M., Marin, A., & Ross, L.E. (2020). Social network analysis: An example of fusion between quantitative and qualitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 14(1), 110–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689818804060>
- Norris, F.H., Stevens, S.P., Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K.F., & Pfefferbaum, R.L. (2008). Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, p. 127–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-007-9156-6>
- Nguyen, V.K., Blaer, M., & Pyke, J. (2024). “I have the feeling of community again”: The socioeconomic impacts of small-scale events on community recovery.” *Event Management*, 28, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599523X16907613842156>
- Olmedo, E., & Mateos, R. (2015). Quantitative characterization of a chaordic tourist destination. *Tourism Management*, 47, 115-126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.09.011>
- Olmos-Vega, F. M., Stalmeijer, R. E., Varpio, L., & Kahlke, R. (2022). A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149. *Medical Teacher*, 45(3), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>
- Oliver, C. (1990). Determinants of interorganizational relationships: Integration and future directions. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(2), 241-265. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258156>
- Palrão, T., Rodrigues, R.I., & Estevao, J.V. (2021). The role of the public sector in the aftermath

- of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis: The case of Portuguese events' industry. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 22(5), 407–428.
- <https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2021.1904077>
- Patel, S. S., Rogers, M. B., Amlôt, R., & Rubin, G. J. (2017). What do we mean by community resilience? A systematic literature review of how it is defined in the literature. *PLoS Currents*, 9.
- Patterson, I. & Getz, D. (2013). At the nexus of leisure and event studies. *Event Management*, 17, 227-240. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513X13708863377836>
- Pauchant, T.C., & Mitroff, I.I. (1992). *Transforming the Crisis-Prone Organization: Preventing Individual, Organizational, and Environmental Tragedies*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Peachey, J.W., Borland, J., Lobpries, J., & Cohen, A. (2015). Managing impact: Leveraging sacred spaces and community celebration to maximize social capital at a sport-for-development event. *Sport Management Review*, 18(1), 86-98.
- <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.05.003>
- Pera, R., Occhiocupo, N., & Clarke, J. (2016). Motives and resources for value co-creation in a multi-stakeholder ecosystem: A managerial perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(10), 4033-4041. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.03.047>
- Pereira, E.C.S., Mascarenhas, M.V.M., Adão, J.G., Flores, A.J.G., Gustavo M.V.S., & Pire, G.M.V.S. (2015). Nautical small-scale sports events portfolio: a strategic leveraging approach, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(1), 27-47.
- <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2015.1007883>
- Perkins, R., Khoo, C., & Arcodia, C. (2022). Stakeholder contribution to tourism collaboration:

- Exploring stakeholder typologies, networks and actions in the cluster formation process. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 52, 304-315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2022.07.011>
- Pernecky, T. (Ed.). (2016). *Approaches and Methods in Event Studies*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315770642>
- Pernecky, T., & Faisal, A. (2023). Events in the age of heightened vulnerabilities: Towards pragmatic hoping. *Event Management*, 27 (4), 625-629. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948695206>
- Pfeffer, J. (1981). *Power in Organizations*. Pitman.
- Pfeffer, J. & Salancik, G.R. (1978). *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. New York: Harper and Row. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2231527>
- Pink, S., & Mackley, K. L. (2016). Moving, making and atmosphere: Routines of home as sites for mundane improvisation. *Mobilities*, 11(2), 171–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2014.957066>
- Pitas, N, & Ehmer, C. (2020) Social capital in the response to COVID-19. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 34(8), 942-944. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890117120924531>
- Platt, L., & Ali-Knight, J. (2018). Grassroots festivals and placemaking. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 11(3), 262-265. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-08-2018-131>
- Podolny, J.M. and Page, K.L. (1998). Network forms of organization. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 57-76. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.57>
- Pooley, J.A., Cohen, L. & Pike, L.T. (2005). Can sense of community inform social capital? *The Social Science Journal*, 42, 71-79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2004.11.006>

- Poortinga, W. (2012). Community resilience and health: The role of bonding, bridging, and linking aspects of social capital. *Health & Place*, 18 (2), 286-295.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2011.09.017>
- Portes, A. (2000). The two meanings of social capital. *Sociological Forum*, 15, 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007537902813>
- Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 (1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.1>
- Portes, A., & Landolt, P. (1996). The downside of social capital. *The American Prospect*, 26.
- Potwarka, L.R., & Snelgrove, R. (2017). Introduction: Managing sport events for beneficial outcomes: Theoretical and practical insights. *Event Management*, 21, 135-137.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X14878772869522>
- Powell, W. W. (1990). Neither market nor hierarchy: Network forms of organization. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Gummings (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior* (295-336). JAI Press.
- Provan, K.G. & Milward, H.B. (2001). Do networks really work? A framework for evaluating public-sector organizational networks. *Public Administration Review*, 61 (4), 414-423. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00045>
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 28 (4), 664-684.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/420517>
- Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster. <https://doi.org/10.1145/358916.361990>
- Putnam, R., Light, I., de Souza Briggs, X., Rohe, W.R., Vidal, A.C., Hutchinson, J., Gress, J., &

- Woolcock, M. (2004). Using social capital to help integrate planning theory, research, and practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 70 (2), 142-192.
- Quarantelli, E. (1986). What is disaster? The need for clarification in definition, conceptualization in research. In B. Sowder & M. Lystad (Eds.), *Disasters and Mental Health: Selected Contemporary Perspectives* (49–81). Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health.
- Quarantelli, E.L. (1997). Ten criteria for evaluating the management of community disasters. *Disasters*, 21 (1), 39-56.
- Quinn, B. (2005). Arts festivals and the city. *Urban Studies*, 42 (5–6), 927–943.
- Raj, R., & Vignali, C. (2010). Creating local experiences of cultural tourism through sustainable festivals. *European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*, 1, 51-67.
- Ramsbottom, O., Michopoulou, E., & Azara, I. (2018). Guest introduction: Making sense of event experiences. *Event Management*, 22, 1-8.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X15111988553946>
- Ratten, V. & Fernandez, J.G. (2024). Networks and events - a curated collection of papers published in Event Management. *Event Management*. Published online 2024.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599524X17095118412117>
- Reid, S., & Arcodia, C. (2002). Understanding the role of the stakeholder in event management. Paper presented at the Event Research Conference, July, University of Technology Sydney, Australian Centre for Event Management.
- Rentschler, R. & Lee, B. (2021). COVID-19 and arts festivals: Whither transformation? *Journal of Arts and Cultural Management*, 14 (1), 35-54.
<https://doi.org/10.15333/ACM.2021.7.30.35>

- Richards, G. (2021, December). Rejuvenating the post-Covid city.
<https://www.richardstourism.com/post/rejuvenating-tourism-in-the-post-covid-city>
- Richards, G. (2019). Event experience research directions. In Armbrrecht, J., Lundberg, E., & Andersson, T.D. (Eds.), *A Research Agenda for Event Management*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788114363.00015>
- Richards, G. (2017b). Emerging models of the eventful city. *Event Management*, 21, 533-543.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X15053272359004>
- Richards, G. (2015b). Events in the network society: The role of pulsar and iterative events. *Event Management*, 19, 553-566. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599515X14465748512849>
- Richards, G. (2015a). Developing the eventful city: Time, space and urban identity. In S. Mushatat & M. Al Muhairi (Eds.), *Planning for Event Cities* (37-46). Municipality & Planning Department of Ajman.
- Richards, G. (Ed.). (2007). *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*. Psychology Press.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203826188>
- Richards, G., de Brito, M.P., & Wilks, L. (2013). *Exploring the Social Impacts of Events*. Routledge: London & New York. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203108123>
- Richards, G., & Jarman, D. (2021). Events as platforms, networks, and communities. *Event Management*, 25(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599520X15894679115420>
- Richards, G. & Palmer, R. (2010). Why cities need to be eventful, 1-37. In G. Richards and R. Palmer (Eds.), *Eventful Cities*, Butterworth-Heinemann. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-7506-6987-0.10001-0>
- Ring, P. S., & Van de Ven, A.H. (1994). Developmental processes of cooperative

- interorganizational relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 19, 90–118. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258836>
- Ritchie, B. W., & Jiang, Y. (2019). A review of research on tourism risk, crisis and disaster management: Launching the annals of tourism research curated collection on tourism risk, crisis and disaster management. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 79, 102812. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102812>
- Ritter, T., & Gemunden, H.G. (2003). Interorganizational relationships and networks: An overview. *Journal of Business Research*, 56, 691-697.
- Robertson, M., Ong, F., Lockstone-Binney, L., & Ali-Knight, J. (2018). Critical event studies—issues and perspectives. *Event Management*, 22 (6), 865-874. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599518X15346132863193>
- Rodney, Y. (March 14, 2023). Volunteerism: In crisis or at a crossroads? *The Philanthropist Journal*. <https://thephilanthropist.ca/2023/03/volunteerism-in-crisis-or-at-a-crossroads/>
- Rohlinger, D.A. & Meyer, D.S. (2022). Protest during a pandemic: How Covid-19 affected social movements in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642221132179>
- Rojek, C. (2013). *Event Power*. SAGE: London.
- Rosen, J., & Painter, G. (2019). From citizen control to co-production: Moving beyond a linear conception of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 85(3), 335–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2019.1618727>
- Rota, F.S., & Salone, C. (2014). Place-making processes in unconventional cultural practices: the case of Turin’s contemporary art festival Paratissima. *Cities*, 40(A), 90-98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2014.03.008>

- Rowen, I. (2020). The transformational festival as a subversive toolbox for a transformed tourism: lessons from Burning Man for a COVID-19 world. *Tourism Geographies*, 22, 695–702. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1759132>
- Schwandt, T. (2001). *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schulenkorf, N., Thomson, A., & Schlenker, K. (2011). Intercommunity sport events: Vehicles and catalysts for social capital in divided societies. *Event Management*, 15 (2), 105-119.
- Schwarz, E.C., & Tait, R. (2007). Recreation, arts, events, and festivals: Their contribution to a sense of community in the Colac-Otway Shire of County Victoria. *Rural Society*, 17(2), 125-138. <https://doi.org/10.5172/rsj.351.17.2.125>
- Seraphin, H. (2021). COVID-19: An opportunity to review existing grounded theories in event studies. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 22 (1), 3–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2020.1776657>
- Siisiainen, M. (2003). Two concepts of social capital: Bourdieu vs. Putnam. *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 40 (2), 183-204.
- Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 312–321. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.015>
- Silvers, J.R., & O’Toole, W. (2021). *Risk Management for Events* (Second edition.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429291296>
- Sprengholz, P., Henkel, L., Böhm, R., & Betsch, C. (2023). Historical narratives about the COVID-19 pandemic are motivationally biased. *Nature*, 623, 588-593. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06674-5>
- Smith, A. (2012). *Events and Urban Regeneration: The Strategic Use of Events to Revitalize*

- Cities*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203136997>
- Smith, A. (2015). *Events in the City: Using Public Spaces as Event Venues*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315765129>
- Smith, K.G., Carroll, S.J., & Ashford, S.J. (1995). Intra- and interorganizational cooperation: Toward a research agenda. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(1), 7-23.
- Spracklen, K., & Lamond, I.R. (2016). *Critical Event Studies*. Routledge: London.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315690414>
- Spiropoulos, S., Gargalianos, D., & Sotiriadou, K. (2006). The 20th Greek festival of Sydney: A stakeholder analysis. *Event Management*, 9(4), 169-183,
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599506776771535>
- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. SAGE.
- Stergiopoulos, E., & Wrathall, J. (2021). Re-imagining and transforming events: Insights from the Australian events industry. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 11(2), 77–83.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2021.1917809>
- Stevenson, N. (2019). The street party: Pleasurable community practices and placemaking. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 10(3), 304-318. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-02-2019-0014>
- Stevenson, N. (2020). The contribution of community events to social sustainability in local neighbourhoods. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1808664>
- Stevenson, N. (2023). The well-being effects of developing and staging a community festival during the coronavirus pandemic. *Event Management*, 27 (3), 407–421.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948695198>

- Stinchcombe, A.L. (1986). Norms of exchange. In *Stratification and Organization*, Elster J. & Hemes, G. (Eds). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 231-267.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511570759.012>
- Stokes, R. (2006). Network-based strategy making for events tourism. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (5/6), 682-695. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560610657895>
- Stone, C.N. (1993). Urban regimes and the capacity to govern: A political economy approach. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 15 (1), 1-28 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9906.1993.tb00300.x>
- Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20 (3), 571-610. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258788>
- Supardi, S. & Hadi, S. (2020). New perspective on the resilience of SMEs proactive, adaptive, reactive from business turbulence: A systematic review. *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology*, 12(5), 1265-1275.
- Szreter, S., & Woolcock, M. (2004). Health by association? Social capital, social theory, and the political economy of public health. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 33(4), 650-667. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyh013>
- Taks, M. (2013). Social sustainability of non-mega sport events in a global world. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 10(2), 121-141.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2013.11687915>
- Taks, M., Green, B. C., Misener, L., & Chalip, L. (2018). Sport participation from sport events: Why it doesn't happen? *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 36(2), 185-198.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-05-2017-0091>
- Taks, M., Chalip, L. & Green, C. (2015). Impacts and strategic outcomes from non-mega sport

- events for local communities. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(1), 1-6.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2014.995116>
- Thomas, G. (2011). *How To Do Your Case Study*. SAGE.
- Turner, V. (1969). *Liminality and Communitas. The ritual process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Aldine Publishing.
- Twigger-Ross, C., Kashefi, E., Weldon, S., Brooks, K., Deeming, H., Forrest, S., Fielding, J., Gomersall, A., Harries, T., McCarthy, S., Orr, P., Parker, D., & Tapsell, S. (2014). Flood resilience community pathfinder evaluation: Rapid evidence assessment. Defra.
- Uzzi, B. (1996). The sources and consequences of embeddedness for the economic performance of organizations: The network effect. *American Sociological Review*, 674-698.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2096399>
- Vaneeckhaute, L. E., Vanwing, T., Jacquet, W., Abelshausen, B., & Meurs, P. (2017). Community resilience 2.0: Toward a comprehensive conception of community-level resilience. *Community Development*, 48(5), 735-751.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2017.1369443>
- van Niekerk, M. & Getz, D. (2019). *Event Stakeholders*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.
<https://doi.org/10.23912/9781911396635-3840>
- van Niekerk, M., & Getz, D. (2016). The identification and differentiation of festival stakeholders. *Event Management*, 20(3), 419–431.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599516X14682560744910>
- Wallace, K., & Michopoulou, E. E. (2023). Building resilience and understanding complexities of event project stakeholder management. *Event Management*, 27, 499-517.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948695143>

- Wallace, K., & Michopoulou, E. (2019). The stakeholder sandwich: A new stakeholder analysis model for events and festivals. *Event Management*, 23(4-5), 541-558. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599519X15506259855742>
- Waller, M. (2001). Resilience in ecosystemic context: Evolution of the concept. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 71, 290–297. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.71.3.290>
- Waterloo Region Record (2022, May 30). Best of Summer Festivals Returning to Waterloo Region in 2022.
- Wäsche, H. (2020). The social capital structure of a small-scale sport event: configuration, evolution, and legacy. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 20(3-4), 289–309. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2020.110846>
- Wheatley, M. 1992. *Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organization From an Orderly Universe*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Whitford, M. (2009). A framework for the development of event public policy: Facilitating regional development. *Tourism Management*, 30, 674-682. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.10.018>
- Wilks, L. (2013). Introduction. In G. Richards, M.P. de Brito, & L. Wilks (Eds.), *Exploring the Social Impacts of Events*. (pp. 1-11). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203108123>
- Wood, D.J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27(2), 139-162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886391272001>
- Wood, L., Snelgrove, R., Legg, J., Taks, M., & Potwarka, L.R. (2018). Perspectives of event leveraging by restaurants and city officials. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 9(1), 34-50. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-01-2017-0003>
- Woolcock, M. (2001). Social capital in theory and practice. Where do we stand?

- In J. Ishman, T. Kelly, & S. Ramswamy (Eds.), *Social Capital and Economic Development: Well-Being in Developing Countries*. Edward Elgar Cheltenham.
- Yaghmour, S., & Scott, N. (2009). Inter-organizational collaboration characteristics and outcomes: a case study of the Jeddah Festival. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 1(2), 115–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407960902992175>
- Zaheer, A., McEvily, B., & Perrone, V. (1998). Does trust matter? Exploring the effects of interorganizational and interpersonal trust on performance. *Organization Science*, 9(2), 141-159. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.2.141>
- Ziakas, V. (2010). Understanding an event portfolio: The uncovering of interrelationships, synergies and leveraging opportunities. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 2(2), 144-164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2010.482274>
- Ziakas, V. (2013). A multidimensional investigation of a regional event portfolio: Advancing theory and praxis. *Event Management*, 17, 27-48. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513X13623342048095>
- Ziakas, V. (2014a). *Event Portfolio Planning and Management: A Holistic Approach*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203119396>
- Ziakas, V. (2014b). Planning and leveraging event portfolios: Towards a holistic theory. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 23(3), 327-356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2013.796868>
- Ziakas, V. (2016). Fostering the social utility of events: an integrative framework for the strategic use of events in community development. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(11), 1136-1157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.849664>
- Ziakas, V. (2019a). Issues, patterns and strategies in the development of event portfolios:

- configuring models, design and policy. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 11(1), 121–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2018.1471481>
- Ziakas, V. (2019b). Embracing the event portfolio paradigm in academic discourse and scholarship. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 11(s1), s27-s33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2018.1556861>
- Ziakas, V. (2021a). Facing the unsustainability of public events and festivals. University of Leeds, *The Northern Notes Blog*, June 1, 2021. <https://northernnotes.leeds.ac.uk/facing-the-unsustainability-of-public-events-and-festivals/>
- Ziakas, V. (2021b). The morphosynthesis of event portfolios: Connecting networks and the community. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.785018>
- Ziakas, V., Personal communication, April 9, 2021.
- Ziakas, V. (2024). *Rethinking Events: A Critique and Reconfiguration*. Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham, UK. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035313648>
- Ziakas, V., & Boukas, N. (2018). Contextualizing phenomenology in event management research: Deciphering the meaning of event experiences. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 5(1), 56-73. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-08-2012-0023>
- Ziakas, V., Antchak, V., & Getz, D. (2021). Theoretical perspectives of crisis management and recovery for events, pp. 1-29. In V. Ziakas, V. Antchak, & D. Getz (Eds.), *Crisis Management and Recovery for Events: Impacts and Strategies*. Goodfellow Publishers: Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.23912/9781911635901-4692>
- Ziakas, V., & Getz, D. (2021). Event portfolio management: An emerging transdisciplinary field

of theory and praxis. *Tourism Management*, 83, 104233.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104233>

Ziakas, V. & Costa, C. (2010). Explicating inter-organizational linkages of a host community's events network. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 1(2), 132-147.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/17852951011056919>

Ziakas, V. & Costa, C. (2011a). The use of an event portfolio in regional community and tourism development: Creating synergy between sport and cultural events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 16(2), 149-175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2011.568091>

Ziakas, V. & Costa, C. (2011b). Event portfolio and multi-purpose development: Establishing the conceptual grounds. *Sport Management Review*, 14, 409-423.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2010.09.003>

Zhou, R., Ross, W. J., Pu, H., Kim, C., Kim, J., Kaplanidou, K., & Leopkey, R. (2021).

Exploring partnerships in sport event delivery. *Event Management*, 25(5), 425–444.

<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599519X15506259856363>

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

To help you make an informed decision regarding your participation, this letter will explain what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a research participant. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask one of the investigators prior to consenting to the study. You will be provided with a copy of the information and consent form if you choose to participate in the study.

Title of the study: Understanding Community Event Stakeholders' Experiences in Times of Crisis: The Case of Kitchener and COVID 19

Student Investigator: Kelly McManus, PhD (c)
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, N2L 3G1
Email: kmcmanus@uwaterloo.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Troy Glover, PhD
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, N2L 3G1
Email: tglover@uwaterloo.ca

What is the study about?

Community events were dramatically impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will speak to community event stakeholders in Kitchener who have been affected and are responding going forward. The study examines the practices and relationships between these stakeholders before, during, and following the pandemic, and seeks to understand the factors that might help communities to respond to and recover from a crisis in the future.

I. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PARTICIPANT

What does participation involve?

Participation in this study will consist of participating in one interview with the researcher. The interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you and will take up to two hours.

The purpose of the interview is to explore your experiences and perspectives as a community event stakeholder in Kitchener, and to understand any changes in practices or relationships that may have taken place before, during, or following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interview will be conducted in person or online; with your permission, the interview will be audio recorded.

If you participate online in a session using Microsoft Teams, that session will be video recorded, with your permission.

This online platform, MS Teams, has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information provided via the Services from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no Internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free.

Who may participate in the study?

Participation in this study is by invitation only. Altogether, up to 20 community event stakeholders will participate in the study. These participants will represent various events in Kitchener, Ontario.

Participants should have been involved in the planning of one or more community events in Kitchener for at least two years prior to, during, and following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020) and must continue to play a role presently.

Although there are many individuals who take part in your event, we ask that there is a single representative of your event or organization. You are welcome to consult with other individuals in your event organization in advance of the interview, or to share any follow-up reflections with the researcher following the data collection.

At the end of the interview, you will have the opportunity to recommend another event stakeholder in Kitchener who you think would be good participants for this study. Any referrals must meet the criteria outlined above.

II. YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT

Is participation in the study voluntary?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to leave the study at any time by communicating this to the researcher. You may decline to answer any question at the interview.

This is a study conducted by researchers at the University of Waterloo and is not conducted by the City of Kitchener. While you may have a relationship with the City of Kitchener in some way, this relationship does not obligate you to take part in the study. There are no direct benefits or deterrents to this relationship by participating or not participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of the study?

This study will benefit the academic community and society by helping to how community event stakeholders might work together in positive ways to deliver community events with positive outcomes for the local community, and further knowledge of how community events may be more resilient in the face of future disruption.

Participation in this study may not provide any personal benefit to you, however, findings may be used to further knowledge about community events in the face of disruption.

You may find that you enjoy the opportunity to think critically about community events in Kitchener, and to explore the challenges and opportunities that face event stakeholders in our community.

What are the risks associated with the study?

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in the study.

Will my identity be known?

The student investigator and the supervisor will have knowledge of your identity.

In the dissertation or reports resulting from this study, the name of you and your event and event organization will not be used but a pseudonym (such as “Community Event A”) will be assigned. However, due to the nature of the topic and the case study community, it is possible that people familiar with you or your work may be able to identify you/your comments in the study results. Discussions might include topics that may be considered critical of an organization or of community events more broadly. While every effort will be made to not directly identify you, your event, or your event organization, due to the nature of this topic, full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Although paraphrased or direct quotes may be shared in the final research results, they will be shared in a way that does not assign your identity. Any quotes that are used in the dissertation or reports resulting from this study will be used with your permission.

Because this study is investigating relationships with other event organizations in Kitchener, you will be asked questions about your interactions with other event stakeholders in the community.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Only myself and my advisor, Dr. Troy Glover in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo will have access to the electronic data.

The information you share will be kept confidential by assigning an ID code so that individual names and email addresses are not associated with the data. Your name, email address, and ID code will be stored separately and will be password protected on a secure server. All electronic data (e.g., consent forms, de-identified transcriptions) will be stored for 7 years on a secure server with no personal identifiers.

Identifying information will be kept for 18 months to allow for data analysis and writing of the dissertation and will then be permanently erased. If you wish to have your data removed from the study, please contact me within this time frame. Afterwards, it will not be possible to identify which data are yours. Additionally, it is not possible to remove data from findings that have been submitted for publication or otherwise shared publicly.

The recording of your interview will be transcribed in a written file. The recording and transcription will be stored separately on a password-protected secure server and only the student investigator will have access to this data. Once the recording is transcribed, names in the transcription will be replaced with the ID code (deidentified) and the deidentified transcription will be used for analysis. The faculty supervisor will have access to the deidentified transcription, which will be stored on a secure server.

III. QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR CONCERNS

Who is funding this study?

There is no funding for this study.

Has the study received ethics clearance?

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #43204). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

Who should I contact if I have questions regarding my participation in the study?

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at kmcmanus@uwaterloo.ca. Additionally, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Troy Glover, tglover@uwaterloo.ca.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Title of the study: Understanding Community Event Stakeholders' Experiences in Times of Crisis: The Case of Kitchener and COVID 19

By agreeing to participate, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Kelly McManus of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo and by Dr. Troy Glover of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #43204). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions contact Kelly McManus by email at kmcmanus@uwaterloo.ca.

- I agree to my interview being audio recorded (or audio and video recorded if online) to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. [YES NO]
- I give permission for the use of quotations in any dissertation or publication that comes of this research with the understanding that a pseudonym will be used in place of my real name and organization (i.e., Community Event Stakeholder A). [YES NO]
- I wish to review and approve any quotes used in the dissertation or publication that comes of this research [YES NO]

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ *Date* _____

Witness Signature: _____ *Date* _____

Verbal consent was obtained by the researcher *Date* _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

A. About the stakeholder and their event

PURPOSE | To understand the event during the phases of the crisis.

The following questions will first ask you to describe your event during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Tell me about your event (*probe for size, budget, goals*), and what is your role?
2. Think about this event before the pandemic to today. Describe any changes that were made during the pandemic? Did any of those changes remain today, or were they a temporary response to the pandemic?

B. Interorganizational relationships with other community event stakeholders

PURPOSE | To understand the social ties between event stakeholders during the phases of the crisis. This includes the source of social capital (who), the motivations of the stakeholders, the mechanisms of social capital (norms, sanctions, trust, reciprocity), the outcomes of the social capital (i.e., joint problem solving, information sharing, resource sharing), and various forms of social capital (instrumental, expressive, collective, obstructive)

The following questions ask you to think about your specific relationships with other event stakeholders in the community. It will ask you to think about how these connections may have changed throughout the experience of the pandemic to today.

3. What was the **role of relationships in the success of your event** before the pandemic?

Who were the specific **partners that you worked with to deliver your event before the pandemic**. [*probe for partners, volunteers, sponsors, nature of the relationship; probe for examples of different purposes or intended outcomes of relationships*]

- During the pandemic, did you still work with these people? Did the nature of these connections change? Why do you think that was? Did you do anything intentionally to try to maintain or strengthen these relationships?
- During the pandemic, did you connect with any **new partners or make any new relationships**? Who were they? Did you reach out to them or did they reach out to you? What was the nature of the relationship? Were there any new relationships that you felt obligated to enter into?
- As we are emerging from the pandemic, are there any **new partners** you are working with today who you were not working with before or during the pandemic? Do you

- think there will be any changes in your partnerships in the future? If so, who might they be, and why? *[probe for specific examples]*
4. When you think about these various relationships with other event stakeholders, how important was it to **trust** them? Can you share an example where trust, or lack of trust, impacted your event planning or delivery?
 5. Can you think about a time when you shared something with another event stakeholder (it could be information, resources or something else?). If so, how important was it to get something back in return? Did it matter if it was returned right away or down the road? **[reciprocity]**
 6. Was there a time when a relationship was a **negative experience** for you? [peer pressure, obligation, sanctions from others]
 7. Do you think about the value of relationships with other event stakeholders differently today, having come through the pandemic? How so? (or why not?)

C. Examining a holistic view of event stakeholder relationships in Kitchener

PURPOSE | These questions explore Ziakas' principles of an event portfolio.

The following questions will ask you to think about Kitchener events broadly, and asks about the various stakeholders who may be involved.

8. Overall, what role do you think events play in Kitchener? Do you feel that this changed in any way as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? Do you think that there is a strategic vision and goals for community events in Kitchener?
9. What do you think is the role of the **City of Kitchener** in community events in Kitchener? Have you seen a change in this during the pandemic? Do you anticipate that this will change in any way in the next three to five years?
10. What do you think is the role of **sponsors** in community events in Kitchener? Have you seen a change in this during the pandemic? Do you anticipate that this will change in any way in the next three to five years?
11. What do you think is the role of **volunteers** in community events in Kitchener? Have you seen a change in this during the pandemic? Do you anticipate that this will change in any way in the next three to five years?

D. Conclusion

12. Is there any additional information that you would like to share based on our interview today that was not discussed?

13. Is there another person in the Kitchener event community that you think that I should speak to regarding these experiences that we have discussed today? *[probe and include criteria of (a) new organization that has not been included in the sample so far, (b) event takes place within Kitchener; (c) event emerged two years prior to the pandemic; (d) event still exists]*

Would you be willing to contact this individual to inquire if they would participate?

If yes, I will provide you with a draft email to use to guide this outreach.

14. Do you have any questions for me?

[Reminder of timelines and participant access to data]

Thank you.