Abstract
This study applies mixed methods research to investigate agents’ perceptions of and motivations for participating in farmers markets. Trends in thought and actions among farmers market staff, vendors, and customers of three farmers markets in Burlington, Vermont are examined within the broader narrative of the local food movement in the United States. Extrapolated through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and anonymous customer surveys, differences in participants’ goals reveal tensions between what an ideal farmers market should look like and accomplish. The concepts of value and alternative economies present in farmers markets are situated within an evaluation of anthropological theory on value, economy, and community. Finally, farmers markets’ accessibility is discussed in relation to federal nutrition assistance programs and their impact on farmers market economies.

Key Words: Farmers market, local, nutrition assistance, value, alternative economy