A Qualitative Exploration of the Influence of Leadership on the Success and Failure of Farmers Markets in Virginia

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Agriculture, Leadership, and Community Education

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August 21, 2021
Blacksburg, Virginia

*Keywords: farmers markets, social enterprise, Leadership Hexad, adaptive leadership, Virginia, short food supply chain*
FARMERS MARKET LEADERSHIP

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP ON THE SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF FARMERS MARKETS IN VIRGINIA

Jama Coartney

ABSTRACT (ACADEMIC)

Farmers markets play an important role within the local food system and the short food supply chain (SFSC); they promote economic development by connecting vendors, people, and community. While the number of farmers markets has increased dramatically since 1994, many markets fail, and it is unclear why. Little is known about the influence of leadership practices on the success and decline of farmers markets. This qualitative case study explored the influences of farmers market leadership and asked the question: How does leadership influence factors contributing to success and failure of farmers markets? The first objective explored patterns and trends contributing to the success and failure of farmers markets. The second objective analyzed farmers markets through the lens of leadership. The study explored findings through application of Jackson et al.’s (2018) Leadership Hexad, developed to help examine leadership within social enterprises. Adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) and good-to-great leadership principles (Collins, 2011) provided additional depth and connections to multiple leadership perspectives. The study may be of interest to people involved in leading and working with social enterprises, such as farmers markets. Findings revealed surging operational changes, strong support of the short food supply chain (SFSC), and the need for stabilizing forces, such as a stable location and municipal support. The six lenses of Jackson et al.’s Leadership Hexad—person, position, process, performance, place, and purpose—generated additional findings. Topics include the influences of vendors, champions, and partnerships; the role of managers in supporting the community and entrepreneurship; the ambiguity of ownership when referring to farmers markets;
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planning for succession; surviving the startup phase; professionalizing farmers market management; co-constructing leadership with the community and vendors; evolving the purpose; and leveraging the purpose of farmers markets within the local food system. The recommendations for future practice include a professional development leadership pipeline oriented to actors in social enterprises, especially farmers markets.

Keywords: farmers markets, social enterprise, Leadership Hexad, adaptive leadership, Virginia, short food supply chain
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ABSTRACT (PUBLIC)

Farmers markets play an important role within the local food system and the short food supply chain (SFSC); they promote economic development by connecting vendors, people, and community. While the number of farmers markets has increased dramatically since 1994, many markets fail, and it is unclear why. Little is known about the influence of leadership practices on the success and decline of farmers markets. This qualitative case study explored the influences of farmers market leadership and asked the question: How does leadership influence factors contributing to success and failure of farmers markets? The study used three leadership theories or frameworks for exploring farmers market leadership. The study may be of interest to people involved in working with social enterprises, such as farmers markets. Findings revealed surging operational changes, strong support of the SFSC, and the need for stabilizing forces, such as a stable location and municipal support. Additional topics include the influences of vendors, champions, and partnerships; the role of managers in supporting the community and entrepreneurship; the ambiguity of ownership when referring to farmers markets; planning for succession; surviving the startup phase; professionalizing farmers market management; co-constructing leadership with the community and vendors; evolving the purpose; and leveraging the purpose of farmers markets within the local food system. The recommendations for future practice include a professional development leadership pipeline oriented to actors in social enterprises, especially farmers markets.
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*Keywords:* farmers markets, social enterprise, Leadership Hexad, adaptive leadership, Virginia, short food supply chain
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have influenced, encouraged, and supported me as I pursued my Master’s degree. This group includes family, friends, mentors, my graduate committee, ALCE people, and Southern SARE, to name a few. I have support from multiple higher education institutions, including Virginia Tech, Educause LCI Institute, and University of Virginia. As I do not want this document to become longer than my thesis, I will not name everyone; you know who you are. Thank you, Charlottesville people. Thank you, Floyd people. I really appreciate that you have not held it against me when I disappeared for months at a time. Thank you, ALCE people.

In addition, there are some people that I would like to mention by name.

I want to thank my parents for all of their wonderful support. I could not have completed this degree without them. They have been with me every step of the way, from encouraging me to leave my safe job and launch a new career to helping me physically through recovery from smoking and surgery. Also, no thank you of family would be complete without acknowledging the support of my life-long mentor, friend, and guide, Dr. Avril V. Somlyo. She is larger than life, seamlessly illuminating the sciences and the arts.

Returning to graduate school has been an incredible journey, and I would like to thank my committee members as they helped me make this transition. My advisor and committee chair, Dr. Eric Kaufman, has been a role model and inspiration. I have been so fortunate to have the opportunity to be on the receiving end of his counsel, guidance, patience, and knowledge. While the thesis represents a culmination of a journey, it only hints at what I learned about life, leadership studies, and facilitating change through his mentorship. Another committee member, Dr. Tom Archibald, introduced me to program evaluation; he always provides a thoughtful sounding board for understanding evaluation and research. My third committee chair, Dr. Carol
Cash, has shared her insightful voice, which often resonates with the clarity of a tuning fork when it comes to putting it all together in a way that makes sense.

ALCE attracts an awesome group of faculty, staff, and students, and I have been so fortunate to benefit from their knowledge and expertise. The faculty are incredible, and I cannot list one of them without listing all of them. I have learned and enjoyed every course I have taken in ALCE. Ms. Debbie Carroll was especially helpful throughout my academic pursuits; her great sense of humor always made it fun to stop by her office, and I really appreciated all of her assistance with the Southern SARE grant. The opportunity to work with so many different graduate students has been really rewarding. I have worked closely with several fellow students and have grown from the experience: Nicole Nunoo, Ousmane Kane, Subrato Kuri, Anu Sen, and last, but not least, Roberto Franco.

Lastly, I would also like to thank Southern SARE for awarding me a grant to explore the leadership of farmers markets. Their support helped make it possible to conduct this research.

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number PTE2017-38640-26914 through the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number SUB00001876. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Farmers markets play an important role within a local food system, creating community by connecting farmers, people, and place, through food networks and economic development (Canfora, 2016; Leiper & Clarke-Sather, 2017; Schupp, 2017). At their core, farmers markets provide a public venue for farmers to sell their goods directly to the public (Farmers Market, 2004). U.S. farmers markets have experienced significant growth over the past 20 years. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) listed 8,771 farmers markets, a more than 490% growth since 1994 (USDA AMS, 2019). While rapid growth has slowed, the number of farmers markets continues to increase annually (USDA AMS, 2019).

Farmers markets provide a local channel for farmers and producers to sell directly to consumers, thus contributing to the local economy. In a report to congress, Low et al. (2015) noted the challenges in measuring the impact of local and regional food systems on the local economy. In 2012, about 7.8% of U.S. farms participated in some form of local food marketing. Farmers markets and other agricultural direct marketing outlets have contributed approximately $9 billion each year to the U.S. economy (Melton, 2017). Most of the direct-to-consumer sales are attributed to small- and medium-sized farms (Low et al., 2015; USDA AMS, 2017). Farmers markets contribute to local/regional resource planning and community-based food systems (Bendfeldt et al., 2011; Schmitt et al., 2018). They also contribute to local, rural, and urban economic development (Brown & Miller, 2008; Food Desert Task Force, 2014; Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2021). In 2018, the Virginia Farmers Market Association (VaFMA) showcased the contributions to the community of thirteen farmers markets: 600 businesses employed over 3,000 people (VaFMA, n.d.). The loss of a farmers market eliminates a point of direct sales for farmers and alters the community food system (Canfora, 2016; Staisey & Harris, 2019).
**Short Food Supply Chain**

Farmers markets are considered to be a link in the short food supply chain (SFSC). Delicato et al. (2019) provided a definition of SFSCs based on a regulatory perspective, which recognizes the importance of social relationships:

“According to the European rural development regulation (1305/2013), a ‘short supply chain’ refers to a supply chain involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to co-operation, local economic development, and close geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers. It is important to note that this regulation recognises the importance of social relationships between people involved in the food chain and this point is also very important for understanding how collaborative SFSCs operate.” (p. 75)

Some research indicates farmers capture a greater percentage of the dollar spent when they sell direct-to-consumer (Detre et al., 2011). Other research has challenged whether direct channels provide any significant financial advantage to producers (Park et al., 2014).

SFSCs emphasize the importance of close geographical relationships. Farmers markets are considered local community assets for healthy food (Franck et al., 2020); travel distance and proximity influence customer attendance to the market (Abelló et al., 2014; Helmer, 2019). Values-based interests, such as food miles or transportation distance of food, are also a noted concern (Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016; Kumar et al., 2019). Farmers markets have served as a local space to support entrepreneurship and business incubation (Campbell, 2014; del Barco, 2019).

The definition of SFSCs also emphasizes the importance of close social relationships (Delicato et al., 2019). Consumer motivations include value for building social relationships with
the farmers who produced the food (Betz & Farmer, 2016). Studies of vendors have included how to market, promote, and connect with customers (FMFNY, 2019; Witzling et al., 2019). Research has also emphasized the importance of vendors sharing their experiences in order to connect with consumers and building social capital with other vendors (Campbell, 2014; Cowee et al., 2009; FMFNY, 2019; Megyesi et al., 2011). Research indicates farmers markets have played a role in building community resilience (King, 2008; May, 2019).

**Farmers Market Leadership**

While serving as a transaction point for farmers and the public, farmers markets have many different organizational characteristics, including operations and governance processes. One study used market characteristics to categorize markets as either high or low governance and found the structure may impact market attendance (Betz & Farmer, 2016). Another study included interviews with market managers and identified and described three major ownership types for markets: vendor-led, community-led, and led by sub-entities of a larger organization (Gantla & Lev, 2015). Another study analyzed input from farmers market leaders and noted how the needs changed for markets based on the type of community, ranging from rural to urban (Wilson, et. al., 2018). Other aspects of the literature focused on the farmers market governance structure, such as the importance of an advisory board (Mainville, 2010), as well as guidance on regulations and training for market managers (FMFNY, 2019). Stephenson et al. (2006, 2008) studied the years of experience and volunteer status of farmers market managers, finding correlations to market financial performance and viability; other research indicated paid status or the years of experience of market managers did not have a significant impact on economic success (Scott, 2013).
There is, however, a growing body of leadership literature about social enterprises, of which a farmers market is one. As a relatively new area of study, social enterprise has a multitude of definitions (Defourny & Nyssens, 2009; Wronka, 2013). This paper uses a definition provided by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

“All private activity conducted in the public interest organised with an entrepreneurial strategy but whose main purpose is not the maximisation of profit but the attainment of certain economic and social goals, and which has a capacity of bringing innovative solutions to the problem of social exclusion and unemployment.” (Wronka, 2013, p. 596)

Due to the complexity of understanding farmers markets within their unique context (Figueroa-Rodriguez et al., 2019), approaches from the social enterprise literature provide a basis for better understanding the influences of leadership. While at the same time, Jackson et al. (2018) acknowledge the challenge of studying leadership within social enterprises: “Our knowledge of leadership in the social enterprise field is still in its infancy” (p. 73). The triple bottom line social enterprise perspectives—people, profit, planet—provided insights into short food supply chains and social enterprises (Kumar et al., 2019; Ruebottom, 2011). Building on the work of Grint (2000, 2005), Jackson et al. (2018) provided another means for exploring leadership within social enterprises: a heuristic Leadership Hexad. This leadership framework offers a rich, contextual view into social, cultural, and political influences of leadership. The framework explores the relationships of leadership through the following six lenses: (a) person, (b) position, (c) process, (d) performance, (e) place, and (f) purpose (Jackson et al., 2018; Jackson, 2019).

Lawless et al. (2017) have identified a related need to better understand the forces at play within the local and regional food systems:
“In order for community and regional food systems to transform and support family farms, public health, food security, resource stewardship, youth development, job creation, racial and economic justice, or any other social goals, we must understand and succeed in the marketplace. However, the marketplace is a complex concept; it involves social, political, and economic processes that unfold over days, weeks, and years.” (p.108)

Social enterprises have the capacity to combine interests from both for-profit and purpose-driven sectors to help promote social justice (Jackson et al., 2018; Ventura & Bailkey, 2017).

Definitions of leadership abound, and it is difficult to define, and at times, distinguish leadership from management. Northouse (2016) provided some general guidance for distinguishing between management and leadership. Management functions as a means to provide order and consistency. Leadership, whether individual or group, sets forth to produce change by creating a vision, setting strategies, communicating common goals, and motivating and energizing people. For example, in an interview with INC, Ron Heifetz defined leadership as a problem-solving activity: “And the activity of leadership I define as the mobilization of the resources of a people or of an organization to make progress on the difficult problems it faces” (Richman, 1988, para. 4). Also taking an activity-oriented approach to defining leadership, this paper uses Raelin’s (2011, 2020) leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) as a guide for understanding leadership practice or phenomena. Raelin (2011) describes leadership as co-constructed: “a cooperative effort among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome” (p. 196); leadership practice adapts, “continually unfolding in what appears to be a constantly shifting and evolving dynamic” (Raelin, 2020, p. 3).
Problem Statement

While farmers markets provide an important junction for food movements, communities, and small farmers, some markets fail, and it is not clear why. Due to the wide variability in types and approaches to farmers markets, success is difficult to replicate (Figueroa-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2018). There is little published work explicit to the study of farmers market leadership (Brown, 2002; Wilson et al., 2018; Witzling et al., 2019). Understanding how leadership can contribute to farmers markets’ success and failure remains an open question.

Purpose Statement, Objectives, and Research Question

The purpose of this research is to explore the influences of leadership on Virginia farmers markets to better understand factors contributing to their success and failure. While previous studies have focused primarily on financial performance to evaluate success and failure, this research study takes a more nuanced approach to understanding success, through the six lenses of the Jackson’s (2019) Leadership Hexad. Specific objectives include the following:

1. Uncover patterns or trends in variables contributing to success or decline of farmers markets, and
2. Align farmers market variables with the lenses for analyzing leadership and social enterprises.

As such, the overarching research question guiding this study is: How does leadership influence factors contributing to success and failure on farmers markets?

Significance of the Study

Little is known about the influence of leadership practices on the success and failure of farmers markets. Gaining insights into the leadership practices that encourage farmers market success and avert decline will contribute to a healthier community agricultural ecology. The
findings of this research will provide valuable knowledge on sustainable farmers markets, thus making the entire agriculture system more sustainable. Farmers, vendors, organizers, and planners will benefit from additional perspectives for building successful farmers markets (Dollahite et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2018). These findings could be used by people involved in farmers market initiatives and other similar value-based or short food supply chains to help lead these efforts. Although this project focuses on Virginia, the research may have broader implications for similar geographical regions and states.

This study is based upon work supported through the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (Southern SARE). Southern SARE is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grants and outreach program, which includes a focus on family farming and strengthening communities through agriculture. The funded grant proposal was titled “Farmers Market Leadership: Factors Contributing to Success and Failure” (Appendix A). Through the lenses of leadership, the research focused on better understanding the success and failure of farmers markets; the ultimate goal was to create a more resilient local community food system and support farmers.

**Overview of Methodology**

This study used a qualitative case study approach to explore the complexity of leadership within Virginia’s farmers markets. Participants were identified through publicly available information on farmers markets and agriculture-related venues. These public listings included Virginia farmers markets, websites, and points of contact. The study used both convenience and snowball sampling to recruit (Appendices B, C, and D) potential key informants (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). After obtaining verbal informed consent (Appendix E), a semi-structured interview protocol guided the data collection (Appendix F).
Discussions of findings were framed through the lens of adaptive leadership practice (Heifetz, 1994) with additional insight drawn from Collins’ (2011) *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. Unlike some leadership theories, Heifetz’s adaptive leadership theory focuses on adaptive challenges, where there are no easy solutions. This framework seems especially suited to farmers markets, where leadership helps to orchestrate multiple sets of independent activities and purposes within a larger crucible. The adaptive leadership approach has six leadership practices associated with it: get on the balcony; identify the adaptive challenge; regulate distress; maintain disciplined attention; give the work back to the people; and protect leadership voices from below. Collins’ (2011) framework, modified specifically for the social sector, describes principles for shifting leadership practices from good-to-great. The framework includes five principles for getting to great leadership: define “Great,” practice Level-Five Leadership, First Who, The Hedgehog Concept, and Turn the Flywheel (Collins, 2011).

**Terminology**

Farmer, Producer, and Vendor

The terms vendor and producer are used to represent any individual who sells goods or services at a farmers market. The term farmer is used to represent an individual or group who grows, picks, raises, or gathers raw, unprocessed food.
Chapter Summary

Farmers markets serve as a community hub, connecting community, food, farmers, and producers. As part of the SFSC, farmers markets contribute to the local economy. Each farmers market is unique and represents the values of the community in which it resides. Farmers markets have a wide variety of organizational characteristics and governance structures. Due to a blend of commercial and community interests, farmers market leadership can be studied from a social enterprise perspective. Some farmers markets fail to thrive, and it is not clear why. The purpose of this research is to study the influences of leadership on Virginia farmers markets to better understand factors contributing to their success and failure. The study has two objectives: to uncover patterns or trends in variables contributing to success or decline of farmers markets and to align farmers market variables with the lenses for analyzing leadership and social enterprises. The overarching research question is what leadership factors influence farmers markets’ success and failure? Farmers, producers, vendors, organizers, and planners will benefit from additional perspectives for building a successful farmers market.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature related to broad concepts of leadership studies, leadership practices, and contextualizing farmers market leadership. Initially, two approaches to understanding leadership studies are explored: Western’s (2013) four leadership discourses in historical context and Grint’s (2010) four leadership lenses. Next, the social enterprise Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018) is introduced; this framework focuses on a unique business type—a social enterprise. Additionally, adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) and good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011) are reviewed. Lastly, studies of farmers markets organization and characteristics are summarized.

Ways of Categorizing Leadership Studies

While discussed and studied extensively, leadership is not well understood (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Northouse, 2016). However, various scholars have developed frameworks to broadly organize leadership studies. Western (2013) takes one approach and identifies the developmental evolution of four major leadership discourses around leadership studies. Grint (2005) takes a different approach, describing four categories of leadership. Jackson et al. (2018) build on the work of Grint (2005) with a specific focus on the social enterprise sector. These three organizational frameworks provide context for this paper’s discussion of leadership.

Leadership Discourses

Western (2010, 2013) has provided a useful organizational framework for conceptualizing the focus of leadership research and studies. Each category represents a particular focus and conventional wisdom and socio-cultural norms of the time. Western has broken them into four major categories or discourses: Controller, Therapist, Messiah, and Eco-Leader.
Controller Discourse

The Controller discourse has a strong focus on maximizing efficiency. Theories falling within this category highlight results, standardization, and manipulation. Efficiency and results are characterized by measurable goals and maximizing employee productivity. Standardization practices equate the work to machine-like assembly or production lines. Manipulation can come in the form of incentives and disincentives; control and autonomy can be associated with reward and punishment. Work identity does not tie into personal identity. The Controller approach to leadership can be valuable in certain settings where a high degree of regulation and control are needed, such as nuclear power plants (Western, 2010, 2013).

Therapist Discourse

The therapist discourse describes a set of leadership practices with an emphasis on more humanistic aspects and came about from the Human Relations movement in western culture. This discourse is characterized by a focus on individual and team development. Personal development, motivation, self-actualization are some of the characteristics associated with this category of leadership. Individual personal growth and increased personal identity are associated with work in the form of self-actualization. It includes a focus on building team rapport and building trust. Part of the theoretical assumption for the Therapist discourse is that happy workers are productive workers. Examples include the establishment of personnel departments, emotional intelligence, and executive coaching (Western, 2010, 2013).

Messiah Discourse

The Messiah discourse places emphasis on charismatic leadership with a promise to help make sense of an increasingly chaotic world. Highly strategic and visionary, the focus is on changing the culture and has implications toward replacing social institutions, such as the
church. The cultural aspects are to build company culture, energize, and motivate toward a common goal. Messiah leadership discourse includes innovation and dispersing leadership. A notable example of the Messiah discourse is Transformational leadership (Western, 2010, 2013).

**Eco-Leadership Discourse**

The Eco-Leader discourse began in the early 21st century. This term describes a new approach to leadership for companies and organizations. It takes into account the complex, networked, and interdependent environment in which organizations must do business. Noted examples from this discourse include the need to reframe the structure and the purpose (Western, 2010, 2013). Eco-Leadership is characterized by distributed leadership approaches and the need for adaptive networked organizations with the ability to use both formal and informal processes to quickly adjust to constantly evolving situations—the ability to handle complexity and uncertainty:

“The Eco-leadership discourse is about a new paradigm of leadership. Eco-leadership recognises that within an organisation there are interdependent parts which make up a whole, this goes for all stakeholder relationships, and in ever widening circles that eventually reach the air that we breath [sic]. It is about connectivity, interdependence and sustainability underpinned by an ethical and socially responsible stance.” (Western, 2007, “What Are Your Leadership Assumptions” section)

**Leadership Lenses**

In *Arts of Leadership*, Grint (2000) provided a useful organizational framework for conceptualizing leadership practices. Grint categorized leadership within four broad lenses (Figure 2-1). These lenses are not mutually exclusive. Each of the four lenses provides a
practical guide for organizing leadership: Leadership as Position; Leadership as Person; Leadership as Results; and Leadership as Process.

**Figure 2-1**
Four Lenses of Leadership, Derived from Grint’s (2000) Arts of Leadership


**Leadership as Results**

Leadership as Results lens highlights a focus on *what* leadership produces (Grint, 2010). This perspective includes the outputs and outcomes of leadership. Emphasis is placed on achievements and measurable performance. This perspective may be characterized with terms, such as winning and losing. This leadership lens shares similarities with Western’s (2013) Controller discourse.
Leadership as Position

When viewing Leadership as Position, the focus becomes on *where* leadership occurs (Grint, 2010). It relates to the authority drawn from a position or a role within the hierarchy of an organization. Job titles can also represent levels of power and authority. This leadership lens has parallels with several of Western’s (2013) categories, including the Controller category.

Leadership as Person

The Leadership as Person lens focuses on *who* is leading (Grint, 2010). Leadership is attributed to individuals with characteristics associated with leadership, such as personality, personal style, and charisma. Leaders may become labels: heroes or villains (Webster, 2013). This leadership lens has similarities to Western’s (2013) Messiah discourse.

Leadership as Process

Leadership as Process has a view that contains multiple interconnecting parts in that it focuses on *how* leadership occurs (Grint, 2010). Leadership is attributed to interconnectivity of strategies and tactics that span the social, political, and cultural realms. These networks, systems, places, and spaces provide the underpinnings on which leadership processes can occur. Leadership as Process has many similarities to Western’s (2013) Eco-Leadership discourse.

Social Enterprise Leadership Hexad

While Western (2013) and Grint (2010) have provided frameworks for organizing leadership studies, Jackson et al. (2018) have developed a leadership framework—Leadership Hexad—for the social enterprise sector. A social enterprise, defined in the previous chapter, differs from commercial businesses and nonprofits in that it blends the two, serving both private and public sector goals (Wronka, 2013). The Leadership Hexad expands upon the work of Grint, making some adjustments (Jackson et al., 2018). The first adjustment adds two new lenses:
Leadership through Place and Leadership through Purpose. Another adjustment modifies the name of a lens from Leadership as Results to Leadership through Performance. The third adjustment changes the word as to through on all six lenses to better connote a change process. Lastly, the Leadership Hexad calls attention to the connections or relationships between the six elements. The six elements of the Leadership Hexad are as follows: Leadership through Person; Leadership through Position; Leadership through Process; Leadership through Performance; Leadership through Place; and Leadership through Purpose.

**Figure 2-2**
The Six Lenses of the Leadership Hexad with Associated Relationships


*Leadership through Person*

In alignment with Grint (2010), the Leadership as Person lens focuses on who leads, emphasizing the individual. The individual’s source of power is informal and is not drawn from position or title. The individual has characteristics associated with leadership, such as experience, skills, and charisma (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019).

*Leadership through Position*

Also in alignment with Grint (2010), the Leadership through Position lens emphasizes where leadership occurs. It, too, tends to focus on the individual. It relates to the source of power
drawn from a position or a role within an organization. Job titles and positions within the hierarchy also represent levels of power and authority (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019).

**Leadership through Process**

Continuing to remain in alignment with Grint (2010), Leadership through Process focuses on *How* leadership occurs. This lens into leadership directs attention to the interconnectivity of strategies and tactics that span the social, political, and cultural realms. These networks, systems, places, and spaces provide the underpinnings on which leadership processes can occur (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019).

**Leadership through Performance**

Leadership through Performance lens highlights *what* leadership achieves. Jackson et al. (2018) modified the name of one of Grint’s (2010) categories—changing Results to Performance—to more broadly represent the needs of the social sector. This lens includes the outputs and outcomes as quantifiable results. It also includes *what* gets measured, such as social impact and value (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019).

**Leadership through Place**

Leadership through Place focuses on *Where* leadership occurs. The concept of place encompasses a multitude of concepts related to time and space, including historical and social contexts. In one of its simplest forms, place can mean a geographical location; however, it can broaden quickly to encompass place in the abstract, such as farmers markets (Jackson et al., 2018; Jackson, 2019; Souza & Jackson, 2019).
Leadership through Purpose

Leadership through Purpose asks the basic question of *Why* have leadership. The purpose of the organization includes the social mission as well as commercial aims. Purpose also includes individuals, their motivations and what they hope to achieve. Within a social enterprise context, each organization has a unique balance of social/commercial ends (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019).

Specific Leadership Approaches for Understanding Leadership Practices

In addition to broad categorizations of leadership studies, it helps to apply specific leadership theories to gain insight into leadership in specific contexts. Many leadership scholars have noted an abundance of leadership theories and observations (Burns, 1978; Jackson & Parry, 2011; Kellerman, 2018). "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (Burns, 1978, p. 3). Two specific approaches to understanding and contextualizing leadership include Heifetz et al.’s (2009) adaptive leadership and Collins’ (2011) good-to-great leadership.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership describes the activities necessary to lead and manage dynamic and complex challenges across multiple levels of an organization, using position, authority, and expertise (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). Northouse (2016) describes six areas of focus for adaptive leadership, where problems are complex and solutions not clear: (1) Get on the Balcony, (2) Identify Adaptive Challenges, (3) Regulate Stress, (4) Maintain Disciplined Attention, (5) Give the Work Back to the People, and (6) Protect Leadership Voices from Below. Leadership faces three kinds of challenges: technical, adaptive, and a blend of technical and adaptive (Heifetz et al., 2009). Technical challenges are easily identified, have known solutions, and the solutions are
quick to implement. They can be easily solved by acquiring the necessary expertise and skills. Adaptive challenges are difficult to identify, thus easy to deny. They cannot be solved by acquiring skills and expertise. Adaptive solutions involve changes to values and beliefs. The solutions come from the people with the problem, and it takes time to generate adaptive solutions. And even then, there is no guarantee that the solution will work to solve the problem at hand. The third category is a blend of both technical and adaptive problems.

*Get on the Balcony*

Getting on the Balcony involves diagnosing the organization as a system and developing a sense of how the culture and norms have been reinforced. Different sectors have cultural norms that make it difficult to adjust to new situations. Decision-making by consensus may create challenges to implement change. For example, not-for-profits are often driven by mission and may have difficulty making decisions where there is uncertainty and complexity. Rules on consensus and veto-power may also make it difficult to adapt and change. On the other hand, public sector organizations may be slow to change as they do not have to take into account the same pressures as other sectors. Their public nature insulates from external pressures and supports risk aversion. They do not have the same drivers and need to change and adapt to changing conditions. Getting on the Balcony involves gaining perspective and understanding about the organization (Heifetz et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016).

*Identify Adaptive Challenges*

While Getting on the Balcony focuses on the system, the next step involves Identifying the Adaptive Challenges. Adaptive challenges may involve intense emotions related to values, beliefs, and traditions. An indicator of an adaptive challenge might be a perpetual cycle of failure in addressing a recurring problem. These challenges can manifest in different ways: gaps
between stated values and actual behavior, competing commitments, naming the elephants in the room, and avoiding the impossibly hard work (Heifetz et al., 2009).

**Regulate Stress**

In order to address adaptive challenges, another leadership activity relates to orchestrating and Regulating the Stress created by addressing complexity and uncertainty. Monitoring the distress and keeping it from being overwhelming and counterproductive is one of the activities of adaptive leadership. People experience stress as they experience the mental shift toward an adaptive problem-solving mindset. Adaptive leaders create holding spaces for groups to be able to safely dialogue and clarify the issues. Adaptive leaders adjust the rate of change and manage the level and intensity of the stress associated with the process (Heifetz et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016).

**Maintain Disciplined Attention**

Another aspect of the adaptive leadership process is the need to Maintain Disciplined Attention on the challenging and difficult work. This focus can be especially difficult with adaptive challenges, which involve changes to values, beliefs, and traditions. Confronting cultural norms and knowledge domains may surface uncomfortable topics, such as gaps between what people think and how they act. The adaptive leader exposes these issues, helps to reframe and unbundle them with productive dialogue, and manages the associated conflict and tension (Heifetz et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016).

**Give the Work Back to the People**

Adaptive leadership also includes the concept of Giving the Work Back to the People. This behavior involves taking a step back and letting people assume greater responsibility for the work: “When you have authority, people expect you to provide direction, protection, and order”
Adaptive leaders move away from making authoritative decisions; they provide direction and avoid taking control. It is the role of adaptive leadership to encourage people to take greater responsibility and initiative in solving problems.

**Protect Leadership Voices from Below**

The last leadership behavior associated with adaptive leadership is to *Protect Leadership Voices from Below*. The tendency is to listen to the majority opinion and ignore the dissenting opinions from those in the minority or on the fringe. Listening to these unpopular voices can be disruptive to organizational norms and culture. Bringing in diverse perspectives encourages involvement and engagement from people who are not normally heard; thus, more people take responsibility for the work and finding solutions (Heifetz, 2009; Northouse, 2016).

**Good-to-Great Leadership Principles**

In *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, Collins (2011) highlights business practices that transcend whether an organization operates in the business or social sector. He describes the challenges and activities necessary to transition an organization from good-to-great in the social sector. Good-to-great leadership contains five principles: Defining “Great”; Level Five Leadership; First Who; The Hedgehog Concept; and Turning the Flywheel (Collins, 2011).

**Defining “Great” and Measuring Performance**

The first principle of good-to-great leadership involves Defining “Great.” For those in the social sector, measuring performance may seem at odds with social goals. Also, metrics and measurements may seem difficult to identify and impossible to obtain. “What matters is not finding the perfect indicator, but settling upon a consistent and intelligent method of assessing your output results, and then tracking your trajectory with rigor” (Collins, 2011, p. 8).
Developing a baseline provides a basis for understanding the performance level of the organization.

**Level Five Leadership—Ensuring the Right Decisions Get Made**

The second principle of good-to-great leadership describes peak operating performance by operating at a Level Five on a scale of one to five (Collins, 2011). Levels one through four leadership include highly capable and effective leaders able to provide a compelling vision and energize higher performance standards. Level 5 leadership, however, emphasizes a strong commitment to the cause or mission and an unwavering ambition to do whatever it takes toward the achievement of that mission. This principle highlights the need to make sure the right decisions get made rather than ones that conform to niceness or consensus-building.

**First Who—Recruiting the Right People**

The third principle of good-to-great leadership concerns a focus on *Who First* to bring on board or recruit. Regardless of sector, social or business, it is important to get the right people included in the organization. In the social sector, offering large financial incentives is not normally an option. The social sector does have a leverage point for recruitment: “[filling the] desperate craving for meaning in our lives” (Collins, 2011, p. 16). Additionally, Collins highlights the need to be selective in recruiting in order to get the right people involved in the initiative.

**The Hedgehog Concept—Relentless Focus on Producing Results**

The fourth principle of good-to-great leadership refers to a pivotal notion of *The Hedgehog Concept* (Collins, 2011). This concept involves a relentless focus on how best to produce long-term results (Figure 2-3).
The Hedgehog Concept lies at the overlapping center of three questions: *What you are deeply passionate about* (relates to mission and purpose); *what you can be the best in the world at* (illuminates the unique contribution of the organization); and *what drives your resource engine* (can include multiple factors, such as time, money, and image or brand). Great leadership requires creating a culture of discipline with the fortitude to say “No” to opportunities that fall outside of the overlapping center.

**Turning the Flywheel—Building Momentum**

Lastly, the good-to-great leadership framework underlines the importance of persistent, consistent effort, likening it to the movement of a giant flywheel. “In building a great institution, there is no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment” (Collins, 2011, p. 23). No herculean effort by a single individual moves the organization forward; rather, many small efforts come together to build momentum.
and achieve results. Achieving results attracts more commitment, support, and resources in a continuous cycle—like the flywheel.

**Farmers Market Leadership**

Farmers markets fail and succeed, and there are observations and research as to why. Eggert, Executive Director of the Farmers Market Federation of NY, indicated one reason for farmers markets closures is that there are too many of them; they compete not only with each other but also with other sources for fresh food (Helmer, 2019). Stephenson et al. (2008) attributed farmers market failure to five factors: number of vendors; product availability; lack of revenue; low manager salary or volunteer management; and high manager turnover. These factors—while important—relate more to the structure of the market and do not convey information about leadership. Other researchers have identified steps for creating successful farmers markets. Mainville (2010) authored *Foundations for a successful farmers' market*, which includes considerations for starting a farmers market as well as samples of bylaws and rules. Quintana and Morales (2015) note the transformative nature of the Farmers Market Coalition’s Listserv toward building individual capacity and community building within a social movement; the study does not convey whether this capacity building contributes to the success and failure of the actual markets. How leadership can contribute to understanding farmers markets’ success and failure remains an open question.

**Farmers Market Governance structures**

In order to gain a better understanding of farmers markets, researchers have used governance structures as a framing mechanism. One study categorized markets by status: nonprofit, municipality, or community members; it then used factors to determine whether the market was high- or low-governance (Betz & Farmer, 2016). Another study categorized markets
as vendor-, community-, or subentity-led, and explored how farmers market ownership
influenced “priorities, processes, and outcomes” (Gantla & Lev, 2015, p. 50).

**Farmers Market Typologies**

Often, researchers categorized farmers markets by organizational characteristics in order
to analyze various factors that influence success and failure. Stephenson et al. (2008) used
market longevity as well as the number of vendors, categorizing markets into micro, small,
medium, and large, in order to study the factors associated with market failures. Berry et al.
(2013) asked farmers market managers to select the development phase (start-up, growth,
mature, or declining) of their market to showcase how Cooperative Extension might tailor
services to meet the differentiated needs. Tiemann (2004) categorized grower-only markets as
either “indigenous” or “experience” as a means of analyzing their social and economic purpose
within their communities. With a focus on distinguishing training needs, another study used
population to gain a better understanding of the needs: metropolitan, micropolitan, suburban, and
rural (Wilson et al., 2018). In outlining the core investments in infrastructure farmers markets
most need, which included administration, Hergesheimer and Kennedy (2010) identified three
common levels of administration typically found in farmers markets: ground, organizational, and
collaborative with ground level referring to a manager on site, organizational referring to some
form of board of directors, and collaborative referring to membership in other organizations.

**Farmers Market Leadership Studies**

Leadership frameworks that take into account the unique needs of the social sector are
suited for the study of farmers market leadership. The adaptive leadership framework (Heifetz et
al., 2009) can be used to contextualize leadership of farmers markets. Heifetz (1994) described
the need for a different concept of leadership, one that takes a systems approach and also
distinguishes leadership from concepts of authority and power, to address complex social challenges, such as poverty, environmental hazards, and access to food. The heart of adaptive leadership lies in social adaptation, “developing the organizational and cultural capacity to meet problems successfully according to our values and purposes...the clarification and integration of competing values itself becomes adaptive work” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 3). In Good to Great and the Social Sectors, Collins (2011) targeted the unique needs of the social sector, which differ from commercial enterprise. This focus can be used to guide the exploration of leadership within the context of farmers markets.

Farmers markets are complex dynamic systems with vendors, customers, and market organizers bringing their unique values and purposes. Like nested dolls, farmers markets are part of a larger community food system, which are part of a regional, national, and, ultimately, global food system. Each vendor at a farmers market leads a business enterprise. Depending on the farmers market, the vendors may also participate in its leadership (Scott, 2013). Taken in combination, this leads to a complex social environment that would benefit from adaptive leadership perspectives.

**Chapter Summary**

Categorizing and describing leadership studies provides context for considering leadership. While there may be correlations and overlap between the leadership categorizations of Western (2013) and Grint (2010), they are distinct. Western (2013) takes a temporal/historical approach to categorize the evolution of leadership theories. Grint (2010) takes a more practice-based approach as to where, how, and why leadership occurs. Both approaches represent a progression toward a shared approach to leadership. The social enterprise Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018) showcases how entities from the social sector also depend upon a web of
relationships across multiple elements, including purpose and place. Additionally, adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) and good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011) provide prescriptive frameworks for exploring the practice of leadership.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study approach to guide the exploration of farmers market leadership. The purpose of this research was to study the influences of leadership on Virginia farmers' markets to better understand factors contributing to their success and failure. The case study approach helped to explore the complexity of the influences of leadership. “A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (Cresswell & Poth, 2018, p. 100). Main components of a case study approach include system boundaries, unit of analysis, case description, and case themes (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). This research study contained multiple cases for comparison and had bounded systems: farmers markets in situ, Virginia, and leadership. The cases were also bounded temporally as the study occurred during a global pandemic. The information about the cases came from multiple sources: aggregated lists of farmers markets available online; websites specific to each market; and Facebook pages. Convenience and snowball sampling (Cresswell & Poth, 2018) were used to identify people involved in leading Virginia farmers market initiatives.

Researcher Stance

Qualitative inquiry methodology is influenced by a researcher’s background, personal experience, perceptions, and philosophical assumptions (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). My positionality has influenced the examination and understanding of this research. Reflexively, I grew up in a rural county in Southwest Virginia, and agriculture and horticulture have always been a part of my life. I come from multiple generations of farmers and teachers and am a part-time farmer. I am a middle-aged, White woman—with considerable privilege—and my passion is to help create the spaces, connections, and relationships for small farmers to thrive and to
continue farming. I see community and local food systems as one way to improve farm viability for rural farmers. I want farmers markets to be successful, in Virginia and beyond. I expect farmers market leadership in rural and urban areas to have different sets of challenges and priorities for success. I expect farmers markets’ leadership may have different concepts of what it means to be successful. I expect financial performance to be crucial in order for markets to be considered successful.

**Population**

The population for this study included people involved in leading farmers market initiatives in Virginia. Multiple online listings provided a basis for creating a master list of Virginia farmers markets (Table 3-1): Local Harvest, Open Air, Virginia Farmers Market Association, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Virginia Department of Tourism. The 1,244 entries were reviewed, and obvious duplicates removed. This process generated a list of 406 markets (Table 3-2).

**Table 3-1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Set</th>
<th>Date Accessed</th>
<th>Number of Listings</th>
<th>URL, If Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Market Online</td>
<td>09/01/2019*</td>
<td>152</td>
<td><a href="http://www.farmersmarketonline.com/fm/Virginia.htm">http://www.farmersmarketonline.com/fm/Virginia.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Harvest</td>
<td>09/18/2020</td>
<td>232</td>
<td><a href="https://www.localharvest.org">https://www.localharvest.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDACS**</td>
<td>09/24/2020</td>
<td>244</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/frmsmkt-resources.shtml">http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/frmsmkt-resources.shtml</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tourism Corporation</td>
<td>09/18/2020</td>
<td>51</td>
<td><a href="https://www.virginia.org/farmersmarkets">https://www.virginia.org/farmersmarkets</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Farmers Market Association**</td>
<td>02/08/2020</td>
<td>303</td>
<td><a href="https://vafma.org/virginia-markets/">https://vafma.org/virginia-markets/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No change between the 9/01/2020 and 05/02/2018 data set.
** Received an additional copy through personal correspondence dated 02/08/2020.
Using the map of Virginia Cooperative Extension’s four districts (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2015), each market was assigned to its corresponding district: Central, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest. The research aimed to interview a mix of four to five opened and closed markets from each region, based on the market’s potential status (Table 3-2). A list of potentially open, closed, or unusual markets was derived from the population. Potentially closed markets were identified, using the following criteria: broken links to websites; appearance on only one listing; and information on web presence more than 4 years old. Unusual markets were also noted, using the following criteria: similarities and differences in name, address, and primary contact.

Table 3-2
Total Number of Farmers Markets Reviewed, Contacted, and Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VCE* Region</th>
<th>No. of markets</th>
<th>Analysis of Potential Status</th>
<th>Contacted</th>
<th>Key Informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Unusual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-Large**</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Virginia Cooperative Extension
** Key informants with a state-wide perspective on Virginia farmers markets

Recruitment

In fall 2020, using an IRB-approved recruitment message (Appendix B), the researcher emailed the listed contacts for twenty markets, five markets from each region. This effort yielded no volunteers for interviews; however, two email responses were received. One respondent provided a written letter, detailing the closing of their market, but they did not respond to requests for permission to use this letter in the study. Another person responded that the market
had been loosely structured, and they were not sure why they were listed as a contact as they only worked with the market for a partial season.

Recruiting participants proved challenging, particularly for closed markets. The coronavirus pandemic also contributed to recruitment challenges in the fall of 2020 as farmers markets struggled to remain open, provide operational alternatives to walking through the markets, and meet Virginia’s mandates for operating non-essential businesses. Recruitment resumed in March 2021. While continuing to recruit from potentially closed markets by email and phone, the researcher began recruiting contacts associated with markets known to be in operation.

The recruitment email requested interested parties respond directly to the researcher by email or phone. These individuals received a follow-up email, which included an informed consent sheet, W-9 tax form for remuneration, and an invitation to schedule a time to talk. After reviewing an informed consent sheet (Appendix E), participants gave verbal informed consent. During interviews, key informants provided additional contacts for Virginia farmers market leadership perspectives; this snowball sampling yielded additional recruitment opportunities and generated four additional key informants with state-wide knowledge (rather than localized).

**Data Collection**

Data collection followed a semi-structured interview protocol, which was pilot-tested and modified to incorporate feedback. Jackson et al.’s (2018) Leadership Hexad provided the context for developing the prompts, as shown in Table 3-3.
Table 3-3  
*a priori Propositions Used to Explore Relationships in the Leadership Hexad*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Supporting Literature</th>
<th>Interview Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markets with strong ties to place will be more successful</td>
<td>Leadership Lens—Place, Process, and Performance</td>
<td>Tell me a little bit about the farmers market: Where was/is it located? What was/is it like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets with leadership who have values that align with the market will be more successful</td>
<td>Leadership Lens—Position and Person</td>
<td>Tell me a little bit about how you became involved with the farmers market?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets with strong internal webs of connections and relationships will be more likely to be successful</td>
<td>Leadership Lens—Process, Person, Purpose</td>
<td>Tell me about the community surrounding the farmers market, such as vendors and the people involved with the running of the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets with strong external webs of connections and relationships will be more likely to be successful</td>
<td>Leadership Lens—Process and Purpose</td>
<td>Thinking about the customers for the market, are/were they mostly community members? Why do you think they are/were coming to the market?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets that have more discussion about decisions and include a diversity of positions will be more successful than ones that do not.</td>
<td>Leadership Lenses—Process and Performance</td>
<td>As farmers markets form/evolve, there are decisions to be made, such as changes to rules/policies. Think about a particular decision. How would you describe the decision-making process?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An IRB-approved semi-structured interview protocol included a review of the informed consent sheet, review of questions or concerns, and obtainment of participant’s verbal consent to be interviewed and recorded. Verbal consent was recorded, tracked, and stored in a Google Sheet on a password-protected VT Google Drive. Interviews were conducted over an eight-month period, across two farmers market seasons; six interviews were conducted between September 25 and November 11, 2020, and fifteen were conducted between March 05 and May 06, 2021.
A total of sixty-one potential participants were contacted. All respondents who met the research study criteria, volunteered, and provided informed consent were interviewed. The three research criteria were: 18 years or older; active involvement in running a farmers market in Virginia; and willingness to share insights into leading farmers market initiatives. Twenty-one key informants were interviewed; they were associated with one closed market, sixteen active markets, and four organizations with state-wide perspectives about Virginia farmers markets (Table 3-2). Interviews were conducted virtually at the convenience of the participant, either by phone or with Virginia Tech’s Zoom conferencing system. All key informants consented to being recorded.

The twenty-one farmers markets leaders provided in-depth perspectives on more than thirty-two Virginia farmers markets. Many of these leaders were involved with more than one farmers market initiative in Virginia over the course of their career. Other at-large key informants provided state-wide perspectives with regard to farmers markets and local food resources. Some interviewees provided insight from the perspective of a farmers market organization; these organizations lead multiple farmers markets.

**Data Preparation**

The recorded interviews were fully transcribed through an automatic transcription service provided by the Zoom system. The transcriptions were downloaded to the researcher’s password-protected computer, reviewed, and corrected for accuracy. Transcriptions were stored on a password-protected Google Drive as well as on the researcher’s computer in the software application, ATLAS.ti 9.07 for Mac.
Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview method was used to collect data and surface findings based on themes/categories from elements included in the Leadership Hexad framework: (a) person, (b) position, (c) process, (d) performance, (e) place, and (f) purpose; an additional lens, focused on people/audience, was subsequently dropped as place represents a community of people.

During a first-pass, data were coded in ATLAS.ti in an inductive manner, focusing on facts. This coding pass was descriptive in nature to familiarize the researcher with the data. During this process, commonly repeated terms, shared experiences, and characteristics from each case were noted. This process generated 160 codes, which were reflected upon and augmented the use of a coding dictionary.

The coding dictionary focused on the six lenses of the Leadership Hexad. While multiple sources informed the process (Jackson, 2019; Souza & Jackson, 2019), the primary source for the coding dictionary was Jackson et al. (2018). Each code is related to one of the six lenses in the Leadership Hexad, through which social enterprise leadership can be viewed. The initial code list was honed to approximately 65 codes in a process that involved revision of codes and review of code applications.

Study Limitations

The boundaries and limitations of this study fall broadly into three groups: timing, methodology, and sample. Case studies are bounded by constraints (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). While interpreting the research findings, it helps to note a study’s limitations.

This study had several temporal boundaries. First, it occurred during a global pandemic. For example, when key informants referenced market closures, clarification was needed: closure due to the pandemic or closure due to other circumstances. Also, due to the pandemic, food
access, safety, security, Virginia Farmers Market Association (VaFMA), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were foregrounded by many participants. In order to limit the scope of this study, these inter-related topics were not analyzed and reported: Virginia Farmers Market Association (VaFMA); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and the response to, and implications of, the COVID-19 coronavirus. Additional information related to COVID-19 and impacts on farmers can be found on the SARE website (SARE, n.d.).

Lastly, in-person interviews were restricted, and the interviews spanned an eight-month time frame, which encompassed the end of one market season and the beginning of another one.

The study methodology introduced limitations and boundaries. First, the study was limited to Virginia farmers markets. While building the population sample, there were challenges related to the definition of a farmers market. Types of business entities that needed to be removed included farmers stands, farm stands, u-pick operations, destination farms, and other agriculture-related venues. In order to gain insight into markets that have closed, it is necessary to identify these markets. Markets that have failed are difficult to study. Once a closed market has been identified, a contact person must be found. People involved in failed markets are often difficult to track down and may not want to talk about the experience. Also, it may be the market did not close but rather evolved/migrated/mutated through various name and location changes.

The study sample may also introduce some limitations. There may be some selection bias in terms of participants who volunteered to participate in the study (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). For example, no unpaid market managers volunteered to participate. Respondents either received some form of salary related to their work with farmers markets, owned a market, or were unpaid members of a governing board. According to a state-wide survey of farmers market managers in
Virginia, at least 12% of the 76 respondents were volunteers (SNAP, 2019). A volunteer perspective may have provided additional insight and perspective to the study.

**Chapter Summary**

This study used a case study design approach with qualitative data drawn from semi-structured telephone or Zoom video conference interviews. The study explores the factors that influence farmers market leadership. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect qualitative data. The data were transcribed and analyzed through the lenses of the Jackson et al. (2018) Leadership Hexad. Limitations of the study were described. The findings of this research can be found in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter one introduced the study, which included background on farmers markets, the problem, purpose, and objectives for studying farmers market leadership. Chapter two provided a review of literature associated with leadership studies, social enterprise, and farmers market leadership. Chapter three described the study design, data collection, and data analysis process. This chapter reports the findings of the research question: What leadership factors influence farmers markets’ success and failure? There were two overarching objectives:

1. Uncover patterns or trends in variables contributing to success or decline of farmers markets, and

2. Align farmers market variables with the lenses for analyzing leadership and social enterprises.

Within qualitative studies, validation processes to help ascertain the accuracy of findings include rich descriptions (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Key informants provided one of the data sources for this study. A unique identifier was used to help protect their identity. Each key informant was identified by “KI-,” followed by a letter. For example, KI-a represents one respondent, and KI-b represents a different respondent.

Objective 1: Uncover Patterns or Trends in Variables Contributing to Success or Decline of Farmers Markets

The first objective was to uncover patterns or trends that might contribute to the success or decline of farmers markets in Virginia. Based on the data provided by key informants, three overarching themes or categories emerged: surging operational evolution, supporting the SFSC, and stabilizing forces.
Surging Operational Evolution

Many key informants noted an increase in market operations. Nearly half indicated the addition of an online ordering solution in the past year to accompany their markets’ web presence. One participant provided a description of their online addition:

“We created an online marketplace where we had over 50 producers and farmers that would upload their products onto this website, and then customers could order what they wanted. And prepay. And then our staff would. The vendors would drop them off to us.... We would aggregate everything, and then we would deliver to all of our market sites, for our customer drive-through pickup.” (KI-f)

Other key informants indicated an increase in their availability, by adding a physical storefront or an additional market day, such as a Tuesday evening market. As an example, one participant noted the addition of a produce stand: “We also launched what we’re calling the produce stand. We’re going to be selling through the week when the farmers aren’t here, a small selection of goods from our vendors” (KI-c). Some key informants indicated the addition of a winter market or extending their market season to year-round: “We've expanded to going year-round now” (KI-g). Several key informants indicated the launch of entirely new markets. One participant described their new market as being typical in size: “It’s a very good example of a new market, one year old; it has ten vendors” (KI-p). While not as common, at least one key informant indicated the possible addition of a delivery service. The participant provided further explanation for adding this service: “I’m hoping that [it] will allow us to expand our reach, by offering a delivery solution that won't be cost prohibitive or support [intensive]” (KI-l). By creating and maintaining these alternatives, farmers markets’ leaders have increased the direct-to-consumer options available in their community.
Supporting the SFSC

The short food supply chain (SFCF) includes a number of factors, such as economic development, cooperation, close geographic proximity, and social relations (Delicato et al. 2019; Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016; Franck et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2019); and key informants provided rich context around these topics. One key informant couched the purpose of their organization in local economic development terms: “The goal of the nonprofit is to provide our local economy, specifically our local agricultural economy, with a venue in order to make a living and sell their product” (KI-v). More than half of the key informants noted their markets had rules linked to geographic proximity. In some cases, rules restricted participation by the location of the vendor’s residence. Other rules limited the travel miles of the food itself. Some markets had rules linked to where the vendor resided as well as the travel distance of the food:

“Our rule is that the vendor has to be within 100 miles of the market to sell. With the exception of a couple of products, like seafood or roasted coffee, and we make exceptions for that on a case-by-case basis. But even then, you as the business owner, have to live within that 100-mile radius. And we do allow people to resell if all the product is from a 100-mile radius, and it's all labeled, so that the customer knows where it came from, and how it was grown.” (KI-m)

Many of the key informants described the social atmosphere and cooperative environment among those participating in the market. One key informant described their family-like market community, noting how learning and personal growth can occur as a result of relationships:

“One of the coolest things to watch and see is some of, what I would call my old fashion, older farmers who started with us who used to just grow beans, and tomatoes, and corn—the traditional kinds of things—and then having them interact with some of the other
farmers. That's the thing. We truly created like a family community amongst our folks. And to me, that's very important. You're only as good as the vendor next to you. But anyway, [I get] to watch some of these older folks grow kohlrabi—and instead of just growing traditional eggplants, growing Japanese eggplants. And [they are] kind of expand[ing] their personal horizons, too.” (KI-r)

Another key informant, described the community as well as the general atmosphere and energy around their market:

“I feel like we're a little behind the curve in terms of the local food movement. But we're starting to get caught up, and there's a lot of new young farmers, and the energy that they bring to market, and the passion they bring, meshes with our mission really well. And they work cooperatively instead of acting like they're competing against each other, which I feel like is really important.” (KI-m)

Another aspect of the SFSC involves community connections and social relationships. KI-o sums up the social nature of their farmers market:

“The community comes out and sees it [the farmers market], and they see such a diversity of different types and different personalities, and you can find somebody that fits, like they can be your best friend at that market, basically. It's so many different aspects and personalities out there, and it's just like there's somebody for everybody. And there's a farmer for everybody.”

Overall, participants reinforced the idea that SFSCs afford opportunities to work cooperatively toward community economic development and to build connections and relationships among the participants in the local food system.
Stabilizing Forces

Key informants noted the fragility of farmers markets as well as multiple factors critical to their success and failure. One interviewee observed a pattern of farmers markets opening and closing with little fanfare: “Yeah, there's so many [farmers markets] out there that are very fragile, and kind of just spring up, and die out, before a lot of people even know that they’re there” (KI-n). Another participant shared an insight about what can make a difference to a market:

“When you lose a key vendor, that can make a big difference. A lot of markets don't have a steady location, and so they've had to move several times. That can be a big issue. I guess stability—when you've got a stable location, and maybe a stable manager, and some amount of financial stability—I think all of that goes into it.” (KI-h)

These observations highlight market leaders’ concerns over stability in vendors, location, management, and financial support.

Stable Locations and Permanent Facilities

Multiple key informants talked about the uncertainty associated with short-term leases and the value of a permanent facility. One key informant noted the planning challenges and uncertainty associated with leasing the property on which the farmers market resides: “We're still currently just leasing land. And it's an issue every year when we try to renew. Because we can never get a longstanding lease for us to just feel comfortable where we're at. And [when we have a lease], we never have our own land so that we can actually develop to maximize the potential of the farmers market” (KI-n). Another participant described their site location as being donated, which could lead to challenges in the future:
“The downside to our location [is] we don't own the location. The location we've been in has been generously provided to us free of cost for years, but the man who owns it is not, of course, part of the [market].” (KI-u)

Other market leaders noted the value of having a pavilion or structure. One key informant described how their market fluctuated over the years. Having a designated facility may provide some consistency:

“‘There’s always kind of just been this, ‘it pops up for a few years, and then it dies down, and then it pops up and it dies down.’ This is probably the longest that we’ve had it. But again, we now have a designated facility for it.” (KI-d)

Temporary markets have a lot of flexibility, which can also lead to a lack of stability. One key informant, KI-f, told the story of a single market that changed names, locations, and management three years in a row. Most of the vendors moved with the market each time; eventually however, the market closed. Another key informant contrasted temporary versus permanent facilities from a public safety perspective:

“[One of the] considerations was public safety. And we're not just a farmers market that drops on a piece of property and goes away at the end of the day. This market is here year-round, and it stays on the property, even when we're not here. We maybe have one or two vendors that will use a tent, but for the most part, they're all under cover.” (KI-a)

In general, participants described location and facilities as stabilizing forces for their farmers markets.
Municipal Support

Most of the key informants highlighted the value of municipal support in order to operate a farmers market in their community. This much needed support took many forms, such as permits, financial, and location support. While key informants at municipality-run markets did not foreground issues, most of the key informants who worked with 501(c)(3) and for-profit markets highlighted major challenges with the Virginia permitting process. One participant provided an example and suggestions to improve the Virginia system:

“When we talk about permits, I can write horror stories about getting a permit in Virginia… For example, we have a market in [a] county, and we have to navigate this weird fair permit. It's just for four months. And then, after that you have to renew it every month. And then if you go to [city], I think it's [called] an event permit, which is the same thing—a parade or a farmers market. It's not the same. And for each one, it’s like a different scenario. Just having a farmers markets permit in Virginia would help. You apply to that means you’re a farmers market, and you can apply in your county, but it's a farmers market permit.” (KI-p)

Key informants noted a second aspect of municipal support: financial. Many interviewees described their markets as losing money, or barely breaking even, each year. As one noted, “We go every year to our county administrators and put our hand out and ask for a little bit of money” (KI-v). Other than municipal support, other sources for offsetting the shortfalls included private donations, special fundraising events, and market day or annual sponsorships. Lastly, key informants noted that municipalities can also help or hinder efforts to find a location to hold a market. One key informant described how the lack of support from the local government made it difficult to find a location in their community to hold a market: “I would go to City Council
meetings. ... After sitting in the meeting and them telling me, ‘Oh, we don’t think [our municipality] needs a market.’ I don’t think they wanted the market to be at all” (KI-e). In general, farmers market leaders noted that municipalities help to stabilize farmers markets in their community.

**Objective 2: Align Farmers Market Variables with the Lenses for Analyzing Leadership and Social Enterprises**

The Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018) provides a means for exploring social enterprises through its six lenses: Person, Position, Process, Performance, Place, and Purpose. Relative to other entities, as well as amongst themselves, farmers markets are unique. As one noted, “If you’ve seen one, you’ve seen one” (KI-t). Another key informant provides further context on farmers markets: “They're fragmented; they're not an organized, you know, business like a Walmart or something like that; they've got a business plan that’s—every one of them has got a different business plan; and that's what makes them unique” (KI-a). This section explores farmers markets within their unique context and through the lenses of the Leadership Hexad.

**Leadership through Person**

The Person lens of the Leadership Hexad focuses on who has the informal power to create leadership within a farmers market (Jackson et al., 2018). While these findings about farmers markets leadership use a primary perspective of Person, this lens does not function in isolation from the other five dimensions of the Leadership Hexad. These findings showcase examples of strong connections to leadership through Person: choosing a market, needing a determined champion, and working in pairs.
Choosing a Market

Many of the market leaders highlighted the need to recruit and maintain vendors at their market, thus the vendors have informal power and influence on the performance of the market. In many instances, vendors have the option to choose whether to attend a market. One key informant described how vendors carefully assess their options before making that choice:

“[The vendors are] always on the prowl for a new market. They could give you some really good insight on the success and failure of a market, too... I just listened to some of the things they say, and how they answer me, and I can tell... They’re not too sure if they're going to be here next week. Because they're taking all these factors into consideration. And it's like real time.” (KI-j)

Part of the dilemma vendors face is whether a market will be profitable. From a farmers market perspective, the vendor/customer balance can lead to upward or downward spirals of attendance. Vendors are crucial to forming a successful market. One participant highlighted the importance of vendor consistency, especially for a new market: “In the early stages of a market, you have to have people who are willing to have some not-great sales days to hang in there... If a market is not consistent, you lose customers” (KI-h). Another key informant provided further context on the vendor/customer relationship and vendor preference for a well-established market:

“How long a market is around, pertains to its success... We barely have to request anyone to apply for our [established] market. Vendors try to get in, and they're, ‘Oh there's never an opening,’ because we always tend to favor return vendors. So, people, like the customers know—[this vegetable vendor] has been there for 30 years—they're a staple at that market. We give preference to people [vendors] like that, but that's not necessarily an ear marker of success for a market.” (KI-k)
In describing the importance of steady, strong, stable management at two struggling markets, one key informant’s remarks described the required trust and credibility with vendors, which other market leaders mentioned as well:

“In both cases, I had to go out and recruit vendors and say, ‘Look, trust me on this. This is a good market. It can do it. It'll be good for you. It'll be good, but you have to trust me.’ And that's what I had to do in the beginning...within two years, in both cases, you could see a huge difference, once the market had just some stable, steady, strong management.”

(KI-g)

After these markets became established, this key informant noted, “In fact, I’ve had a waiting list the entire year” (KI-g). In general, key informants noted the decisions vendors make relative to choosing a market, or choosing to show up, have a direct impact on the market and its performance.

*Needing a Determined Champion*

More than half of the market leaders provided origin stories about their markets, which involved at least one champion. These champions differed in approach but share common characteristics: determined, committed, effective, and critical to the market’s initial success. As one participant noted, the market “was definitely dependent on that member that was driving the creation of it, and the success of it—that could see the vision of it, to see it come to fruition” (KI-j). Another informant described the commitments needed to create a farmers market. It involved a complicated and complex planning process with the county: “A retired planner with the county helped us to get through the initial requirements that they had as far as developing a plan” (KI-a). The interviewee described the end result as well worth the investment: plenty of parking, handicap accessible space with smooth surfaces, and bike racks, to name a few of the amenities
included in the process. One key informant provided background on a market without a strong champion:

“[They never really formed an organization, and it struggled because of that... The woman that mainly ran it, sorta did it by herself... If you texted her, she just didn’t reply. [And, she] didn’t answer the phone. [The owner] hired somebody... The social media improved, but then it just—it didn’t have any momentum.” (KI-f)

The market eventually closed. In contrast, another key informant described the perseverance of some local business owners:

“Mainly it was a couple of ladies who had businesses in town just felt like it needed a farmers market. They held it together for about three years... We are talking about really determined people... I mean they were determined to hold down that corner... Eventually, it was five pretty regular [vendors].” (KI-h)

After describing the transfer of management of a market in decline, one participant noted: “If it hadn't been bullheaded [by] me, taking the market, it probably would have closed for real” (KI-q). Based on the comments from the key informants, the overall sense is that determination and commitment were critical to the initial success of these farmers markets.

**Working in Pairs**

Two thirds of the interviewees strongly identified as working in a pair with another person. In many instances, they shared responsibilities with a spouse. When asked who manages the farmers market, one participant responded: “That’s me. My husband, sometimes he plays manager. We’re both always there. When the markets open, the two of us are always there on site” (KI-q). Another key informant noted sharing leadership with a spouse: “I’m the only official employee, but she and I share responsibilities. I couldn't do it without her, to be totally
Another participant describes how she and her partner make decisions related to the market: “With my husband and I doing this together, we’re together all the time, and so we have a lot of time and opportunity to talk through those kinds of things” (KI-r). One key informant described the importance of diverse styles and leveraging this diversity to distribute responsibilities. “[Another market leader] has written the grants, is kind of like the big picture, idea guy, and I am the ‘Okay, this is how we’re actually going to implement this.’ Having that dynamic is really important” (KI-h). One interviewee, KI-v, described the value and utility of partnering with another person who has multiple roles: the founder of the farmers market, a volunteer to the market, and the representative to the nonprofit board that oversees the market. Another key informant described how pair of leaders who started the market used their influence to bring people into the planning process:

“Between the two of them, they had everyone on speed dial: they were really well connected with the Chamber, and they knew and had the mayor on speed dial, and the city manager on speed dial, and the president of [a foundation] on speed dial. So, they were so well connected that they were able to bring all the people to the table.” (KI-l)

While key informants described other working relationships with individuals and small groups, the paired relationship occurred frequently when describing their farmers market leadership.

**Leadership through Position**

The Position lens of the Leadership Hexad focuses on who has the formal power to create leadership within a farmers market (Jackson et al., 2018). While these findings about farmers market leadership use a primary perspective of Position, this lens does not function in isolation from the other five dimensions of the Leadership Hexad. These findings showcase examples of
strong connections to leadership through Position: becoming a community anchor and supporting entrepreneurship.

**Becoming a Community Anchor**

Multiple key informants got their start with farmers markets as vendors, which aligned with their personal values. For some market leaders, transitioning into the role of market manager was an act of service to others. One participant described how she transitioned to becoming a market manager:

“When the market was going to close, I’m looking around me, and [for] a lot of these people, this is their livelihood. It's not just a hobby for them [as it was for me]. It's their ‘bread and butter.’ And I’m thinking, ‘if this market closes, how do they survive? What's going to happen to them?’ And I couldn't just leave that on the table and walk away from it. Okay, well I’ll just, I’ll just make sure this is here for them, so they have this resource. And it just became bigger than me, really quickly.” (KI-q)

Other market managers were invited into the position by their municipality. When the former manager stepped down, one interviewee described her recruitment process: “They didn't even post the job. They knew me from when I was a vendor there; and they called me, and they were like, ‘Hey do you want to do this?,’ which I’m glad they did. And I mean, it's been awesome” (KI-o). Another market manager was recruited into the position because of ties to the community and previous experience with the farmers market: “The [municipality] started discussing with me the possibility of coming [into the farmers market position] … because I was already involved in the community. It was the community involvement that was the real connection” (KI-i). Another key informant summarized the value of having someone from the community take on the market manager role:
“What is really important in a manager is somebody who really knows their community and is passionate about what they're doing. And level of education and all of that stuff doesn’t matter a hill of beans if it's not something they really care about.” (KI-h)

In general, many key informants noted how market managers came into the position due to a connection or service to the community.

**Supporting Entrepreneurship**

Leadership through the lens of Position provides insight into how market leadership creates opportunities and supports entrepreneurship at their markets. This entrepreneurship can take many forms. In its simplest form, it can include providing a space for an information table that serves the community. As noted by several key informants, farmers as vendors do not always participate for a full season. One gives an example of how some farmers participate in the market: “They come in and sell their berries, and then they leave. They’re only there for four weeks” (KI-d). Another key informant expanded upon the seasonal nature of farmers as well as the purpose of their farmers market as a business accelerator.

“Farmers actually come and go. They kind of rotate in and out. The intention of [our farmers market], originally, was to let smaller businesses have an outlet to go direct to customer. But also to get their name out, for smaller businesses. So, we've seen farmers who have come to us, and had a very small business, but made connections, built their business, and now they're too big to even continue to come to our market, because they're too busy elsewhere and [with] other facilities. We want to be that. You start your business, you come to us, we help you accelerate your business to the point where you don't—not to say you don't stay here, [but] you outgrow us.” (KI-u)
Providing a supportive environment for entrepreneurship to occur does not necessarily mean that the vendor or farmer outgrows the farmers market. As one key informant describes, some vendors have built their business model around the market:

“A lot of them [the businesses] are either owned by the artisan or farmer themselves or [are] family-owned businesses. A lot of them really need the farmers market to sustain their business, because of the high profit margins on their items. They aren’t being undercut by wholesalers. So, it's really a place that has direct sales. But it's just like, they’ve built their whole business around it; and it's really the best way they can operate; and possibly, the only way they can operate and still maintain their business.” (KI-n)

The creation of online markets has opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurship. Not only does it create a new channel for farmers and vendors to make their goods available, market leadership can participate in the online markets as well. One participant provides further detail:

“The online market place has been great for someone who doesn't have the time to sit at a market for four hours, plus set up and break down. [My colleague] who manages the market also is a vendor. [And another colleague] is also a vendor. We're all very food-focused people and in multiple ways.” (KI-m)

As noted by some participants, the entrepreneurial nature of having online markets affords market leadership opportunities to participate in ways they could not before.

**Leadership through Process**

The leadership through Process lens focuses on *how* leadership happens within a farmers market. Of all the lenses, leadership through Process is the one that is the most complicated and the least understood (Jackson et al., 2018). While these findings about farmers markets leadership use a primary perspective of Process, this lens does not function in isolation from the
other five dimensions of the Leadership Hexad. These findings showcase examples of strong connections to leadership through Process: owning a market and planning for succession.

**Owning a Market**

When talking about farmers markets, some key informants note the term “ownership” introduces ambiguity. What determines ownership? Is it the person or organization that coordinates and arranges for permits within the city or county in which the market resides? Coordinates insurance? Signs a land lease? Oftentimes, market leaders fall back on federal tax status to help distinguish the operations. An unknown tax exemption status for a farmers market can lead to confusion, as one participant noted: “There wasn’t any formal organization at all. It wasn’t an LLC. It wasn’t a nonprofit. It was just—I don’t even know how they got a bank account” (KI-f). Another key informant distills some of the confusion, bringing in a nonprofit perspective:

“It's hard to talk about ownership, with farmers markets, right? Because we manage the farmers markets, but basically ownership really depends on many things. We can own the farmers market in this neighborhood; but to operate it, we need the letter of support, so we can get the permits, right. So, in that case, we depend on the community so we can operate. [If] they say, ‘No,’ [then] it doesn't matter; we wouldn't be able to operate that market. So, we can own a market, and we can’t operate, in that case. So, we run all the farmers markets… [For a specific market], the county owns the market and they contract with us to manage it. It’s [our organization] a nonprofit, which helps us to bring grants and things for the operation.” (KI-p)

As noted above, some key informants used tax status as a means for typifying a farmers market.
Other key informants also noted the importance of tax status for acquiring grants. As a nonprofit, the federal tax exemption status assists in securing grants; however, grants are not as readily available for markets owned by a municipality, as another key informant notes:

“About grants and stuff, so, it’s hard because we are a municipal body; so a lot of grants that are open to nonprofits or LLCs or anything like that, we can’t even apply for. And I think that is part of the original reasoning for forming that [external] group, because they are actually a 501(c)(3). So, they can go after some of those grants, and kind of bring them into the market in a round-about way.” (KI-c)

Farmers markets can also use another federal tax-exempt status, 501(c)(6), which is used by business leagues and chambers of commerce. This status affords farmers market leadership unique opportunities that would otherwise not be available, as one participant notes: “The 501(c)(6) [status] works really nicely; because if we were a 501(c)(3), the [municipality] wouldn't be able to do some of the things that they do for us” (KI-l).

Farmers Markets frequently operate under the umbrella of a 501(c)(3) sponsor. Each nonprofit sponsor has unique characteristics. One participant provides the following description of the nonprofit, which is the umbrella 501(c)(3) for their farmers market:

“And I know that [our nonprofit] would like to develop into sort of that kind of model, where we’re supporting agriculture throughout the county, not just at the market. And there’s a real impetus behind that, because the county wants to see that as well, as part of economic development. And so, there’s a lot of looking into how can [the] county support the farmers? And how can we support the farmers? And the farmers market is just one small component of that.” (KI-v)
Of the key informants that identified as having nonprofit farmers markets, the most common forms were the stand-alone 501(c)(3) and being under the umbrella of a 501(c)(3). Appendix G provides a visual representation of farmers markets and tax exemption status classification.

While not as common in Virginia as nonprofit or municipally sponsored markets (SNAP, 2019), private or for-profit farmers markets also operate in Virginia. The reasons for choosing private ownership are unique to the individuals and circumstances, yet several key informants distinguished their privately-owned markets as more vendor-focused. For example, one participant noted the following:

“All the other markets around me are government run. So, they have a very different take. We like to say they’re customer-centered markets, and we're a vendor centered market. So, it's my job to support the businesses that come to sell. It's their [the vendors’] job to take care of the customers.” (KI-q)

Some key informants described farmers markets that began as for-profit and then transitioned to another tax status. For example, one participant described their market’s history: “The farmers market started out as just a private entity.... and [then] it became a program of Parks and Rec” (KI-n). Another key informant described an evolutionary process of creating a blended environment of for-profit and nonprofit functions in order to gain some advantages:

“A lot of farmers markets have gotten kind of creative, where they started off as a for-profit, and then they added a nonprofit to be sort of their umbrella agency … [For-profits] have to do things like pay rent… Some of them [farmers markets] are a weird mix or blend of nonprofit and for-profit.” (KI-l)

One participant affirmed how becoming a nonprofit has created new opportunities for the organization: “Now that we're officially a 501, I can actually do more. And I’ve researched more
Another participant shared how their nonprofit affiliation assists them with expenses: “We are not charged anything by Parks and Rec… They do not charge us rent. So that’s huge, because that can put an organization under—fast” (KI-g). In contrast, another key informant from a for-profit farmers market describes the interaction with the municipality: “Absolutely, I have to pay. I have to rent the lot [each week from the municipality] …We have 38 weeks of market each year” (KI-q). In general, key informants used tax exemption status to characterize the farmers market, especially talking about ownership and management.

**Planning for Succession**

Market leaders shared examples that involved planning for the future. Key informants noted multiple areas that would benefit from succession planning. These examples included location predictability, planning for operational growth, and planning for turnover.

Multiple markets described location predictability as an ongoing issue. This could be due to the lack of long-term leases or unexpected location shifts due to unforeseen instances. One key informant described the lack of predictable space, noting the uncertainty and difficulty in planning for the future:

“We're still currently just leasing land, and it's an issue every year, when we try to renew. Because we can never get a long-standing lease for us to just feel comfortable where we're at. And we never have our own land, so that we can actually develop to maximize the potential of the farmers market. That's something we've been struggling with, and try to get to the city council's ear, to try to make the farmers market a dedicated part of the city…. For the past two years, it's been kind of a headache just to wonder if they're actually going to try to renew our lease or not.” (KI-n)
While a pavilion or permanent structure was not a guarantee of a market success, markets with a permanent structure did not identify location predictability as an issue.

The second aspect of planning for succession involves the operational growth of individual markets. Nearly half of the key informants indicated their farmers markets have added a market day, such as Thursday; an online market; a home/office delivery service; a winter market; a new market; or some combination of the above. The operational growth has increased the organizational complexity, including increased employees and number of hours needed to run operations. One key informant noted how their market may need to find an alternative to being an association. While a 501(c)(3) sponsor has worked in the past, they observed that as the market grows in complexity, it may need to become a stand-alone nonprofit:

“One is we would have to go out on our own, and no longer have a fiscal sponsor, which may, in fact, happen [anyway]. Only because of this year, we've gotten so complicated. We're running three markets now [normal, online, and winter]. So, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to have a fiscal sponsor as we have had. Any grants we write, we have to write through them, which is a whole complicated process.” (KI-g)

As KI-g noted above, grant-writing can be complicated when under the umbrella of another nonprofit. Another key informant described how changes to the market have opened up opportunities to bring new talent and skills to the farmers market:

“With the expansion into online ordering, and the second market, the time needed for that, really, was more than I could commit to the market. But in addition, my strength is not website development or online ordering. That was a component that I just wasn’t— didn't feel I had the strength. And we were also looking for someone who could assist us
with grant prospecting. And so, our [newly hired] assistant market manager has that background... with grant prospecting and submitting grants.” (KI-v)

In summary, key informants have noted both the challenges and opportunities associated with the operational growth of their farmers markets.

The last area of succession planning relates to market manager turn-over and planning. One key informant describes the challenging conditions under which market managers must operate and why there is turnover:

“Working in food is so hard. It is relentless. Because the farmers wake up early, and people work late; and so it's—sometimes they have calls or things at night, or like seven, you never know, right... [You] have to wake up early, and you have to be outside in any condition. It could be cold; it could be rainy. It could be 90 degrees... Sometimes we have marketing managers that quit after two weeks: ‘I’m sorry. I didn't realize that.’ Because you go to a farmers market, and it’s so lovely; and you see a lot of people having fun; and once you've gone into management, it is not like that.” (KI-p)

This high turnover can have ramifications beyond the inconvenience of needing to hire another market manager. One key informant describes the impact of high turnover on the implementation and use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at farmers markets:

“The lifespan of a market manager is relatively short, and turnover is a big issue. It's a big issue with SNAP, because there are all these permits and different things that are in people's names. And when one market manager disappears and takes the files, and then the new market manager doesn't know who the equipment provider is, or what the contract says [it’s a problem].” (KI-t)
The market manager turnover can affect some of the most fundamental market operations, such as communicating, branding, advertising, and earning media credit through webpages and social media accounts. One participant noted the importance of social media for managing a farmers market: “Whatever is on Facebook is what is real” (KI-j). At a fundamental level, access to communication channels affects the ability to update hours, answer questions, and manage a farmers market’s online presence.

**Leadership through Performance**

One of the more interesting aspects of the Leadership Hexad involves the flexibility of leadership through Performance lens. Within the social enterprise Leadership Hexad, Jackson et al. (2018) named the lens leadership through Performance and placed more emphasis on choosing what gets measured as a result of leadership. While these findings about farmers markets leadership use a primary perspective of Performance, this lens does not function in isolation from the other five dimensions of the Leadership Hexad. These findings showcase examples of strong connections to leadership through Performance. These findings include two themes that emerged from the data: surviving the initial phase of startup and choosing what gets measured—professionalizing market managers.

**Surviving the Initial Phase of Startup**

Several key informants described an initial period or startup phase in which a new farmers market struggles. One key informant spoke generally about the core elements needed in order to create a successful market:

“The different factors that play into whether a farmers market is going to be successful—of course, one of them is the right mix of vendors; the right mix of products; the right
location; the right management team; and the right customers—and you’ve got to have all of those.” (KI-f)

In addition to having the right combination of factors, for a new market, market leaders suggest it takes two to five years to determine its viability. One key informant provides more context:

“You have to understand every market takes between like two to five years to actually really be a viable market. We like to say three years, to see really; and at the third year, we like to see projected upward growth for the market. And if we don't see that projected upward growth or maintaining a steady growth rate, then we have to evaluate whether or not it's worth having the market as part of our entity.” (KI-k)

While it may take two to five years to determine viability, other participants note how timing is critical along the way. One participant summarized the need to invest in equipment, promotion, outreach, and the need to build momentum in a very short period of time:

“Most of the time, markets fail because you don't have enough money to support your operations. And when you don't do enough investment to get good equipment, to get good promotion, and do outreach, and all these things that you need; sales start going down, and normally farmers leave, right. So, you have this very, very critical, very short period of time, where you have to make the market successful. So markets struggle a lot, and they depend a lot on free labor, which is volunteers, mostly.” (KI-p)

While multiple market leaders highlighted various aspects of the need and the value of having relationships with other market leaders, one key informant clearly articulated the need for connection as well as momentum:

“When you have something go wrong, there’s not always somebody you can talk to about it. And, so those relationships with the other market managers are really priceless, and
that’s so, so important to the success long term of any market as the burnout factor is so high, because they don’t have support…. It was imperative that we did that [connected], to keep our momentum going. It’s the people that don’t participate that get burnt out, and they lose momentum.” (KI-f)

Key informants provided context for helping farmers markets make it through the initial phase of starting up a new market. They highlight the importance of building relationships as well as building momentum around the market.

**Choosing What Gets Measured—Professionalizing Market Managers**

In considering what gets measured, beyond financial performance, several key informants emphasized a need for training and professional development for farmers market managers. One of the provided reasons is that market managers shoulder a tremendous amount of responsibility, including managing the tensions of competing demands. As one participant noted, “I feel very responsible for the families of the folks we work with. They depend on us, and that's a lot sometimes to walk around with. So, I feel like we have to be on top of everything we're doing” (KI-r). Market managers burn-out and drop-out for multiple reasons, including salary. While another participant shared how much he enjoyed running the farmers market, he noted it was not a sustainable career option:

“Candidly, I’m leaving the farmers market. I’m actually the ex-manager at this point…. Moving forward, my career with them [another company] is more challenging and more rewarding financially as well. And so, I really don't have the time for it. Not to say the desire—I enjoyed doing it, but I just don't have the time to make it work. And my other job just is going to potentially pay me better in the future.” (KI-u)
One key informant provided perspective on professional development and training, describing three benefits: encouraging skill development, showing appreciation to employees, and retaining employees longer:

“I think that the training is good for the skill; but also, it is important for our staff to feel that they are taken care of. So, from a leadership perspective, I think it's also good that you get all the tools that you need and that you prefer, and you feel like the organization is investing in you; and that also helps them. And having a staff that are happy doing their job, and that is a big difference. Cause normally, we’ve seen that also, at many farmers markets. People get tired of managing in the markets, and when they're happier, they could stay longer.” (KI-p)

Several farmers market leaders noted the challenges of employee turnover. One key informant emphasized how professionalizing market managers goes beyond a simple request for pay equity; it impacts expanding the local food system and creating access to healthy foods:

“There are many, many, many talented people who could be, and should be, doing this kind of work. But they can't. They can’t do it because they can't get paid; they can't get paid enough to make a living.... You're running a small business or a small nonprofit, and you just have to have a professional staff person doing it.... If you've got a larger goal in mind, expanding the local food system, and creating access to healthy foods for local people, whatever it is. So long as you have that in mind, you need to hire somebody who can do that job.” (KI-g)

Overall, many key informants valued professional development and career paths for people interested in managing farmers markets.
Leadership through Place

Place can relate to many things, such as geographic location, time, or culture (Jackson et al., 2018). For the purposes of these findings about farmers market leadership, Place is a cultural construct. While these findings about farmers markets leadership use a primary perspective of Place, this lens does not function in isolation from the other five dimensions of the Leadership Hexad. Place belongs to the community of people who live near the farmers market, and it belongs to the community of farmers and vendors who bring their goods to the farmers market. These findings showcase examples of strong connections to leadership through Place: co-constructing leadership—community Lens and co-constructing leadership—vendor lens.

Co-constructing Leadership—Community Lens

In order to have a successful farmers market, multiple key informants indicated the importance of understanding the community and co-creating the farmers market. One key informant described the challenges in replicating a farmers market in another community: “Even though I was doing a lot of the same events and trying to set up the same sort of easy-going vibe [at the market], it did not fly in [another town]” (KI-h). Customers need to have a reason for coming to the market, and these reasons vary from one community to another. As an example, one key informant, KI-I, did a study of their community and identified three types of customers: core, marque, and lifestyle. The core group attends every week. The marque group attends for special items, such as strawberries. The lifestyle group attends due to various personal reasons, such as a health issue or desire to educate children about healthy eating. Another key informant described her core group as “the ones that are involved with local churches and local schools. They’re the ones who help me the most with advertising and getting the word out” (KI-g). In
working to help a struggling market, one key informant described organizing community schools, businesses, and other agencies to help build support and momentum:

“You gotta really involve the community to make it successful, and there was no community there. Extension was involved, and the Chamber of Commerce was involved, and the schools, and some of the local nonprofits, and the kids from band.... Just a whole bunch of community organizations supported it…. I met with the economic development director, and the chamber, and I went and met with the brewery down the road, and the cidery, and someone from the school board; and we just got, we got all these different agencies involved.” (KI-f)

This process involves more than just meeting with a group; it involves understanding what the community needs and wants. KI-k described the process and what needs to be shared when co-constructing a market: “This is who we are. These are our values. This is our mission statement, and this is what we can do for you.” Moving beyond individual markets, one participant provides a broader perspective on farmers markets, generally:

“One of the things that's most appealing to me about farmers markets is, it is a cross section between economic stability, environmental stability, and social stability. It's what really drew me to farmers markets. Now, I’ve always been interested in environmental sciences, and they aggregate the fabric of a city and its citizens. So, I think it's the best place to combine all those worlds.” (KI-n)

Summarizing the perspectives of key informants, the community the market serves helps to co-construct the leadership of the market.
Co-constructing Leadership—Vendor Lens

In order to have a successful farmers market, key informants discussed the importance of the farmers and vendors that bring their goods to the market. At their core, farmers markets serve farmers. One participant notes, “What's the point in having a farmers market if it doesn't benefit the farmer?” (KI-m). One way in which farmers markets distinguish serving vendors is through rules, and those rules often center around geographic location. No rules, food-distance rules, and vendor-distance rules are examples of how place affects the leadership of the market. One market leader described the decision-making process for their market as “people run” and highlighted how vendors voted on all amendment changes:

“For big events, we’ll go ahead and plan the skeleton with the board and then bring in the members and have them vote on everything and get their opinions on what to add. But when it comes to big amendment changes, it's everybody. And we have to have a certain percentage to be able to go through with it.” (KI-o)

This farmers market had no limits related to distance, and the participant provided additional perspective: “I don't feel comfortable turning anybody down that has enough courage and drive to ask” (KI-o). Other farmers markets differed in how they developed their rules. For example, another key informant described a more informal process of having “vendors who are kind of designated as liaisons” (KI-d) to provide feedback and help to inform decisions related to the market. Another key informant represented a farmers market with a more formal set of rules and provided additional context for the rules:

“It’s community focused. It's not specifically vendor [focused], and it's not specifically consumer [focused]. It is bringing local vendors to local people, and keeping money within the local community, and creating a purpose and an area of growth that's mutually
beneficial. That's why we have that 125-mile radius... We like to keep our food fairly local, so our people can hear, ‘Oh, [Vendor’s] produce is grown in [this county or that county].’ And so, people love to hear that, and we love stimulating the local economy.”

(KI-k)

In describing a very active board, one key informant noted the importance, challenges, and benefits of having farmers and vendors co-construct the farmers market by serving on the board:

“It’s hard for them, for farmers in particular, or any vendor or any producer; it's just hard for them to consider what's in the best interest of the market, which may or may not be in their own personal best interest—so, their own business, [or] their own farm’s best interest. So, it makes it really, really hard; so that’s what we have to deal with. But by the same token, I wouldn't ever want to run a farmers market that didn't have representation of the producers, because they have great insight and wisdom into what and how, things that are working and not working. And that's the best way to get them to be honest and forthright is to put them on the board and give them a voice.” (KI-g)

Whether the processes were more formalized or less so, many key informants indicated the value of having vendors help to co-construct the leadership of farmers markets by sharing their wisdom and experience.

**Leadership through Purpose**

The Purpose lens of the Leadership Hexad focuses on *Why* leadership is created in farmers markets (Jackson et al., 2018). While the purpose of farmers markets begins with transactions around locally produced goods, the purpose can also include greater and more far-reaching aspirations (Betz & Farmer, 2016; Campbell, 2014; del Barco, 2019; Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016; FMFNY, 2019; Kumar et al., 2019; May, 2019; Witzling et al., 2019). While the
findings in this study about farmers markets leadership use a primary perspective of Purpose, this lens does not function in isolation from the other five dimensions of the Leadership Hexad. These findings showcase examples of strong connections to leadership through Purpose: evolving the purpose and leveraging purpose to foreground other issues.

**Evolving the Purpose**

On its surface, the purpose of a farmers market may appear simple, but there are multiple ways in which it can evolve, such as community outreach and education. One key informant distilled the purpose of their market to its core: “The purpose has always been to allow the community an outlet to share with their goods, their produce, their baked goods, their crafts, their arts; and that focus has remained true” (KI-i). Another key informant stepped through an example of how the purpose for a market might evolve over time, once foundations are in place:

“So, markets struggle to do the basic stuff: to attract vendors, to attract customers, to work with their local authorities—that’s a big nugget in and of itself. And then at some point, they become a little more community outreach oriented and start thinking about accepting SNAP and, ultimately, offering Virginia Fresh Match.” (KI-t)

While community outreach is one area a market can focus on growing the purpose, education is another area. Multiple key informants described entrepreneurial programs targeted toward youth, adults, and vendors. One key informant described the community’s enthusiasm and how they created a youth entrepreneur farmers market program: “They like having their own market day; so usually, they will do a Saturday” (KI-d). Another participant shared a more casual philosophy about their market’s educational goals: “We are here to have fun; we are here to sell good stuff; and, if possible, we’ll educate people while we're doing it” (KI-h). Several farmers market leaders are invited to educational activities beyond the market. For example, one participant
described participating in career day at the local schools to help educate young people about farmers markets and entrepreneurship:

“I go to the schools, too, myself. Whenever they have career day, I’m on their list. I just go and talk about farmers market and all the different things you can find there, and how, if you have a business idea that is related somehow to food or agriculture, come talk to me.” (KI-q)

Another key informant described their organization as having three different programs: “We have the farmers markets, we have the food hub, and we have the education program.” (KI-p).

Vendors also participate and lead educational activities as well. These activities ranged from the more informal, such as featured recipes, to more formal, such as cooking demonstrations. As an example, one key informant encouraged a vendor to lead a session on flower arrangements.

“Have you ever thought about doing a workshop?’ And she was like, ‘I would love to do a workshop.’ [And I said,] ‘You let me know what you want per person. So, we’ll do pre-orders. You can get all the stuff and all the money goes to you’” (KI-o). Many key informants noted how the Why of having farmers market leadership at their market often aligned with the personal values and goals of those involved in leading the market.

**Leveraging Purpose to Foreground Other Issues**

In addition to having the purpose of a farmers market evolve over time under the right conditions, key informants described opportunities associated with leveraging the farmers markets toward additional goals. Key informant talked about using the farmers market as a point of entry for bringing about community change: “If you change a food system, you change a community” (KI-e). Another key informant described the experience of working with another organization that was oriented toward food access:
“For us, the markets were not the goal, right; having a farmers market was not the goal that we had. The market, for us, has always been a means for something else. So, [it was] a means to create food access, [and] a means to improve the lives of farmers. We tried to see the market as a tool, and so we could create relationships with other organizations that would benefit from local food…. The farmers are going to come, and you can use—and we’ve been doing that—using that trade to bring more fuel to feed other goals that the organization has. But the market is the key part, but it's the tool for these other things.” (KI-p)

Another key informant expanded upon how farmers markets fit into the larger picture of food access and food security: “The way it works, when it works, is that all the different community’s sectors come together, who are interested in food security and food access. So, farmers markets become part of that food system orientation” (KI-t). Farmers markets seem a natural fit as part of a community effort around food security and access. Other means of leveraging purpose also exist. One key informant shared a passionate desire for professionalizing farmers markets’ management as a means to improving and expanding the local food system:

“If I accomplished one more thing, in my life that would be it: to get the market managers the respect that they need and the pay equity that they deserve—not because they're lovely people who work hard, but because they are a means to an end. They are the people who will make this local food system expand and be what it can be. And without them, it is not going to happen; it just isn't going to happen.” (KI-g)

These examples provide context on leveraging the purpose of farmers markets toward other missions and goals.
Chapter Summary

The findings described in this chapter provide an overview of two overarching objectives for exploring farmers market leadership. The first objective was to uncover patterns or trends contributing to the success or decline of farmers markets; findings included surging operational evolution, supporting the short food supply chain (SFSC), and stabilizing forces. The second objective was to analyze farmers market leadership using the Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018); findings included themes in each lens of the Leadership Hexad: person, position, process, performance, place, and purpose. The following chapter provides a summary of the findings and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the research study. It includes a brief review of the objectives of the study as well as the design. It includes a discussion about the findings presented in chapter four, framing them from within the related scholarship. The chapter concludes with implications for leadership theory, future research directions, and practical implications for supporting farmers markets.

Problem Statement

While farmers markets provide an important junction for food movements, communities, and small farmers, some markets fail, and it is unclear why. Due to the wide variability in types and approaches to farmers markets, success is difficult to replicate (Figueroa-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2018). There is little published work explicit to the study of farmers market leadership (Brown, 2002; Wilson et al., 2018; Witzling et al., 2019). Understanding how leadership can contribute to farmers markets’ success and failure remains an open question.

Purpose Statement

This research studied the influences of leadership on Virginia farmers markets. While previous studies have focused primarily on financial performance to evaluate success and failure, this research study took a more nuanced approach, using the six lenses of the Jackson’s (2019) Leadership Hexad. Specific objectives included, first, uncovering patterns or trends in variables contributing to success or decline of farmers markets and, second, aligning farmers market variables with the lenses for analyzing leadership and social enterprises.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a qualitative case study approach to illustrate and illuminate the complexity of leadership within Virginia’s farmers markets. The study used both convenience
and snowball sampling to recruit potential key informants (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). A semi-structured interview protocol guided the data collection. Data were encoded in multiple passes; the initial pass identified descriptive content, and the second and third passes used a coding dictionary, which was derived from the six lenses of the Leadership Hexad.

**Summary and Discussion of Findings**

Discussions of findings were framed through the lens of adaptive leadership practice (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009), with additional insight drawn from Collins’ (2011) *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. Unlike some leadership theories, Heifetz et al.’s (2009) adaptive leadership theory focuses on adaptive challenges, where there are no easy solutions. This framework seems especially suited to farmers markets, where leadership helps to orchestrate multiple sets of independent activities within a larger crucible. The adaptive leadership approach has six leadership practices associated with it: get on the balcony; identify the adaptive challenge; regulate distress; maintain disciplined attention; give the work back to the people; and protect leadership voices from below. Collins’ (2011) framework focuses specifically on the social sector and identifies practices to shift from average to great. The framework includes five principles to get to great leadership: define “Great”; practice Level-Five Leadership; First Who; The Hedgehog Concept; and Turn the Flywheel (Collins, 2011).

**Objective 1: Uncover Patterns or Trends in Variables Contributing to Success or Decline of Farmers Markets**

The first objective of the study was to uncover patterns or trends that might contribute to the success or decline of farmers markets in Virginia. Three overarching themes emerged: surging operational evolution, supporting the short food supply chain (SFSC), and stabilizing forces.
**Surging Operational Evolution**

In general, farmers markets and farmers are growing in capacity by increasing the number of direct channels available to the local community. Although exponential growth in the number of farmers markets has tapered off in recent years (USDA AMS, 2019), many farmers markets in Virginia have experienced operational growth in 2020 and 2021, as noted by key informants. While an increase in the number of direct-to-consumer channels does not necessarily indicate an increase in local food production or consumption, it is an indicator that some form of expansion is happening. This expansion may relate to any number of factors, including an expansion of the local food system, an increase in community support, or some other factor; thus, it may have an influence on the community food system (Canfora, 2016; Staisey & Harris, 2019).

**Supporting the SFSC**

The increase in capacity of farmers markets’ operations may indicate an increase in support of the SFSC. Farmers markets are an integral part of the SFSC, which includes a number of factors, such as, economic development, cooperation, close geographic proximity, and social relations of all parties (Delicato et al., 2019; Detre et al., 2011; Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016; Kumar et al., 2019). Key informants in this study described their experiences as part of the SFSC. For example, one aspect of the SFSC involves economic development (Detre et al., 2011). Many key informants shared a focus on their “local agricultural economy” (KI-v). Cooperation among participants was a second element of the SFSC (Campbell, 2014; Cowee et al., 2009; FMFNY, 2019; Megyesi et al., 2011). Many key informants described the sense of cooperation at their market; it was an aspect of the market they personally valued.
A third aspect of the SFSC involved close geographic proximity (Abelló et al., 2014; Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016; Franck et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2019). Key informants described rules at their markets to help address concerns over both the travel distance of food as well as where the vendor resides. Lastly, the SFSC emphasizes social relations and community connections (Campbell, 2014; Cowee et al., 2009; FMFNY, 2019; Megyesi et al., 2011). Participants highlighted the connections and social relationships between customers and vendors. They also highlighted the family-like atmosphere and sense of community within the vendors at their markets.

While several aspects of the adaptive leadership framework may align to the SFSC, maintaining disciplined attention on the challenging and difficult work seems a good fit (Heifetz et al., 2009). Maintaining disciplined attention involves paying attention to changes or conflicts associated with values, beliefs, and traditions. The SFSC includes the values, beliefs, and traditions of all of the people involved in food chain—from consumers to market leadership to vendors. In many instances, people’s reasons for participating in the SFSC differ from one another. Market leadership should watch for changes or conflicts in these cultural attributes.

Drawing from the principles of good-to-great leadership, first who (Collins, 2011)—getting the right people involved—seems to be an area that deserves attention by farmers market leadership. Developing and maintaining an excellent SFSC involves recruiting people, vendors, and community, with shared values and sense of purpose for the market.

**Stabilizing Forces**

Farmers markets have two types of stabilizing forces; one is the physical place and space, and the other is municipal support. Stable, predictable locations contribute to the success of a farmers market, and permanent facilities may contribute to the resilience of a market in a
particular locale. In several instances, key informants described the uncertainty of their market in terms of its location. Previous research has provided information on how to choose a location and the importance of consistency (FMFNY, 2019; Mainville, 2010). In at least one of the examples provided by key informants, the market has been in the same location for over twenty years, but there remains a sense of uncertainty. When the market first formed, initial decisions may have been influenced by whether the farmers market was farmer-led or community-led (Gantla & Lev, 2015). Having a permanent facility, such as an overhead cover, seemed to be an important asset in providing some stability to farmers markets. Some Participants linked permanent facilities with more stability for the market over time or as part of a progression in the evolution of the farmers market. A previous study indicated that approximately 32.3% of farmers markets nationally have permanent facilities (Ragland & Tropp, 2009). Another study noted proximity to amenities, such as public restrooms, is important; however, the report did not indicate that permanent facilities improve attendance or resilience of a farmers market (Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2014).

The second stabilizing force involves municipal support in order to successfully develop and maintain a farmers market. This support can include assistance with permits, funding, and additional resources, such as a location to hold the market. Farmers markets contribute to the local economy and provide other public services (Canfora, 2016; Leiper & Clarke-Sather, 2017; Schupp, 2017), but municipal support cannot be taken for granted. A number of key informants described challenges with getting the support and resources needed to operate. Key informants associated with for-profits and nonprofits were more apt to identify challenges with municipal support than farmers markets that were financially supported by the municipality.
Objective 2: Align Farmers Market Variables with the Lenses for Analyzing Leadership and Social Enterprises

The second objective of the study was to align variables related to farmers markets to the Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018). Themes related to each of the six lenses of the Leadership Hexad were identified in Chapter Four. In this chapter, the findings from this study of farmers market leadership are also considered through the frameworks of adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) and good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011).

Leadership through Person

Leadership through person focuses on who has the informal power to create leadership (Jackson et al., 2018). Knowledge, expertise, and behaviors are some of the characteristics associated with this leadership lens. Three themes from this farmers market study related to leadership through person: choosing a market, needing a determined champion, and working in pairs.

Farmers informally contribute to the leadership of farmers markets through their choice to attend and/or return to a market. This act of choice highlights the informal power that vendors have over the leadership of a farmers market. KI-j described how vendors would assess and take many factors into consideration as they determined whether to return to a market. This process is similar to the act of getting on the balcony, described by adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009). Vendors examine the issue, consider their options, and determine whether they will be back or search for another market.

Farmers markets need a determined champion during the initial phases of starting a new market. Key informants described these champions as determined, dedicated people, driven by their beliefs and unyielding in their commitment to having a farmers market. This need for a
determined champion relates to both the hedgehog concept and turning the flywheel in Collins’ (2011) principles. With the hedgehog concept, these champions diligently focused on what they felt was important. Simultaneously, these champions also initiated and sustained the necessary momentum needed to launch the farmers market endeavor.

Working in pairs and having a strong partnership with another person involved with leading the market contributes to sustaining and maintaining farmers markets. Working in pairs, depending on the situation, can be associated with aspects of adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) as well as good-to-great principles (Collins, 2011). For example, KI-h highlighted the importance of diverse styles and leveraging this diversity to help distribute responsibilities. Including perspectives from multiple people can be associated with identifying the type of challenge and giving the work back to the people (Heifetz et al., 2009). Principles of good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2007) also apply to the theme of working in pairs. Most notably, it could involve the principle of first who—having the right people involved (Collins, 2011).

**Leadership through Position**

Leadership through Position focuses on who has the formal power to create leadership (Jackson et al., 2018). Authority, hierarchy, and job titles are associated with this leadership lens. Two elements from this study related to leadership through position: becoming a community anchor and supporting entrepreneurship.

Farmers market managers become a community anchor through their role with the market. These communities include the vendor as well as the local community. Market managers are the anchor in creating a supportive environment for vendors to sell their goods. Oftentimes, managers became involved with the market because it aligned with their personal values. In addition to becoming an anchor for vendors, market managers also help to anchor the market
within the local community. In some instances, market managers were hired explicitly due to their ties to the community. Becoming a community anchor has connections to adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009). Getting on the balcony involves bringing perspective and understanding of the organization to bear on the issues as hand. Farmers market managers provide a unique perspective to helping farmers markets face different types of challenges. The hedgehog concept (Collins, 2011) also applies to becoming a community anchor. Key informants indicate that many people involved in farmers market leadership practice some form of passionate alignment to their personal values. They seek ways to bring the aspects of the hedgehog concept together, such as aligning their passion and unique contribution. Key informants also noted the need to pay market managers, so people can afford to be farmers market managers.

Farmers market leaders are uniquely positioned to support the entrepreneurship of vendors. They can create and maintain the environment for entrepreneurs to flourish. This theme connected with regulating stress and creating a holding space in adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009). For example, KI-u described how a couple of vendors outgrew the farmers market. In this example, the market served as both a tool for regulating the stress or the size/growth of the business. It also provided a buffer or protected environment for business incubation. Another example shared by key informants showcased how an adaptive challenge evolved into a technical one. The issue was how to minimize contact with customers but still make products available. Initially, this challenge was adaptive; once a solution was identified—develop an online ordering platform—the problem then became a technical one. Initially, market leaders had to get on the balcony to identify the problem. Once online ordering was identified, the
problem morphed into a technical one. While many market leaders did not have the technical experience to develop their own platform, they were able to partner with companies that did.

**Leadership through Process**

Leadership through Process focuses on *How* leadership occurs (Jackson et al., 2018). The interconnectivity of strategies and tactics span social, political, and cultural realms. Two findings from this farmers market study highlight leadership through process: owning a market and planning for succession.

Farmers market ownership and governance is ambiguous and complex. This study uses tax status as a means for describing different types of ownership and governance of farmers markets. The complexity surrounding owning/running a market has connections to getting on the balcony of adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009). Market leaders noted the complexity and ambiguity of their tax-exempt status; getting on the balcony affords the opportunity assess and identify challenges. These opportunities can come in a variety of forms, such as exploring options for hybrid approaches to nonprofit and for-profit tax-exempt statuses in connection with strategies to meet the organization’s needs.

With farmers markets, the leadership through Process lens exposed a need for planning for succession. Succession planning included location predictability, operational growth, and employee turnover. Market leaders take multiple leadership approaches to examine these challenges. For example, with planning for the future, they take a first who approach (Collins, 2011) and focus on bringing the right people into the organization. Simultaneously, they are getting on the balcony (Heifetz et al., 2009) and identifying collaborative partnerships to help address some of the needs. As KI-p noted, providing professional development training for market managers might help to improve the issue of management turnover.
Leadership through Performance

The leadership through Performance lens highlights what leadership achieves (Grint, 2010). This lens includes what gets measured, such as social impact and value (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019). There are two findings in this study of farmers markets related to leadership through performance: surviving the initial phases of startup and choosing what gets measured—professionalizing market management.

Farmers markets are especially fragile during the initial phases of startup. Multiple, simultaneous activities must occur in a small critical window of time in order to successfully launch a market. Several participants emphasized the importance of surviving these initial phases of starting a farmers market. This initiating and sustaining momentum relates to the flywheel effect (Collins, 2011). It is not a single, individual act that creates enough force to turn the flywheel. It takes a continuous, steady stream of activity to turn the flywheel and to keep it turning. An adaptive leadership perspective of regulating and managing the level and intensity of stress (Heifetz et al., 2009) also applies to surviving the initial phases of the farmers market startup process. While the flywheel effect focuses more on actions (Collins, 2011), regulating stress focuses more on monitoring people as they try to maintain momentum (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Professionalizing farmers market managers was important to many study participants. Their reasons included less employee turnover and more consistency and stability of the market itself. Choosing what gets measured showcases how performance for social enterprises—what gets measured—differs from other business entities with more commercial priorities (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019). These factors have a counter-influence relative to Collins’ (2011) flywheel principle. An organization needs a steady, consistent stream of acts to keep its
momentum; losing key personnel and a lack of consistency/stability leads to a loss of momentum.

*Leadership through Place*

Leadership through Place focuses on *Where* leadership occurs and may include geographical, cultural, and social contexts (Jackson et al., 2018; Jackson, 2019; Souza & Jackson, 2019). Place can also be abstract, such as the concept of farmers markets. Community/people and place become difficult to distinguish. Two findings in this study of farmers market leadership related strongly to Place: co-constructing leadership through a community lens and co-constructing leadership through a vendor lens.

Farmers markets are a construct co-created by market leadership and the community in which it resides. This co-construction occurs through the process of uncovering and articulating shared vision, purpose, and values within the community. These aspects of co-constructing leadership closely align with the hedgehog concept and the first who principle of good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011). Related to the hedgehog concept, the cultural identity of farmers markets draws a unique contribution and set of core values and purpose from the community that supports it. The first who principle shows in the intentful practice of purposefully involving the right people as leadership of the market is co-constructed.

Secondly, vendors and market leadership, which often includes vendors, co-construct the leadership practices of their farmers markets. Key informants shared how vendors served on the boards and participated in formal and informal decision-making activities, contributing to the overall health and success of the farmers markets. Co-constructing market leadership in this manner brings correlates to the first who principle (Collins, 2011). Involving the right people in the leadership process can help transform an organization from good to great.
Leadership through Purpose

Leadership through Purpose asks the basic question of Why have leadership and why it occurs. Within social enterprises, purpose encompasses social mission, commercial aims, and individual motivations and hopes; each organization has a unique balance of these aspects. (Jackson et al., 2018; Souza & Jackson, 2019). There are two findings in this study of farmers market leadership related to Purpose: evolving the purpose and leveraging purpose to foreground other issues.

The purpose of a farmers market evolves over time in response to the community in which it resides. Evolving the purpose of a market involves getting on the balcony in order to develop a sense of the issues facing a community as well as giving the work back to the people (Heifetz et al., 2009). For example, when it came to food nutrition and access, no single individual has all of the answers; however, collectively, many people can contribute solutions. Market leadership noted how the farmers markets became a place where various groups offer information, training, and education.

Farmers markets can be more than just a transaction point for the exchange of local goods and products. Leveraging purpose to foreground other issues, focuses on the greater impact that farmers markets can have. These findings provided context for how the purpose of farmers markets can be leveraged for other missions and goals: supporting community change and community action, providing food security and food assistance, and improving and expanding the local food system. Leveraging the purpose of the farmers markets to make gains on other issues includes adaptive leadership approaches (Heifetz et al., 2009). Three connections to adaptive leadership include the following: getting on the balcony in order to gain perspective as to what the issues are; identifying the adaptive challenges in the community, such as food access;
and giving the work back to the people, which can be done by providing the farmers market as a platform, venue, or resource for other groups. These findings also connect to the flywheel effect (Collins, 2011). Other key informants felt strongly that professionalizing market managers is an important step to expanding and sustaining the local economy and food system; thus, a farmers market can contribute momentum to a flywheel focused on other systems.

**Theoretical Implications**

Framing leadership through multiple perspectives creates opportunities to study leadership in new and interesting ways. This study used an action-oriented, definition of leadership-as-practice, which includes goal-oriented cooperative effort and co-constructed leadership phenomena (Raelin, 2011, 2020). The study explores aspects of leadership through the lenses of social enterprises and the Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018), adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009), and principles of good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011).

The social enterprise Leadership Hexad provides a framework for exploring complex relationships (Jackson et al., 2018). These lenses offer a means to reflect on the activity of leadership. Leadership through Performance notes the importance of choosing what gets measured, such as social impact or values. In certain contexts, such as farmers markets, leadership through Place becomes important, not just from a geographical/location orientation but also place in the abstract as a representation of the community and people. The Purpose lens reveals similarities and differences between social enterprises that share a common name, such as farmers markets. It further provides a lens into considering the multitude of purposes and perspectives of various stakeholders within social enterprise contexts, and beyond.

In discussing the findings, adaptive leadership theory (Heifetz et al., 2009) and good-to-great leadership principles (Collins, 2011) afforded a unique intersection with the six lenses of
the Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018) for this study (Appendix H). One of the identified adaptive leadership activities—getting on the balcony—intersected with multiple lenses of the Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018). Another leadership activity, identifying adaptive challenges and technical challenges, provided the means to explore leadership phenomena from within the Leadership Hexad as well as when leadership was being co-constructed and where leadership occurred. Analysis allowed for the exploration of co-constructed and collaborative leadership practices. These intersections may provide opportunities to refine and hone each of the three theories: Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018), adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009), and good-to-great leadership principles (Collins, 2011).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The social enterprises Leadership Hexad provided an incredibly useful tool for exploring farmers market leadership and illuminating areas for future research. The global pandemic created turmoil and challenges for farmers markets and the short food supply chain (SFSC). Further attention should be given to how the pandemic affected leadership, leadership capacity, networks, access channels, and social capital around the SFSC, including SNAP and the Virginia Farmers Market Association. Another research opportunity involves the relationship between farmers market leadership and food access—barriers and challenges, beyond the influences of the pandemic. It would be helpful to have further insight into the influences of municipal leadership and how it contributes to the success and challenges that farmers markets face. Lastly, this study recommends further exploration of the professional development needs of Virginia farmers market leaders. One opportunity would be to conduct a study similar to Wilson et. al. (2018), applying micro-strategies to assess professional development needs across the state in order to tailor opportunities in more meaningful ways.
The following list of questions to inform future research:

- How does community type (urban and rural) influence the success and failure of farmers markets?
- How has the global pandemic influenced Virginia farmers market leadership, including food access, safety, security, and SNAP?
- How has leadership capacity influenced the ability to adjust to changing circumstances, such as the global pandemic?
- What are the barriers and opportunities associated with farmers market leadership and food access?
- How does the Virginia Farmers Market Association influence farmers market leadership in Virginia?
- What are the influences of newly added direct-to-consumer short food supply chain channels on sustainability, improved food access, expansion of the local food system, economic development, and farmer resilience?
- What are the implications of farmers markets growth that leaders need to consider?
- How do municipalities make decisions to support, or not, a farmers market? And what can be learned from their leadership approach?
- How do farmers make decisions to support, or not, a farmers market? And what can be learned from their leadership approach?
• What are the professional development needs of Virginia farmers market leaders? And do other social enterprises have similar professional development needs?

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the analysis and discussion of data provided by key informants in leadership roles associated with Virginia farmers markets, recommendations for professional development and leadership pipelines are offered. With the evolution of farmers markets’ operations, professional development may be in greater demand. The Virginia Farmers Market Association (VaFMA, n.d.) offers a Farmers Market Manager Certification and is developing other offerings. Course offerings can be targeted toward specific audiences. Within an academy-like design, there are opportunities to build a leadership and education pipeline broad enough to encompass social enterprise endeavors: leaders, managers, vendors, boards, board members, and community members who would like to participate in the food system. Example course topics include the following:

• **Creating 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations**
  - Targeted toward audiences involved in farmers market or other social enterprise sector leadership who would benefit from understanding the advantages of nonprofit.
  - Especially relevant to farmers markets who need to shift due to changes in operational complexity.

• **Building a Great Board of Directors**
  - Targeted toward audiences who want to create, maintain, or change aspects of their governance structure.
especially relevant to board members, chambers of commerce, municipal leaders, farmers markets leaders, and other organizations in the social enterprise sector.

- Developing a Succession Plan for Your Organization
  - Targeted toward audiences who want to develop a plan to help mitigate future issues.
  - Especially relevant to long-term leadership of farmers markets and other social enterprises.

- Sector-Specific Grant Prospecting, Recruiting Sponsors, and Generating Revenue
  - Targeted to meet the needs of specific audiences who would like strategies for, applying for grants, bringing in multiple revenue streams, etc.
  - Especially relevant to farmers markets and other entities within the social sector, such as municipally-run, for-profit, and nonprofit.

- Vendor and Volunteer Recruitment
  - Targeted toward audiences involved in new initiatives.
  - Especially relevant to farmers markets in the early stages of development and planning.

These recommendations may assist individuals or groups involved in leading social enterprise initiatives, such as farmers markets, cooperatives, and organizations involved in the short food supply chain. It may also be relevant to people involved in Cooperative Extension and land grant universities. People involved in local government and municipalities can learn more about how farmers markets leadership interacts with local government leadership and processes.
Chapter Summary

The findings from this study, organized by the research questions and two objectives, have been presented in this chapter. The findings were summarized, making connections to leadership frameworks: adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) and the principles of good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011). Study limitations were described, and theoretical implications were discussed. Recommendations for practice and future research were provided.

All in all, this study gathered data from farmers markets leaders across Virginia. This study provided people involved with Virginia farmers market leadership an opportunity to discuss farmers markets: past, current, and future. As part of the local food system, farmers market leadership have opportunity and power to help change the local food system from within the system.
REFERENCES


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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Southern SARE Research Grant Proposal

Farmers Market Leadership: Factors contributing to Success and Failure

Abstract

Farmers markets play an important role within a sustainable agriculture system, connecting community, place, food networks, farmers, and economic development. Since 1994 the number of farmers markets has grown dramatically, increasing by 490%. However, many farmers markets fail, and it is not clear why. This proposal addresses this gap in our knowledge. For such an important resource, little is known concerning: How does farmers market leadership influence factors contributing to success and failure?

This research project documents the growth or contraction of farmers markets in Virginia, uncovers patterns or trends contributing to the success and failure, aligns these findings through seven lenses for analyzing leadership and social enterprises, and disseminates these research findings. The outcomes of this research will provide valuable insights on building sustainable farmers markets, thus creating more resilience for a sustainable agriculture system. These findings can help inform planning of future resources, such as mobile farmers markets as well as identify recommendations for farmers markets in decline. Community stakeholders, local food movements, and small farmers benefit. Understanding how leadership influences farmers markets will lead to improved profitability of farmers/ranchers and enhance the quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. Although these findings are specific to Virginia, the research may have broader implications for similar geographical regions and states.

Key words: farmers markets, sustainable agriculture, leadership, social enterprise, farmers market failure, farmers market success

Statement of Problem; Rationale and Justification

The purpose of this project is to study the influences of leadership on Virginia Farmers Markets (FMs) to better understand factors contributing to FMs' success and failure. U.S. FMs have experienced significant growth over the past 20 years. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) listed 8,687 FMs in the U.S., a more than 490% growth since 1994 (USDA AMS, 2017). This increase has been attributed to multiple social and political forces, such as local food movements (Brown, 2001), alternative food networks (Kerton & Sinclair, 2010), farm to table movements (Herrick, 2010), and farm to school programs (Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016). In addition to socio-politically driven food initiatives, community stakeholders often include FMs in local/regional resource planning: Community -based food systems (Bendfeldt et al., 2011); local, rural, and urban economic development (Brown & Miller, 2008; Food Desert Task Force, 2014; See also U.S. House of Representatives, 1975); and community resilience (King, 2008).
While FMs are considered an important junction for community, food movements, and small farmers, some markets fail; there is little research to indicate why. A group of researchers studied nine FMs in Oregon, which closed between 2003-2004; these FMs represented 15% of the total (Stephenson et al., 2008). They attributed FM failure to five factors: Number of vendors, product availability, lack of revenue, low manager salary or volunteer management, and high manager turnover. These findings focus heavily on infrastructure, and it comes as no surprise that manager experience and/or revenue contribute to success or failure of an enterprise. The study ignores other influences, such as leadership and governance, and the complexity of social movements, government, farmers, vendors, and communities in one space. Jackson, Nicoll, and Roy (2018) developed a framework, building on the work of Keith Grint, to study leadership in social enterprises through the following six lenses: (1) person, (2) position, (3) process, (4) performance, (5) place, and (6) purpose. Adding onto this framework, an additional lens includes (7) population or intended audience. Analyzing FM Leadership from these seven perspectives offers a rich contextual view into social, cultural, and political influences of leadership’s contributions to success and failure.

Farmers Markets are an important component for supporting local and regional economic development, sustainable agriculture, food ecologies, and direct marketing avenues for small farmers. Examining the influences of leadership on Virginia FMs will provide valuable insight into planning and organizing future services, such as mobile farmers markets, as well as identifying and making recommendations for FMs in decline. Understanding how leadership influences FMs will lead to improved profitability of farmers/ranchers and southern agriculture and enhance the quality of life for farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

**Objectives**

1. Documented growth or contraction of Farmers Markets in Virginia;
2. Uncovered patterns or trends in variables contributing to success or decline of FMs;
3. Aligned FM variables with the lenses for analyzing leadership and social enterprises; and
4. Built Capacity for future research and practice.
Appendix B: IRB-19-105-A-Farmers Market Leadership - Interview Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Virginia Tech Research Study on Farmers Markets

Hello! I am looking for people who are currently, or have previous experience with, running farmers markets in Virginia. I am contacting you because you have been listed at the point of contact for [farmers market], and I am hoping you can assist.

What is this study?
Running a farmers market involves balancing a complex set of needs and priorities. This research study, IRB 19-105, focuses on the influences of leadership and related factors that contribute to farmers market success or failure.

Who should participate?
Are you now, or have you ever been, actively involved in running a farmers market in Virginia?
Are you 18 years or older?
Are you willing to share insights into leading farmers market initiatives?

We want to learn from your farmers market experience to help improve the success of farmers markets. We invite you to participate in a recorded interview. Your participation is voluntary and will take approximately 45–60 minutes, sometime in the next couple of weeks. I can offer $50 compensation for your time.

Results from the interviews will be gathered and published as a report. The interview will be recorded; however, any personally identifying information collected as a part of the study will remain confidential and anonymous in any reporting.

If you are interested or have more questions about the study, please contact me at jama@vt.edu or 434-989-8669. Also, if you have suggestions of others who might be willing to talk about their leadership experiences, please let me know.

Thank you for considering participating in this study! I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Jama Coartney
Virginia Tech
Appendix C: Phone recruitment Protocol

IRB-19-105-B-Farmers Market Leadership - Recruitment Phone Sample Script

“Hello, my name is [name]. I am with Virginia Tech and we are conducting research on farmers markets. On the web, you’re listed as the point of contact for [Farmers market name]. Do you have a few minutes to discuss participating in a future interview?”

[Wait for an affirmative response before proceeding. If this person prefers to talk another time, ask what time would be better and schedule a time.]

“Running a farmers market involves balancing a complex set of needs and priorities. This research study focuses on the influences of leadership and factors that contribute to farmers market success and failure.”

“I am calling to identify someone who is:
   ● actively involved in running a farmers market,
   ● 18 years or older, and
   ● willing to share their insights on leading farmers market initiatives.

I am hoping that you—or someone you know—are willing to be interviewed. The recorded interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes and occur sometime in the next couple of weeks. It can be by phone or Zoom. The interviewee will receive $50 compensation for their time. I can provide additional information, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.”

[Wait for response. Address the questions/concerns of the individual.]

[Follow-up Question]
“Do you have any suggestions of others involved in leading this market, or another market in Virginia, who might be willing to talk about their leadership experiences?”

[Wait for response.]

[Schedule an interview time, if appropriate. Ask for the best way to send additional information.]

“Thank you for your time. I appreciate your considering this request.”

The informed consent sheet can be used to respond to questions and concerns. The information can be sent to the contact in their preferred communication format.
Appendix D: Follow up email recruitment

IRB-19-105-G-Informed Consent Email

Subject Line: Virginia Tech Research Study on Farmers Markets–Additional Information

This email includes additional information about Virginia Tech’s Research Study on Farmers Markets, IRB 19-105. The study focuses on the influences of leadership and related factors that contribute to farmers market success or failure.

There are two PDF documents attached to this email. The first document is an Informed Consent Sheet, which provides additional detail about the purpose of the study, who can participate, and what participants can expect. The second document is a w-9 form that will need to be filled out and submitted in order to receive $50 compensation for participating in the study.

If you are interested in participating, have questions about the study, or are having difficulty accessing the attachments, please contact me at jama@vt.edu or 434-989-8669.

Thank you for considering participating in this study! I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Jama Coartney
Virginia Tech

[Attachments]
Appendix E: Informed Consent Sheet

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Consent to Take Part in a Research Study
Title of research study: IRB #19-105 Farmers’ Markets Leadership: Factors contributing to success and failure

Principal Investigator: Dr. Eric K. Kaufman 540-231-6258 or ekaufman@vt.edu
Other study contact: Jama S. Coartney 434-989-8669 or jama@vt.edu

Key Information: The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
We invite you to take part in a research study because you have been involved with a farmers market in Virginia and are able to provide insight on related leadership.

What should I know about being in a research study?
- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

What should I know about this research study?
The purpose is to explore the relationship of farmers market leadership and factors contributing to markets’ success and failure. This information will help more people understand what contributes to farmers markets success and failure. Study participation is limited to those 18 years of age or older.

How long will the research last and what will I need to do?
We expect that your participation in this research study will last approximately 45–60 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about your experience with the farmers market. There may be a brief session to follow-up and clarify some of your responses. More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under “What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?”. There are no known risks to participating in this study. There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include improving the understanding of how leadership influences farmers markets.

Detailed Information: The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.
Who can I talk to?
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has harmed you, talk to the research team by phone at 434-989-8669 or 540-231-6258 or by email at jama@vt.edu or ekaufman@vt.edu.

This research has been reviewed by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may communicate with them at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu, if:

- You have questions about your rights as a research subject;
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team;
- You cannot reach the research team; or
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team to provide feedback about this research.

How many people will be studied?

We plan to include about 20 to 25 people in the entire study, each representing different perspectives of farmers market leadership in Virginia.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You will be asked a series of questions to reflect on your experience with the farmers market. The interview, conducted by Jama Coartney, will occur over the phone or by video conference. It will be recorded and last approximately 45–60 minutes. This recording will be transcribed to text. There may be a brief phone or video conference session to follow-up and clarify some of the responses provided, which will also be recorded.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time, for any reason, and it will not be held against you. If you decide to leave the research, contact the investigator so that the investigator can remove your interview from the study.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

The session will be recorded and transcribed using Zoom’s automated transcription and a research team member. The recording of the interview, all paper and electronic copies of the interview transcript, and the demographic data will be stored securely when they are not being used. This information will be erased or shredded at the end of this research.

Your identity, and that of any individuals who you mention, will be kept confidential at all times and will be known only to the research team. We will make every effort to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information only to people who have a need to review this information. The recordings will be stored on password-protected computers. It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech will view this study’s collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for overseeing the protection of human subjects who are involved in research.

The results of this research study may be presented in summary form at conferences, in presentations, reports to the sponsor, academic papers, and as part of a thesis/dissertation.
Can I be removed from the research without my OK?

The person in charge of the research study or the sponsor can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include delays in arranging an interview or technical issues that prevent accurate transcription.

What else do I need to know?

This research is being funded by Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research Education, a U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grants and outreach program.

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will receive $50 for your time and effort. In order to receive payment, you will need to complete and submit a W-9 form for Virginia Tech. This payment can only be made to individuals and is not available to a business entity. A copy of this form will be provided at the time of the interview.
Appendix F: Interview Guide for Farmers Market Leadership

Pre-Session Activities

- The interviewer summarizes the purpose of the study.
- The interviewer reviews the Consent Sheet.
- “Do you acknowledge your questions have been answered and you agree to voluntary participate in this research, including being recorded?”
- Participant must acknowledge verbal consent, which the interviewer documents.
- Begin recording.

Leadership Lens—Place, Process, and Performance

1. Tell me a little bit about the farmers market: Where was/is it located? What was/is it like?
   Further prompts, if needed:
   1.a. How was the parking? Hours/days of operation? Number of vendors? Physical infrastructure—electricity, bathrooms, covered areas?
   1.b. What aspects of location help/ed or hinder/ed the market?
   1.c. How did the market get started? About what year?
   1.d. What was the market’s relationship with other organizations? What kinds of partnerships/grants with other organizations?
   1.e. How important is/was it for the farmer’s market to generate funds to sustain itself? What kinds of bills had to be paid? Rent? Utilities, employees, advertising?

Leadership Lens—Position and Person

2. Tell me a little bit about how you became involved with the farmers market?
   Further prompts, if needed:
   2.a. Were you involved from the beginning? Early planning? Later stages? What prompted your involvement?
   2.b. What kinds of activities are/were you involved in? Writing plans? Applying for grants? Establishing a location? Recruiting vendors? Dual roles of manager/vendor? Vendor/board member?
   2.c. Was the person in the role of market manager paid or volunteer? How was that position established? Did it evolve over time? What criteria was used for identifying or hiring the market manager?

Leadership Lens—Process, Person, Purpose

3. Tell me about the community surrounding the farmers market, such as vendors and the people involved with the running of the market.
   Further prompts, if needed:
   3.a. What was the background of the people who initially started the market? Farmers, community members, private interests, local government?
   3.c. How active were any of these initial people throughout the market’s lifespan?
   3.d. During your involvement, who were the strongest influencers?

Leadership Lens—Process and Purpose

4. Thinking about the customers for the market, are/were they mostly community members? Why do you think they are/were coming to the market?
   Further prompts, if needed:
   4.a. What kinds of community interest do/did you see? What was customer attendance like?
   4.b. Further Prompts: Support the farmers? Get fresh produce? Find a bargain? Socialize?
4.c. How did this compare with the vendors? Were they there for similar or different reasons?  
4.d. Were there city planning or economic development aspects for having a market? What was the process for tracking and pursuing those goals?  
4.e. Did you notice the goals or reasons for having the market, shifting, changing, or evolving over time? What factors contributed to the changes you observed?  
4.f. How well did the advertising or promoting of the market match with community and vendor interests?  

Leadership Lenses—Process and Performance  
5. As a farmers market forms and evolves, there are decisions that have to be made, such as changes to the rules or policies. Think about a particular decision that needed to be made.  
How would you describe the decision-making process?  
Further prompts, if needed:  
5.a Was that typical or unique?  
5.b What other types of decisions needed to be made?  
5.c How did most of the decisions get made? Committees? Informally? Formally?  
5.d How did decisions get communicated to everyone involved?  
5.e How were the people who needed to be involved in decision-making included in the process?  
5.f. [If appropriate] How was the decision made to close or suspend operations of the market?  
5.g. What do you think were the strongest influences for making this decision?  
Further Prompts: Lack of interest? Energy/motivation? Funding?  

Summary and Closing Questions:  
● “Now I would like to summarize the main points you presented. First, you mentioned…”  
  (present summary of main points here)  
○ “Does this capture what we have discussed?”  
○ “Is there anything we haven’t talked about that you believe is important to add?”  
● “Do you have any suggestions of others involved in leading this market, or another market in Virginia, who might be willing to talk about their leadership experiences?”  
● “I may be back in touch for a brief follow-up in case I need more clarity on a point.”  
● Close the interview and thank the participant for their participation.
Appendix G: Tax Exempt Status and Farmers Markets

Factors Contributing to the Confusion over Ownership, Governance, and Management of Farmers Markets

- Land Ownership
  - Private entity Lease
  - Private entity Yrly Waiver
  - Municipality Lease
  - Municipality owned

- Market Facilities
  - Pop-up
  - Permanent


## Appendix H: Matrix of Leadership Frameworks and Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Adaptive Leadership</th>
<th>Good to Great Leadership Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choosing a Market (vendors)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needing a Determined Champion</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in Pairs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a Community Anchor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owning a Market</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Succession</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving the Initial Startup</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing What to Measure</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-constr. Ldrsh.—Community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-constr. Ldrsh.—Vendor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolving the Purpose</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging Purpose to Foreground Other Issues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This matrix provides an overview of the farmers market study findings juxtaposed with three leadership frameworks: social enterprise Leadership Hexad (Jackson et al., 2018), adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009), and good-to-great leadership (Collins, 2011). The matrix includes the four most frequently appearing activities from adaptive leadership and the three most frequently appearing principles from good-to-great leadership.