DEFINITION OF PLACE AND NEGOTIATION OF BELONGING

FOLLOWING HISPANIC IMMIGRATION:

GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE, 1990-2016

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the early 1990s, Georgetown, Delaware has become the destination for

Guatemalan immigrants seeking employment in local agro-processing industries. The

sudden appearance of newcomers with unfamiliar faces and foreign habits

overwhelmed this small rural town already grappling with deteriorating housing stock,

a stagnating economy, and an aging demographic. Facing changes it had not

envisioned or prepared for, leaders and residents struggled to maintain the historic

identity of the town while debating what the town's future would be. This study looks

at the ways long-term residents of Georgetown understood and reacted to changes in

their sense of place and belonging – changes often attributed to the arrival of

immigrants who did not fit into the town's notion of place. Semi-structured

interviews, archival analysis of local newspaper articles and editorials, government

documents, and promotional materials were used to uncover the narratives and

rhetoric Georgetown residents employed when addressing real and perceived changes

to the town's identity. Often conflating the town's housing problems, as well as a

decline in the aesthetics and character of the town's cherished small-town charm, with

the challenges of adjusting to the Guatemalan immigrant community, led to two

decades of contentious negotiations. The town wrestled with how to adjust to the

growing presence of immigrant neighbors they viewed as "out of place". Narratives

used by long-term residents often portrayed the immigrant newcomers as lacking the legal status, cultural knowledge and linguistic skills needed to belong in Georgetown. While Georgetown has made considerable progress in recent years to ease tensions, this research demonstrates how clinging to previously held notions of place and identity, rather than acknowledging and integrating its new diversity, can impede a small town's ability to effectively manage demographic, economic, social and spatial change. These challenges are not unique to Georgetown. They are faced by communities across Sussex County and the rest of the nation.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Immigration trends in the United States since the mid-1980s have shown an increasing

number of new immigrants entering the country, many of whom are from Central and

South America, and increasingly Asia. Unlike earlier waves of immigrants who settled

in large cities, this newest wave is bypassing traditional gateway cities to settle in

towns and small cities across many parts of rural America (Balassiano and

Maldonado, 2014; Carr et al., 2012; Donato et al. 2007). This shift in settlement

patterns has brought with it rapid changes in the social, political, and economic

geographies of places that may not have experienced any in-migration of newcomers

for many decades (Balassiano and Maldonado, 2014; Leitner, 2012; Nelson and

Heimstra, 2008; Price, 2012). The present study engages with recent scholarship on

immigration, belonging, and place by examining the ways in which the community of

Georgetown, Delaware has navigated recent changes in their sense of place and

identity since 1990, following the arrival of significant numbers of newcomers, in

particular a sizeable group of Guatemalan immigrants.

While Georgetown, as well as Sussex County Delaware in general, had already been

dealing with some of the impacts of development due to the expansion of tourist and

agro-processing industries in that part of the state, the seemingly abrupt arrival of

immigrants from Central America took everyone by surprise (Downes, 1994;

Horowitz and Miller, 1999; Borland, 2001; Caldwell, 2006). Similar to many towns

across rural America, growth in the food processing industry in central Sussex County

made Georgetown a desirable location for new immigrants seeking employment

opportunities and available housing (Borland, 2001; Miraftab and McConnell, 2008;

Lichter et al., 2009). The somewhat simultaneous in-migration of both immigrants and

native-born retirees from surrounding states has created new needs in housing and

service provision in Sussex County, a situation that parallels observed linked

migration patterns in other parts of the country (Nelson et al., 2010; Nelson and

Nelson, 2010, Sussex County, 2008). The arrival of so many new faces in and around

Georgetown spurred anxieties and heated debate amongst non-immigrant residents

over the rapidly changing character, look, and future of Georgetown (Caldwell, 2006;

Escobar, 1999; Gaffney, 2007).

Following appeals by scholars for a deeper understanding of the influence of local

context in immigrant experiences (Ellis and Almgren, 2009; Griffith, 2008; Platts-

Fowler and Robinson, 2014; Mendoza ad Moren-Alegret, 2012; Phillips and

Robinson, 2015; Walker, 2015), this study explores how Georgetown dealt with

demographic, social, and cultural changes brought on by the arrival of immigrants,

changes that challenged long held understandings of its place identity. Employing the

narrative construction of place and belonging as conceptual entryway, this study looks

at the ways that the non-immigrant residents of Georgetown perceived, described and grappled with changes to the town's character. Thus, this thesis looks not only at how has Georgetown changed as a place since the 1990s, but how residents understood and described the reasons for unwanted changes in editorials submitted to the local newspaper, in conversations at town council meetings, in town planning documents, and in personal interviews and field observations. In particular, it looks at the narratives, or specific words, phrases and stories that local residents relied on over the last 30 years when discussing Georgetown's past, present and future. In order to get at the ways that place and belonging have been (re)negotiated in Georgetown since the 1990s, the data in this analysis will treat Georgetown as dynamic or constantly evolving place; thus, as other scholars have pointed out, to understand the process through which Georgetown grappled with the loss and reshaping of its identity we must see place and place identity as a multivocal, always-becoming construct (Price, 2004; Stroud and Jengels, 2014; Tuan, 1991).

The remainder of this chapter will serve as the backdrop for this study. First, I will detail an overview of the literature on immigration to and within the United States in order to set the broader context within which Georgetown's story has unfolded. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Georgetown's history from its founding to present. While the study period of this research is focused on the period of Georgetown's history from 1990 to the present, a longer view of the town's history is necessary to fully set the context for the study.

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical approach used in this study through an engagement with the geographic literatures on place and belonging. Here, belonging will be cast as an inherently geographic phenomenon which is determined through the ongoing struggle to define what, and who, belongs in a particular place (Antonsich, 2010; Leitner, 2012). Further, this study draws on scholarship that views place as an ongoing process, a bundle of power relations, emotional attachments, material conditions, and memories that are socially negotiated (Massey, 2005; Price, 2004; Nelson and Heimstra, 2008) and derived through competing narratives of identity, history, and belonging (Greenop and Darchen, 2016; Fuchs, 2015; Tilley, 2006; Price, 2012).

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and analytical approach used in this study, highlighting the importance of identifying common narrative threads in each set of data. Findings from each data collection method are presented in Chapter 4. Discussion and final analysis are presented in Chapter 5, concluding with final remarks and directions for future research and work.

1.2 Increasing Socio-Spatial Diversity in American Immigration

In recent decades, the United States has experienced a shift away from historic settlement patterns and national origins of the country's immigrants. Where in the early 20th century most immigrants to the U.S were from parts of Europe, and often settled in the major industrial cities on the coasts and in the Midwest, by the end of that century immigrants were coming from Asia, Latin America, Africa and the

Middle East, and began settling in big cities as well as many small cities and towns in rural areas of the country (Hirschman and Massey, 2008). In part, this change in origins and settlement patterns can be connected to changes in government policies. For instance, in 1965 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act (also referred to as the Hart-Cellar Act), a national quota system limiting the number of immigrants from non-European countries since the 1920s was removed (Hirschman and Massey, 2008).

In addition, and at about the same time, in 1964 the Bracero Program was ended. The program permitted contract labor from Mexico to enter the US to work in agriculture. This program benefitted growers by allowing them to look beyond local labor pools which demanded higher wages to recruit cheap and highly exploitable, temporary foreign labor (Mitchell, 2012). This created a dependency on cheap labor in the agricultural sector of the economy, a dependency that continued after the end of the Bracero Program. To this day industrial farms and recruitment chains continue to seek out low wage laborers from abroad. Without the previously legal avenue of importing contract foreign labor, and with farms across America still seeking migrant workers, the once documented laborers recruited under the Bracero Program were often replaced by undocumented migrants (Mitchell, 2012).

The years between 1965 and the present saw a dramatic increase in the total number of new immigrants entering the country annually (see Figure 1.1). As the total immigrant population grew, the ethnic composition of the United States' immigrant population

transitioned away from individuals primarily from Europe and Canada, to increasing numbers of immigrants from Latin America (Mexico, in particular) and South and East Asia (Brown and Stepler, 2016; Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015; Warren, 2016). Further, as the ethnic makeup of America's immigrant population shifted towards more immigrants from Latin America and Asia, from the1980s forward, immigrants entering the United States began to bypass traditional gateway cities in New York, California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois, setting in motion a transformation of America's social geography (see Figure 1.2).
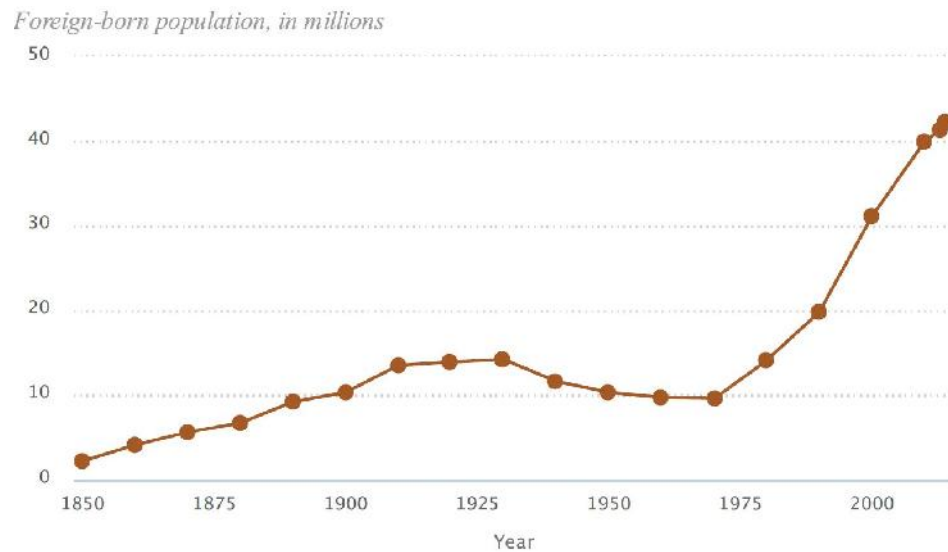
Figure 1.1 Foreign Born population, in millions, by year (Brown and Stepler, 2016)

% of immigrants residing in the U.S. born in ...
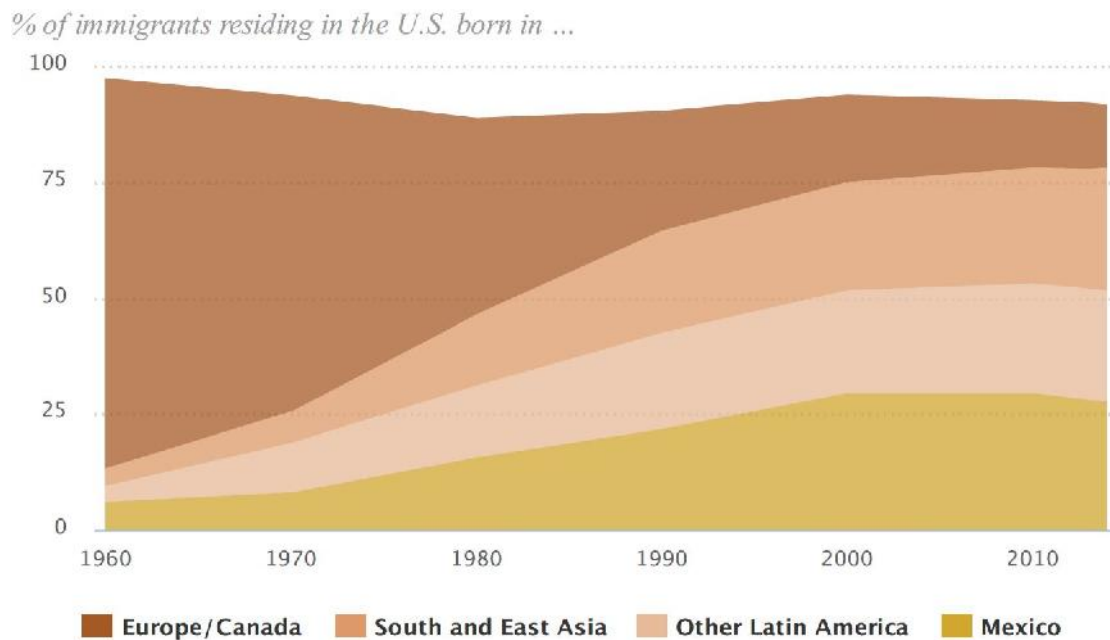
Figure 1.2 Makeup of US Immigrant Population, by year and origin (Brown and
Stepler, 2016)

Immigrants in the most recent wave are settling in parts of the country that,

traditionally, had not received newcomers for many decades (Griffith, 2008; Massey

and Capoferro, 2008). Massey and Capoferro (2008) argue that changes in border

policy are key to understanding the impetus for this change in settlement patterns. In

the 1980s, policies which built barriers across heavily trafficked parts of the US-

Mexico border, as well as increased border patrolling, relocated undocumented

immigrant pathways from southern California to less fenced and patrolled areas along

the Mexican border with Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. This shift opened up the

South and Midwest to new immigration and introduced immigrants to states that had

previously not experienced any significant foreign migration (Massey and Capoferro,

2008).

Changes in border policies, however, do not fully account for the observed increased ethnic diversity of America's immigrant population. Since 1970 manufacturing and agro-processing have relocated from urban areas into rural areas throughout the nation, notably in Midwestern and Southeastern states where labor laws were less restrictive and industries dependent on agricultural products nearby could operate at lower costs. This brought into being a new pull into rural America away from the Southwest (Cravey, 1997; Griffith, 2008; Olivios and Sandoval, 2015; Hirschman and Massey, 2008). Equally important, and often overlooked, was the emergence of new service jobs created by the migration of middle and upper-class retirees into rural areas (Nelson and Nelson, 2010).

In many parts of the country, older citizens were moving out of cities and suburbs to retire in rural regions and towns with more amenities and lower costs of living (Nelson and Nelson, 2010). With this movement of retirees came growth in service industries—industries that often relied on cheaper, often immigrant labor (Nelson et al., 2010) The simultaneous expansion of both amenity-driven service and agro-processing (particularly meatpacking) industries outside of US cities created a further need for low-wage, low-skill workers, making these rural areas attractive to new immigrants. These low-skilled jobs tended to attract more Hispanic workers. This may account for the differences in settlement patterns observed between Hispanic immigrants and immigrants arriving from countries in Asia, who tend to be better educated and settle in more urban areas (Massey and Capoferro, 2008).

1.2.1 The Impacts of New Rural America

The in-migration of both Hispanic immigrants and wealthier retirees to rural towns, coupled with the long-term out-migration of younger native-born residents, brought into being a rapidly changing rural social landscape. The outcomes of new in-migration have brought opportunities to many rural areas in the United States. The 2010 Census showed that Hispanics accounted for the bulk of new growth in rural areas in the 2000s (Carr, Lichter, and Keflas, 2012). These new residents contributed to rising tax and employment bases, and turned around population decline in many areas (Carr, Lichter, and Keflas, 2012; Donato et al., 2007). The settlement of younger workers and families to rural areas also provided a much-needed injection of younger people, helping to alleviate an age imbalance which had shifted towards an older, non-working age population (Carr, Lichter, and Keflas, 2012).

However, this new population and economic growth has been double-edged for some communities. Many towns which became new destinations for immigrants found themselves ill-equipped to deal with the social service needs of a new, larger population that was often economically disadvantaged, had low educational attainment rates, and low rates of English language proficiency (Carr, Lichter, and Keflas, 2012; Donato et al., 2007). Small towns, which lacked the pre-existing social infrastructure and bilingual resources already in place in traditional gateway cities, struggled to fulfill the health, housing, and service needs of newcomers (Donato et al., 2007; Martone et al., 2014). In many cases, the economic benefits associated with revitalized labor markets in rural areas have not been fully realized in new immigrant

destinations. Job creation in low wage industries alone, like agro-processing, does not generate rapid upward mobility that would result in incoming immigrant populations to be lifted out of lower rungs of the labor market. In many cases, then, the rapid expansion of a town's population as result of immigrant settlement does not provide adequate financial increases to cash-strapped towns that need to pay for expansions in social services, local education, or emergency provision needed for a growing population (Dalla, Ellis, and Cramer, 2005).

Beyond presenting new economic opportunities and challenges, the ethnic and socio-economic diversity that new immigrants created in small towns ignited fierce debates about fairness in the provisions of social benefits, crime, and future community stability. Immigrants were often contradictorily portrayed by native-born residents as lazy, non-working drains on local social services, and as a threat to native residents' job security (Price, 2012). In many small towns, native-born residents often raised the specter of growing crime rates associated with new immigrant settlement, whether or not there was any true increase in local crime rates (Carr, Lichter, and Keflas, 2005; Martone et al., 2014). In many locales, immigrants were portrayed not just as a threat to residents' jobs and safety, but as an existential crisis in residents' sense of community, identity, and culture (Price, 2012).

The response to perceived challenges of new immigration were greatly varied from location to location (Walker, 2015). Some places relied on invocations of a shared sense of history founded in America's immigrant past to provide an impetus for local

governments and institutions to advocate for newcomers (Walker, 2014). In many locations, inclusionary policies and actions have been fought for and justified via the argument that immigrants and their families provided important benefits to local communities and their economies (Bauder, 2016; Carpio, Irazabal, and Pulido, 2011). In other parts of the country, local and state governments have imposed ordinances and laws targeted at tackling undocumented immigration (Carpio, Irazabal, and Pulido, 2011; Walker, 2015). Local ordinances have established penalties for landowners who rent to undocumented immigrants and new protocols between local police departments and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. By transferring immigration enforcement powers to local jurisdictions, these new policing agreements allowed local police departments to detain immigrants unable to produce documentation, which quickly moved detainees into federal deportation proceedings (Bauder, 2016; Walker, 2015). While intended to impact only undocumented immigrants, these actions, along with many others, have increased discriminatory practices and immigrant anxieties in many towns across the nation (Carpio, Irazabal, and Pulido, 2011; Walker, 2015).

While inclusionary and exclusionary policies like these have dramatic effects on immigrant experiences, it is commonly understood that time and contact between residents, new and old, would have a positive impact on the future integration of the community (Martone et al., 2014; Morawska, 2009; Smith, 2008). While this observation lessens fears that new immigrant residents will fail to assimilate over time,

the appearance of social and spatial segregation in the places where new immigrants have settled presented roadblocks to communities successfully incorporating them. Studies have shown that residential segregation in rural, new immigrant destinations is often much higher than in established urban immigrant destinations (Lichter, et al. 2009). This spatial separation is further widened when natives and newcomers avoid interacting in shared social space (Carr, Lichter, and Keflas, 2012). A study by Nelson and Heimstra (2008) found that even when natives and newcomers used the same spaces, such as grocery stores, differences in working hours often led to a temporal mismatch, meaning that while a space may be used by both groups, it is rarely ever shared at the same time. Thus, there were few opportunities for face-to-face interaction in part because immigrants had different schedules and in part because they tended to patronize different businesses.

It was in the backdrop of these national trends that Georgetown, Delaware's own story unfolded. It is a story in which a small, mostly white, rural town in southern Delaware found itself scrambling to understand and navigate changes in its own sense of place during the rapid arrival of Central American immigrants. The remainder of this chapter will cover Georgetown's history in order to provide the context in which to understand these changes.

1.3   Georgetown, Delaware: history and change

Georgetown is a small town located in Delaware's southernmost, and most rural, county, Sussex County (see Figure 1.3). In recent decades, the town and county have

found themselves at the intersection of numerous, rapid changes. According to the 2010 Census, Georgetown's population was 6422; having grown by 101.4% since 1990 (US Census Bureau, 2017). Of this population, nearly half are of Hispanic descent (US Census Bureau, 2017).
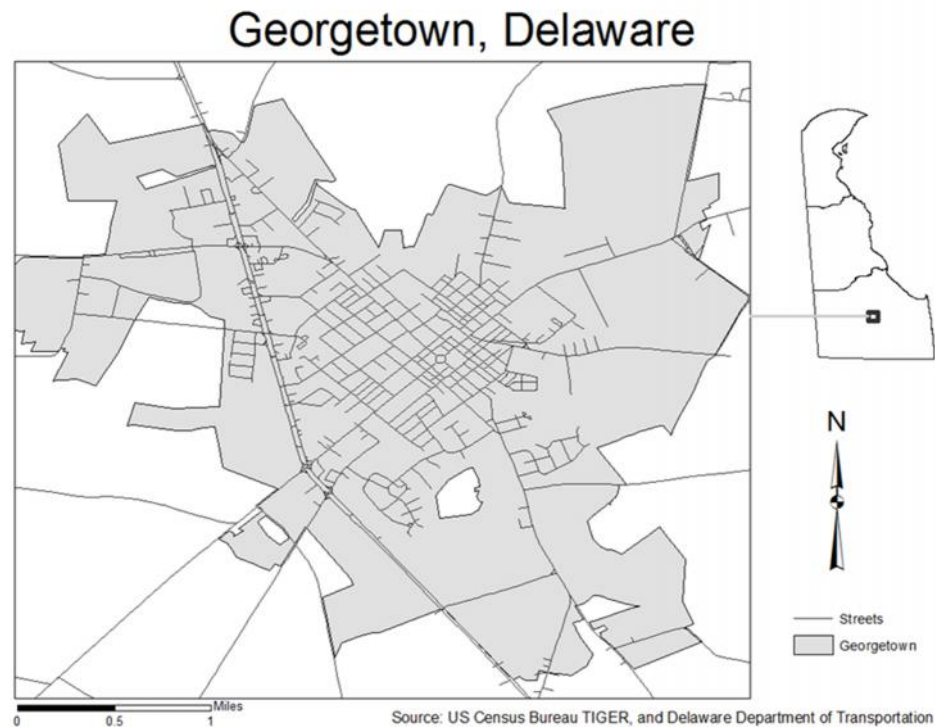
Figure 1.3 Georgetown, Delaware. Produced in ESRI ArcMap. Data from US Census Bureau and Delaware Department of Transportation.

However, it was not always this way. In the past few decades, the settlement of predominantly Guatemalan immigrants seeking employment in the county's expanding chicken processing industry rapidly transformed the small, majority white

town (Horowitz and Miller, 1999; Borland, 2001; Caldwell, 2006; Gaffney, 2007). This transformation was not without tensions. Already facing a crisis of deteriorating housing stock, and an aging population, the rather sudden appearance of Guatemalan newcomers threw the town into a prolonged conflict over its future (Caldwell, 2006). As will be outlined in this study, this conflict centered on anxieties surrounding the loss of Georgetown's history and character, changes in community relations, and the drive to reinvigorate the town economically. To understand this story, we first need to look back into Georgetown's past.

1.3.1   Georgetown: early history

Unlike other southern Delaware towns in post-colonial America, Georgetown was not established as the result of early trade routes or settlement patterns. Instead, it was a creation of political necessity. Citing difficulties in travelling across a county that was at the time mostly rural, residents petitioned the Delaware State legislature in 1791 to move the county seat from Lewes – a coastal town on the counties eastern boundary – to a more central location. After only a few months, legislators identified a property known as John Pettyjohn's Old Field as the ideal site for a new county seat, and the town of Georgetown was founded (Wade, 1975). With its central location, Georgetown grew to be described as being 16 miles from anywhere. As legislators and lawyers moved into the area and the town quickly became the hub of Sussex County, characteristics which have long served as the cornerstone of Georgetown's identity. The town grew rapidly. By the 1850s the population had grown to around 400

residents, and had established itself as a political and financial hub for the county (Wade, 1975).

According to Wade (1975), a local historian, in its first 50 years of existence, the town struggled to determine exactly what the character of Georgetown was to be (Wade, 1975). Early on, many of the political battles in town were centered on controlling and limiting the free roaming of pigs and other livestock within the town limits; this concern highlighted a growing clash between the town's farmers and burgeoning professional class (Wade, 1975). Wade contends that arguments over the matter were a part of fierce debate over whether or not the town was to maintain a pastoral, country lifestyle and character, or become defined by its growing professional class.

With the establishment of self-governance, granted by the state in 1851, came the town's ability to raise taxes, elect its own officials, and use tax dollars to make improvements (Wade, 1975). This, in turn, initiated an effort to beautify the town, starting with a campaign to plant grass and trees in the town's central square, and then to establishing this public space as a park. This park remains today and serves as the site of the town hall, county government, and state and local courts. Now referred to as "The Circle", this space has been the political, economic, and symbolic focal point of the town's identity (Wade, 1975).

Following the Civil War, Georgetown found itself in yet another battle over the town's character and future as the town grappled with its short-lived manufacturing boom (Wade, 1975). While this boom brought investment and industry, it rekindled debates

among residents over what type of place, kind of town, Georgetown was to be. Wade

(1975, p. 41) noted that industry didn't really pick up until the arrival of Charles H.

Treat, a manufacturer from Maine. He arrived in Georgetown and founded the Treat

Manufacturing Company, which specialized in manufacturing "wooden novelties" and

the canning of vegetables. The boom of manufacturing industry in Georgetown

brought with it a sudden burst of in-migration of workers and company directors. The

early successes of Treat, combined with the growing labor force, led to the

establishment of multiple other factories.

According to Wade (1975), the large presence of newcomers created new tensions in

town because long-term residents resented the appointment of non-local company

directorships. Further, the creation of a new working-class neighborhood named

Kimmeytown on the northeastern side of town became a source of class tensions.

Wade (1975, p. 47) states that "this group, consisting almost entirely of factory

employees, made their homes 'on the other side of the tracks' in 'Kimmeytown'," and

remained largely unassimilated from the rest of the town. According to Wade (1975),

the presence of a new social group, many of whom were not from Georgetown,

created cleavages in the community between industrial workers and residents who

wanted Georgetown to retain its rural small-town identity. This tension eventually led

to the ouster of Charles H. Treat by residents of the community. With the ouster of

Treat, Wade contended, came the decline in manufacturing in Georgetown. With the

rejection of Georgetown as an industrial place, the town "settled into an existence as a

quiet, rural county seat and focal point for farmers from the surrounding Sussex County Area" and focused, instead, on the expanding its population with bankers, lawyers, and other professional and semi-professional workers in the county's administrative services (Wade (1975, p. 60).

From his vantage point in the mid-1970s, town historian, William Wade, claimed that Georgetown had changed little since the 1900s. During the first three quarters of the 20th century, the town continued to follow this pattern of growth, welcoming more law offices and court-focused businesses, banks, and a local community college. Wade argued that Treat's "dream of industrializing the county" once "threatened to subordinate the importance The Circle" (1975, p. 87). Georgetown, in his estimation and from his vantage point in the 1970s, would remain "a conservative community" whose identity was anchored to "The Circle, and the business and government institutions" housed in the "historic sphere" until the end of the century. While much of the early history of Georgetown is fundamentally about the effort of a growing, artificially established town to find its own identity, Wade (1975, p. 91) felt comfortable ending his retelling of the town's history with the following prediction:

> It seems probable that Georgetown will continue in the future to exhibit the same characteristics it has in the past. Time may work some change, just as the passage of time has muted the factionalism that was so much a part of Georgetown's early years, but it is unlikely that the character of the town will change.

In what is one of the few histories written about Georgetown, Wade envisioned

Georgetown as a place frozen in time, its identity clearly marked by history,

traditions, and a rural character. In his telling, the establishment of manufacturing,

and the low-income workers that came to the town with it, were deemed out-of-

place in a community defined by a professional class and county administrative

activities. Georgetown, Wade firmly asserted, would likely never move away

from this place identity.

1.3.2 Changing Times and the New Face(s) of Georgetown

Wade's prediction, it seems, could not have been more off the mark. For only a decade

later Georgetown was transformed once again, as the community entered a prolonged

crisis of deteriorating housing (concentrated heavily in Kimmeytown) and began to be

the recipient of a new immigrant population from Central America. The county as a

whole had been experiencing population growth, driven by the in-migration of retirees

to coastal towns and of immigrant laborers inland, and by a rapid increase in tourism

to the county's beaches (Hancock, 1976; Downes, 1994; Sussex County, 2008). The

foundation for countywide growth was laid by the completion of major highways,

which integrated the region into transportation networks that connected it to the major

metropolitan areas of the Mid-Atlantic. Downes (1994) argued that once connected to

major population centers, the county's beach amenities, in conjunction with national

trends towards nonmetropolitan and rural migration, led to a growing retiree

population and the conversion of farmland in the eastern half of the county into new

residential developments (see also, Gaffney, 2007; Sussex County, 2008, Veness et al., 2013).

A major change in Sussex County's agricultural labor structure set the stage for changes in Georgetown. For years, communities across Sussex had relied on seasonal migrant laborers to assist in its agricultural and seafood industries. Prior to the 1990s, seasonal migrants could be found in workers camps near agricultural plants. However, growth in the poultry industry, already a major force in the county's economy, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s (Diehl, 2009) created a greater need for a labor force of workers willing to work for low wages (Horowitz and Miller, 1999; Borland, 2001; Martin, 2009).

According to Martin (2009), poultry farming and processing is a 1.9-billion-dollar industry on the Delmarva Peninsula, with farms and plants located throughout Sussex County (owned by various companies). When Perdue Inc. bought the only poultry processing plant in Georgetown, then a family owned business called Swift and Company, it quickly exhausted local labor reserves that had traditionally come from Georgetown's African American community (Horowitz and Miller, 1999; Borland, 2001; Martin, 2009). Borland (2001), citing reports by Georgetown workers, notes that by 1993 Perdue's labor needs were so great that they offered bonuses to any worker that recruited another worker; this is a practice that fueled the linked migration of Guatemalans from San Marcos to Georgetown. This need for labor recruitment resulted in fairly rapid population growth, and changed Georgetown's ethnic makeup

from majority white in 1990, to Hispanics[1] making up nearly half of the population in

2010 (see Figure 1.4).
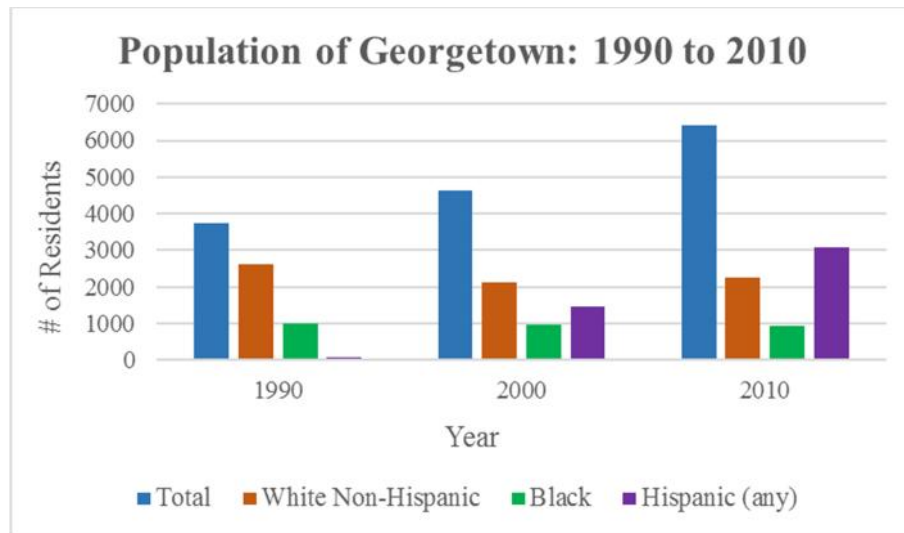
Figure 1.4 Ethnic composition of Georgetown Residents, between 1990 and 2010.
        Source, US Census Bureau

As the immigrant population first began arriving in Georgetown, they were coming

into a town which had just come off the heels of rapid expansion. In the late 1980s,

Georgetown had gone through a series of annexations which broke the historic

boundaries of the town, a one-mile circle with The Circle at its center, which had long

served as a source of pride to many in town (Pugliano, 2015). During this time, the

[1] Following the terminology used by the US Census Bureau, the term Hispanic will be
used throughout this thesis.

size of the town grew 152%, incorporating three apartment complexes, a housing development, and a shopping plaza, and the population grew by 56% (Pugliano, 2015). The motivations for the rapid expansion were economic. Georgetown had long suffered from a small tax base, due to a lack of industry in the town. The annexations were seen by town officials as a way of bringing new revenue into Georgetown, so that the town could fix some of its aging infrastructure and set in motion new economic development (Pugliano, 2015).

The abrupt increase of Hispanic immigration into Georgetown fueled anxieties over how the town would manage its new growth, and sparked new discussions about how to accept new diversity in town (Borland, 2001; Caldwell, 2006; Jacobson, 2014). The majority of the immigrant population in Georgetown was comprised of Guatemalan immigrants originating from rural parts of the state of San Marcos (Borland, 2001; Veness, 2011). These immigrants, many of whom were peasants of Mayan or indigenous descent, left Guatemala in the late 1980s to early 1990s to escape political violence and the ongoing Civil War, as well as crippling poverty (Borland, 2001; Serviam Media, 2006; Veness, 2011). The first arrivals from Guatemala tended to be single, young men looking for work in local agro-processing plants and on farms (Serviam Media, 2006). By the 2000s, the population shifted away from this initial group, towards more families.

As the immigrants moved into the county, many sought to out and found housing in Georgetown so that they would be walking distance from the one of the processing

plants in central Sussex County. As the Guatemalan population grew from 75 individuals to 1473 in 2000 (which many considered an undercount of the population [Sussex Countian, 1998b]), they quickly outpaced the availability of affordable, rental housing, leading to issues of overcrowding in deteriorating housing (Borland, 2001, Sussex Countian, 1994c). Concern over poor housing stock has remained an issue in Georgetown to this day.

Caldwell (2006), in a somewhat sensationalized article, noted that during the 1990s through the early 2000s there was a sense of resentment felt towards the new immigrant community. Despite Perdue's attempts to offer ESL classes at its Georgetown plant, and the establishment of La Esperanza and other Hispanic-oriented service agencies in the late 1990s, native-born residents increasingly felt uncomfortable with the language barrier between Georgetown's two populations (Blueprint Communities, 2015; Borland, 2001; Caldwell, 2006; Jacobson, 2014; Veness et al, 2013) Beyond linguistic challenges, the concentration of Guatemalan immigrants in many of the town's substandard, and overcrowded rental properties fueled worries about how the town was beginning to feel like a radically different place (Borland, 2001; Caldwell, 2006; Horowitz and Miller, 1997; Jacobson, 2014). In a report prepared for Georgetown, Veness, et al. (2013, p.5) found that while the majority of residents surveyed believed that Georgetown was a good place to live because of its history, and historical landmarks and small-town identity, some

residents complained about the "linguistic barriers, property degradation, and visual disorder that hinder communication, cultural integration, and civic pride."

While these sources pointed towards tensions in the 1990s resulting from Georgetown's abrupt diversification, in the last seven years the town has taken more proactive steps to working with the Guatemalan community. In 2012 and 2013, when Georgetown underwent extensive planning processes in which local business owners, visitors to the town, and residents of Georgetown were invited to identify key concerns in the town, several immigration-related issues emerged (Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Morning Star Publications, 2012). This planning processes produced the Georgetown Blueprint Community Revitalization Plan (Blueprint Communities, 2015) which identified beautifying public spaces, rehabilitating dilapidated houses, expanding recreational activities in town, and increasing immigrant and non-immigrant communication and finding a way to write Georgetown's new diversity into planning initiatives, as important steps in economically revitalizing the town. All of this was important to better positioning Georgetown to attract beach going summer tourists. Further, news articles published in the last 3 years have highlighted that not only have some of the cultural tensions eased in Georgetown, but there is also a growing recognition that the Hispanic community is essential to the region's economy (Fisher, 2014; Tyson, 2015).

Despite the town's wider acceptance of its immigrant newcomers, difficulties remained. At a May, 2015 Town Council meeting (Town of Georgetown, 2015), one

immigrant resident pressed for a greater level of consideration towards its immigrant residents. This non-Hispanic immigrant newcomer referred to harassment he received from local police, as well as a complete lack of non-white residents on the town council. The disconnection between how the town of Georgetown operates politically and the reality of its diverse constituency was highlighted in a branding exercise that the town undertook in 2014 (Town of Georgetown, 2014a). Places across America are increasingly turning towards branding exercises as a way to distinguish themselves from other towns in order to drive economic development (Anderson, 2014; Greenop and Darchen, 2016; Porter, 2016). As the tourism industry grew in towns along Sussex County's coast, Georgetown has struggled to attract any significant tourist activity, despite being only 16 miles away from the coast. Georgetown, like many other towns, hired a branding consultant to come up with place-specific branding recommendations that would help make Georgetown standout among other Sussex County towns in the hope of making Georgetown more attractive to tourist and consumer activity (Anderson, 2014; Greenop and Darchenm 2016; Porter, 2016).

The consultant, hired to design Georgetown's brand, stated that the town was at a unique and important point in its evolution. Unable to turn back the tide of change, the town needed to reinstall public pride and unite the diverse community in order to initiate economic revitalization (Town of Georgetown, 2014a). According to the consultant, Georgetown could not afford to ignore its rapidly diversifying and increasingly youthful population (Town of Georgetown, 2014a).

While the consultant encouraged Georgetown to work harder to incorporate its diverse immigrant community into its overall brand, the branding message given to the town in both the presentation and subsequent branding style guide relied heavily on Georgetown's historic landscape and did little to incorporate the Hispanic community into the town's image (Town of Georgetown, 2014a; Town of Georgetown, 2014b). Aside from a few photographs of El Mercado, a local Hispanic market, the images used in the town's brand did not reflect Georgetown's rapid demographic and cultural diversification; instead the brand highlighted the town's older, non-immigrant identity (Jacobson, 2014; Town of Georgetown, 2014a; Town of Georgetown, 2014b).

At its core, the story of Georgetown is the story of a small-town community struggling to define what it is. Like many other towns across the nation, since its founding Georgetown has struggled over how to effectively navigate changing economic, labor, and societal realities while maintaining a sense of its own roots and uniqueness. It is this struggle, occurring over last three decades, that the present study addresses, by looking at how public reactions to change in place have influenced attitudes and policies toward immigrant newcomers. By focusing on the ways non-immigrant Georgetown residents have perceived, described and dealt these changes, this research contributes to efforts by scholars to deepen our understandings of how conditions at the local level, in this case a negotiations of sense of place, impact the nature of place and lives of the immigrants and non-immigrants that live in real places (Ellis and Almgren, 2009; Griffith, 2008; Mendoza ad Moren-Alegret, 2012; Phillips and Robinson, 2015; Platts-Fowler and Robinson, 2014; Walker, 2015).

Chapter 2

PLACE AND BELONGING: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The history of Georgetown laid out in the previous chapter is, among other things, the story of how a small town has grappled with defining what kind of place it wanted to be as it worked through different periods of growth. Wade's 1975 history of Georgetown was as much a project to define Georgetown's place identity as the conservative, small-town center of Sussex County as it was a detailing of historic events. These snapshots of Georgetown's history, as well as Wade's own reading of them, bring to light moments in time when the very nature and character of what kind of place Georgetown was, and was going to be, became the focus of intense debate. Questions about what types of people and what types of economic activities belonged in Georgetown were paramount.

It is this process of (re)defining place and belonging in Georgetown that this project sets out to investigate. As immigrants, largely from Central America, settled in Georgetown between the late 1980s and the present, the town found itself at another crossroads. As outlined in the previous chapter, the movement of Guatemalan immigrants into the town was met with growing concerns over a perception that the degrading character of Georgetown as a place was being caused by the arrival of immigrants. These concerns, as will be outlined in later chapters, were about housing, language, and a perceived decline in Georgetown's small-town identity.

But what exactly is place, and what does it mean to belong? Tim Cresswell (2004) begins in his book, *Place: a short introduction,* with this same line of questioning. Owing to its existence as both a geographic concept and a word used in everyday speech, place can be difficult to define. Cresswell (2004), in his introduction, urges readers to contemplate the everyday uses of place: place can simply be a location (i.e. meet me at this place); place can be something that defines ownership and belonging (i.e., this is *my* place, not *yours)*; or place can define social standings (i.e. know one's place). Place, as Cresswell (2004, p. 2) notes, "is everywhere", making it a uniquely difficult concept to define. Belonging, as a concept, is similarly tricky. To belong somewhere can connote a sense of attachment and a claim to a particular place (den Besten, 2010; Tuan, 1975). When something or some*place* belongs to someone, it becomes a possession of the person or group making the claim. If something (or someone) does not belong somewhere, it becomes defined as being out-of-place (Cresswell, 1996).

The purpose of this chapter is to flesh out a working framework of place and belonging. Drawing on insights from scholarly research on place and belonging, the following pages will provide an understanding of both concepts as ongoing processes shaped by the intersections of social standing, power relations, and identity. Drawing on the work of Price (2004), Tuan (1991), and Gilmartin and Migge (2015) (among others), special attention will be paid to how language, place-stories, and public narratives work to construct place and belonging. By defining place and belonging, this chapter will provide the foundation for using an investigation of the narrative construction of place as an analytic framework for understanding how belonging and social relations are negotiated in communities where new immigrants have settled.

2.2 Immigration and Belonging

In the past decade, researchers have used the concept of belonging as a way to challenge assimilationist approaches, which tend to frame "white, middle-class culture as the implicit norm" for immigrants to strive to emulate, in studies focused on immigrant incorporation (Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008, p. 321). den Besten (2010), defines belonging as something that is essentially founded in an individual's, or group's, desire to feel and create an attachment to a place. The processes of belonging, from this viewpoint, are centered upon the emotions, attitudes, and experiences that individuals, groups, and communities have with particular places (den Besten, 2010; Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008; Tuan, 1975). Belonging, however, does not fall solely into the realm of individual claims to places. Antonsich (2010) asserts that belonging is socially mediated according to the politics, identities, and practices of inclusion and exclusion that exist in place. As such, Antonsich (2010) contends that belonging is inherently tied to place. Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) argue that practices of social and spatial inclusion and exclusion are founded on dialogues of racialized and class-based belonging. Belonging in place, in this way, becomes facilitated both by the everyday interaction between individuals and groups, or lack thereof. Belonging, then, should be viewed as the process of becoming attached to place, as well as an ongoing dialogue of negotiation and contestation around who is included in (and excluded from) the places we inhabit (Antonsich, 2010; Nelon and Hiemstra, 2008; Strunk, 2015).

Ehrkamp and Nagel (2012) argue that institutions, like churches, play a role in developing a sense of belonging among new immigrants in the places they settle. In

their study of Catholic churches in the American South, they found that by holding

sermons in Spanish and celebrating saints that are important in Latin America,

churches were able to foster welcoming communities to newly settled immigrants

(Ehrkamp and Nagel, 2012). However, the study also found that churches, through

holding lectures on good citizenship and hard work, could also act to signal what *type*

of newcomer belonged in the community's territorial spaces (Ehrkamp and Nagel,

2012).

Scholars have also pointed to the importance that immigrant-focused festivals, and

other such "spectacular events", hold in promoting belonging in the places immigrants

settle (Chacko, 2013, p. 444; see also Shutika, 2008). These studies found that in both

cities and small towns, immigrant belonging can be facilitated through the celebration

of immigrant identity, in the form of festivals or in significant places such as main

streets, town squares, and national landmarks, such as the national mall (Chacko,

2013; McClinchey, 2008; Shutika, 2008). Shutika (2008), however, warns that any

initial progress in weaving immigrant-focused events into place should not be seen as

the complete acceptance of new immigrant groups. After returning a year later to her

study site in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, Shutika (2008) noted that, at the request of

local businesses, the ethnic festival held on the town's main street the year prior had

been moved out of sight, into a side alley. Relegating the festival to a less visible

space, Shutika (2008) contends, was driven by a desire by local business owners to

preserve Kennett Square as an upscale place not associated with the lower wage

immigrants who came to the area as agricultural laborers. Further, in the second year, the festival contained a large number of booths promoting ESL and civics courses, something not seen in the previous year. This alteration to the festival shared the strong paternalistic undertones reported by Ehrkamp and Nagel (2012) in their study of Catholic churches. Each communicated the type of immigrant the town was expecting these newcomers to become: hard working, English-speaking, and civic-minded, good citizens (Shutika, 2008).

Scholars have also studied how conceptions of citizenship claiming a right to place not based on legal status, but instead resting on simply residing in the community (a contemporary example of which is the Sanctuary City). Further, these scholars often highlight the way local policies and individual actions reinforce or contest different notions of citizenship and belonging, and are fundamentally used as a mechanism of inclusion or exclusion (Bauder, 2016; Carpio et al., 2011; Strunk, 2015; Walker, 2015). For example, communities across the nation have employed contradictory narratives that the United States is either a (mostly) homogenous, white nation, or has always been a nation of immigrants (Walker, 2014). These narratives have been used in order to justify local policies designed to either include immigrants (many of whom were undocumented) into local systems of belonging (i.e. nation of immigrants), or to construct policies designed to exclude newcomers from local spaces. These scholars have noted how some communities have relaxed requirements for accessing local amenities, such as community services, in order to extend belonging to all inhabitants

of a municipal space on the basis of inhabitance, not citizenship (Carpio et al., 2011; Bauder, 2016). This literature has also highlighted the ways in which communities across the United States, often through partnerships with federal agencies that extend immigration enforcement powers to local police departments, have increased the extent of the policing of immigrants in order to selectively remove undocumented migrants (and to an extent, documented migrants) from community spaces if they could not readily prove legal status. While belonging is a place-based process, these studies have shown that belonging is shaped by formulations of national identity and citizenship existing at many scales. Actions to include immigrants, documented or not, into local places are often articulated under a narrative that views America as a nation of immigrants; they assert that new immigrants have as much right to belong in place as native-born residents (Strunk, 2015; Walker, 2014). Conversely, communities that cast immigrants as being out-of-place, which are often founded on racialized conceptions of American citizenship that cast non-white immigrants as non-American (Price, 2012), can challenge immigrant belonging by extending national immigration enforcement to the local level (Walker, 2014).

Shown here, belonging can be fostered through the experiences with, and in, the communities and places individuals inhabit (den Besten, 2010). At the same time, belonging can be facilitated, expanded, or denied through the actions of government agencies and social institutions and other groups and individuals who share and claim the same space (Shutika, 2008; Walker, 2014). Further, belonging is inherently entangled in and shaped by the different power relations operating in and through

place and space (Antonsich, 2010; Bauder, 2016, Carpio et al. 2011; Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008). Belonging is negotiated and claimed at different scales, from the intimately personal, to the nation (Polakit and Schomberg, 2012; Strunk, 2015). Belonging, then, is not just one's sense of inclusion in place. It is a process and dialogue in which communities and individuals, insiders and 'others', newcomers and 'natives', (re)negotiate competing claims and attachments to the places and spaces they inhabit.

2.3   Place

Place, along with space and landscape, holds a prominent position as one of the central concepts of Human Geography. The rise of the concept of place can be traced back to the humanist critique in Geography, which argued that positivist readings of place and space, focused on quantifiable measurements of spatial analysis, reduced places to "little more than locations and container of human action" (Williams, 2014, p.75; see also, Cresswell, 2004). Cresswell (1996, p. 13) for instance, notes that the humanist critique reminded geographers that humanity does not exist solely in the "abstract framework of geometric spatial relationships." Rather it exists in a world saturated with meaning. Features in the landscape of places, such as monuments or places of worship, are more than just the physical material they are constructed out of. These features of place are signifiers of identity and memory, and often the very character of a place. Following the Humanistic critique, viewing place as a complex bundle of meaning, experience, and materiality allowed geographers to account for human experience and identity in spatial analysis (Cresswell, 1996; Mendoza and Moren-Alegret, 2012; Tuan, 1975).

Place involves people moving space out of the abstract in order to transform it into something meaningful (Pred, 1984). Thus, place does not just "happen" (Tilley, 2006, p. 14), and places do not exist according to inherent qualities. Place must be performed, worked, produced, and carefully maintained through a repetition of actions between people and place (Price, 2004; Tilley, 2006). Further, places are not static, bounded entities that exist indefinitely (Pierce and Martin, 2015). Price (2004) argues that place is fluid and always in the process of becoming (see also; Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008; Darling, 2009; Massey, 1995; Pierce and Martin, 2015; Phillips and Robinson, 2015). The fluidity of place arises through the continual interaction between global and local processes of power, human agency, and contests over what, and *who*, belongs in place (Harner, 2001; Price, 2004; Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008; Massey, 1995). Over time, these processes play into the (re)negotiation of the identity and character of place, manifesting in new relations of power and belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Nelson, 2003).

Yi-Fu Tuan (1975) situates experience as central to our understanding of places and how they are produced. Place is a locus of meaning, experienced in some way by a person or group of people, that does not exist at any one scale (Tuan, 1975). For example, Tuan (1975) notes that places can exist at the scale of a rocking chair in one's home, or the region or even nation-state. However, for these spaces to become places there needs to be some form of meaning which can be derived from them. Thus, as Tuan (1975, p. 156) argues, while some rocking chairs are meaningful places "many are simply receptacles for momentarily weary bodies." It is our interaction with the physical spaces around us, as we begin to connect those spaces to our memories,

emotional attachments, and meanings, that we construct place (Beidler and Morrison, 2016; den Besten, 2010; Shutika, 2008; Tuan, 1975).

Cresswell (2004, p. 11) argues that as place is constructed, social and cultural expectations of allowable norms and behavior are woven into place in ways that help our "understanding the world." These interweavings set the boundaries of where certain activities, objects, and even people (often according to race and class) belong. As such we need to understand place as more than just a bundle of emotions and experiences that tie to the self. Instead, we need to understand place as the arena in which belonging is claimed and contested (Cresswell, 2004). As places are constructed out of social relations, and are defined by hegemonic readings of meaning and character, they become more than "simply things to look at, but provide the context for existence" (Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008). As will be shown in chapter 4, sentiments held by long-term residents of Georgetown that the town was and should always be a small-town, historic place were portrayed in contrast to the cultural and linguistic differences of the newcomer population. This narrative conflated the immigrants and their sponsors with an already existing degrading housing stock, overcrowding, and decline in Georgetown's small-town character, thus situating the Guatemalan population as out-of-place, and not truly belonging in Georgetown.

In the past decade, scholars have increasingly turned their gaze towards how place branding exercises work to produce and shape place identities (Anderson, 2014; Greenop and Darchen, 2016; Hospers, 2006; Porter, 2016; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). Place branding has its roots in corporate branding exercises, in which the intent of branding activities is to associate positive and desirable qualities to an object in order to make it more competitive in the market (Hospers, 2006; Porter, 2016). Place

branding is the application of this corporate concept to locales order to market the social, economic, and cultural values of those places. These branding activities are often designed and recommended by independent consultants hired by municipal governments, and they are used to highlight attractive attributes in order for places to create new economic growth by distinguishing themselves from one another as unique, consumable spaces (Anderson, 2014; Greenop and Darchen, 2016; Porter, 2016).

Porter (2016) notes that in the past the promotion of places relied heavily on providing long, text-heavy information brochures that carefully detailed every aspect of a place. As municipalities turned more and more towards utilizing their place brands, however, the promotion of place shifted towards carefully marketing key aspects of places (Porter, 2016). Place marketing, essentially, is the practice of selling place, and brands work by producing a uniform way of seeing, knowing, and reading that place (Warnaby and Medway, 2013; Porter 2016). The production of a brand, then, necessitates the distillation of all place knowledge into a single, consumable product (Greenop and Darchen, 2016; Porter, 2016). Because of this, place branding often tends to erase difference in place through the promotion of certain understandings and association, and the "forgetting of others" (Greenop and Darchen, 2016, p. 382). As noted in chapter 2, Georgetown's recent place branding exercise followed this trend. As the historic landscape dominated the view of Georgetown portrayed to outsiders, the town's cultural diversity was left out.

Beyond place branding, many scholars have highlighted the numerous ways that history and mythical pasts are employed to define place and social relations in place. Massey (1995, p. 186), for example, contends that "the past is present in places in a

variety of ways", in that people often rely on previously held conceptions of place based on the past to define place in the present. Pinkster (2016), in study of a changing blue-collar neighborhood in Amsterdam, found that residents often reached to the past (often, before they lived in the village) in order to symbolically create an image of what kind of place they wanted to inhabit. In this study, as more affluent people moved into the neighborhood, long-term residents regularly employed a narrative that their neighborhood was fundamentally a blue-collar place in order to counter efforts construct apartments for more affluent residents and preserve the neighborhood as their own (Pinkster, 2016). Articles, pamphlets, and flyers produced by working class residents to challenge the sale of renovated apartments to affluent newcomers, highlighted the historic working-class character of the neighborhood and portrayed the newcomers as degraders of place (Pinkster, 2016). In this way, place, or rather the sense of lost place, becomes entangled in the politics of belonging as memory and history of what a place was like are employed in imaginaries of what a place should continue to be (Massey, 1995; Pinkster, 2016).

Place, then, is the ideal site of history and memory as it embodies the link between material components of place (such as architectural styles and landmarks) and non-material components such as emotions and experiences (Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008; Wheeler, 2014). However, there is never simply one history of a place. History and memory, like place, are always multivocal (Massey, 1995) in that there are always different stories to be told. Scholars have highlighted the importance that built landscape features like monuments, plaques, and designated heritage zones play in inscribing place with historical narratives (Buciek et al., 2006; Cresswell, 2004; Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008; Fuchs, 2015; Tilley, 2006). Historical landmarks and

landscapes become a sort of material memory that serves as an anchor for place narratives. That is, parts of the landscape that have been formalized as being historical make certain histories of place more visibly recognized, and serve as a material anchor for privileging a particular story of place. Similarly, Wheeler (2014) highlights the importance that non-formalized historical landscapes can play in producing a historical sense of place. In his study on memory and place in a former industrial mining town, Wheeler (2014, p. 31) argues that the remnants of the past that exist in the relic landscape, in the abandoned factories, run down mills, and other ruins of past industry and identity, play an important role in "local conceptions of place." Like official landmarks, informal historical spaces serve as anchor points for social and personal memories of place through which particular ways of seeing and defining place can be evoked (Wheeler, 2014). By recognizing the importance of informal sites of remembrance in the production of place, we gain an appreciation for how places are constructed not just from official, institutional sources but from lay knowledge and practices (Price, 2004; Wheeler, 2014).

Not all place histories, however, are woven into portrayals of place, nor are all recognized in the informal "heritagescapes" of everyday life (Wheeler, 2014, p. 1; see also, Cresswell, 2004; Fuchs, 2015). Remembering is almost always selective. What is remembered is more often a reflection of social relations in the present than a true representation of the past (Cresswell, 2004; Fuchs, 2015; Massey, 1995). While places are fluid and always in flux, historical narratives and social memories that become privileged through discourses of heritage work to freeze place into one time, one way of being, and strengthen one group's privileged connection to place.

History and memory, then, become a means of establishing coherence to place (Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008; Hoskins, 2004; Massey, 1995). Contestations over competing readings of place-history are in themselves acts to produce a particular view of place that is stable over time, and not to establish a careful detailing of all events that occurred in that place. These dominant historical readings of place serve as a focal point on which asserted essential characteristics of a place are articulated; they work to produce a hegemonic reading of place that makes less visible the counterhegemonic ways of seeing and being in place (Buciek et al., 2006; Harner, 2001). Presenting place as having a particular kind of history, then, is a way of pruning out the pieces of history that counter the logic being crafted in a particular of place (Buceik et al., 2006; Massey, 1995; Price, 2004).

2.4 Difference, belonging, and place

Rising from the scholarship presented here are the ways in which the production of place becomes intertwined with the production of difference and belonging. Whether it is through discourses of memory and history, concerted efforts to market place, or through our own personal experiences with place, the production of place is an act of categorization that differentiates between what is, and what is not part of that place (Creswell, 2004; Pierce and Martin, 2015). Cresswell (1996, p. 184) argues that "places are fundamental creators of difference," in that it is "possible to be inside a place or outside a place." The production of place necessitates the creation of insiders, those who belong in, are part of, and understand the rules of a place, and outsiders, those who don't. Outsiders, as Cresswell (1996 p. 186) asserts are "existentially removed from the milieu of 'our' place." Essentially, to be out-of-place is to not

belong, and, in this way, the production of place becomes inextricably linked to the ongoing negotiation of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Cresswell, 1996).

The differences that arise from the production of place become a part of the boundaries and borders of place (Leitner, 2012; Pierce and Martin, 2015; Price, 2004). Boundaries and borders exist in myriad forms, always with the purpose of divvying out what (and who) is a part of a particular place, and what (and who) is not (Price, 2004). Borders can fall along the formally demarcated boundaries of place as well as internal social boundaries that separate who belongs and who does not belong in place. Pierce and Martin (2015, p. 1289) remind us, however, that these borders are "real but also provisional and unstable." These boundaries, as emphasized in the above quote, are real, and reflect economic, social, and political processes and arrangements of power relations. However, they do not exist indefinitely. They can change, be contested, and fall apart. More so, the existence of a particular place – in our case, Georgetown, DE – does not require particular arrangements of borders, differences, and others (Massey, 1995; Pierce and Martin, 2015; Price, 2004). Price (2004) argues that to truly get at the ways in which place is put to work in the politics of belonging, we need to shift our focus from uncovering the borders of place to investigating how those boundaries are brought into being.

2.5   Place stories, and the narrative construction of place

To comprehend how places and their borders are brought into being and become meaningful, scholars have long turned their attentions to the role narratives play in placemaking (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015; Greenop and Darchen, 2016; Kielland,

2017; Price, 2004; Tuan, 1991). Tuan (1991), in describing what he termed a narrative-descriptive approach to place, called on geographers to focus on language's role in understanding the creation and maintenance of place by paying attention to how identity and belonging are woven into place through place stories.

Taking language seriously requires focusing not just on place naming practices, but focusing on the ways people narrate the identities and meanings of place through the stories they tell about place (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015; Kielland, 2017). Kielland (2017, p. 81) describes place stories as "recognized articulations or ways of understanding and talking about place" that link various narratives and discourses to make sense of the ever shifting social and material realities people experience each day. Price (2004, p. 31) relates this to a "conjuring" of place that is inherently tied up in the ongoing production of difference and belonging.

Place stories become "moral geographies" (Kielland, 2017, p. 81) that are put to work to define and establish social and behavioral norms that uphold the status and power of some members of place while rendering invisible the experiences and claims to place made by others (Cresswell, 2004; Pinkster, 2016; Price, 2004). Place stories present both a means of inscribing personal and group identities into particular place, as well as a means of limiting the claims to belonging by those defined as out-of-place (Cresswell, 1996).

While place stories inherently produce geographies of belonging and exclusion, it is critical to remember that places and their narratives are not monolithic and static. Places are multivocal, meaning that many voices and many narratives become woven together in the constant negotiation of power and belonging (Price, 2004; Stroud and

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Jengels, 2014). Scholars have highlighted the ways in which place narratives can serve as strategies for outsiders, or marginalized insiders to lay claim to place (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015; Martin, 2000; Mayes, 2010; Price, 2004). Gilmartin and Migge (2015), in studying immigrant experiences of home in Ireland, have shown that newcomers use place stories to navigate their shifting attachments to place. In this study, stories of home are often located in both the places of departure and arrival, allowing the immigrants to claim belonging to the places where they have settled while retaining a sense of connection to their home country. Price (2000) highlights the way that Chicano nationalists throughout the US Southwest employ narratives of Aztlan – the mythical homeland of indigenous Mexicans – to lay claim to place in resistance to narratives of westward expansion, and U.S. white nationalism.

Martin (2000) looks at the ways in which media outlets act to mediate the multiple, and often contradictory meanings and claims to place. Media outlets do not simply report objectively on fact and a narrative. Instead, through reporting individual opinions and views, the media acts to mediate public discourse on ideas, knowledge, and understandings of place (Martin, 2000). As such, media outlets, particularly local presses, can serve as platforms of contention and resistance in the construction of place and belonging.

2.6   Conclusion

By focusing on narratives, geographers are able to open up a number of analytically rich sources of data in order to investigate the ongoing construction of belonging, meaning, and identity in place. Place stories get woven into day to day conversations between people, media outlets, branding efforts, and planning documents and are

created by the varying, and often competing, interests of individuals and groups that interact in place. It is in this framework that the present study is situated. By focusing on what kinds of stories members of the Georgetown community have told, the aim is to understand exactly how place and belonging have been (re)negotiated since the town became a new immigrant destination in the 1990s.

Chapter 3

METHODS AND DATA

3.1   Overview of Methods

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this research is to understand how members of
the Georgetown community have understood, described and responded to changes to
the town's identity and character from 1990 to the present. Because the goal of the
research is not to provide a descriptive account of actual changes, but rather to
produce a deeper look into the processes at play in the town's experiences with and
perceptions of change, a qualitative approach was used in undertaking data collection
and analysis (Mendoza and Moren-Alegret, 2012). While this study period would
imply that the project is historical in nature, the methods and questions used in this
research produce a mix of a historical and present-day data in order to provide an
account of how Georgetown, as a community, got to where it is today.

Data collection began in March of 2016 and was wrapped up in mid-November 2016.
It was comprised of: archived editorial commentary published in the local newspaper,
the Sussex Countian; town council minutes housed on the Town of Georgetown web
site; professional planning documents; field observations of Georgetown over a two-
year period, nineteen semi-structured interviews, and a single, large participant quasi-
focus group (see section 3.4). Pinkster (2016) argues that this type of mixed methods
approach utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis
better captures the multiple, layered dimensions of place than relying on a single

method alone (see also Williams, 2014). Participants for the interviews were recruited primarily through snowball sampling. Initial informants, specifically a town official, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and local Hispanic resident, were recruited using previously established connections made by my advisor, Dr. Veness. These informants, in combination with previous studies of Georgetown undertaken by Veness and two of her graduate students (see Jacobson, 2014; Pugliano, 2015; Veness et al., 2013), helped me familiarize myself with the town of Georgetown and its recent history. They also provided a useful network through which other participants were recruited. The identities of all participants, including public officials, are confidential, and data presented herein has been anonymized.

Williams (2014) notes that when studying place one needs to think about the positionality of both the researcher and the research subject because the social position of both are influenced by race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, personal history and other attributes that shape how we experience the world around us and tell our version of reality. Our interpretations of data, of place, and of society in general are influenced and shaped by our already held notions and experiences. This means that all observers "may attain only a partial or incomplete comprehension of the world due to their embedded and inevitable positionality within any particular province of spatial-temporal reality" (Williams, 2014, p. 75). With this in mind, I will note the respondents' race, gender and approximate age when presenting interview data in order to highlight their social position in Georgetown and how it might be shaping what they experienced and what they chose to discuss with me. The remainder of this chapter will provide an overview of each method used, and will end on a discussion of how analysis was performed.

3.2 Archival Analysis

I conducted archival analysis of editorial comments, as well as a few feature stories, submitted to the local newspaper, *The Sussex Countian*, as well as town council minutes and planning documents to identify some of the conflicts and place narratives that arose in Georgetown over the study period. Information from these sources also shaped the types of questions interviewees were asked.

While all of the county is served by the paper, the *Sussex Countian* heavily features news items focused on Georgetown, owing to the town's position as county seat. Unfortunately, a single, well-preserved archive of all *Sussex Countian* editions published between the years of 1990 to 2016 does not exist. Plus, the paper itself does not currently maintain a collection of their older issues. The articles used in this study, then, were gathered from a collection of printed, hard bound copies of the *Sussex Countian* held by the Georgetown Historical Society, at the Marvel Carriage Museum. The collection stored at the museum ends in 2006. In total, I searched for relevant articles issue of the newspaper (around 880 issues) from 1990 to 2006, the time frame for my study.

To make this task more efficient, I read each headline and focused on photographs, searching for any articles which described the look and character of Georgetown, mentioned immigrants or in-migrating populations, festivals and other large events, issues concerning housing and planning, local political campaigns, and any discussions concerning the future of Georgetown. Because this study focuses on how the residents of Georgetown navigated changes to their sense of place, I did not focus on articles specifically about other towns in the county. However, articles that described countywide issues were included in my search. Further, special attention

was given to the opinions and letters to the editor section of each issue, which make up the bulk of articles collected, as this section was comprised of residents and other community members writing in with their own views on issues occurring in town, allowing me to capture narratives beyond the professional journalists' representations of Georgetown. Articles which met my search criteria were then digitally scanned on premise using a document scanning application on my smartphone, and stored on a personal computer to be coded and analyzed out of the field. Summaries of articles describing the date, issue, title, and content of each article were written into a personal journal to help me with record keeping.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze all archival material used in this study. Drisko and Maschi (2016, p. 87) describe qualitative content analysis as "a systematic method for searching out and describing meanings within texts." In this method, texts (in our case, the *Sussex County* and town documents) are thematically coded and organized in order to identify narratives present in the data (Drisko and Maschi, 2016). The codes that are developed for this method are heavily dependent on what research questions are asked and what theoretical models are employed in a study (Drisko and Maschi, 2016). Unlike quantitative approaches to content analysis, which often try to reduce data down through word counts, qualitative content analysis does not lend itself to statistical analysis (Drisko and Maschi, 2016).

For *Sussex Countian* articles, I developed a set of eight codes to organize and group data based on common narrative themes discovered throughout the set of articles collected. If an article or opinion piece was mostly descriptive, providing information on upcoming events or organizations, it was coded "dcr" for description. Materials that cast the immigrants as taking over the town, invading, or materials that relied on

language portraying immigrants as a force coming in and occupying space were coded "inv" for invasion. In the same fashion, materials focused on overcrowding in houses were coded as "ovc", and materials that cast the town as deteriorating were coded "dec". "Dev" was used to categorize any publication focused on efforts to develop the town, either economically or culturally, and "chr" was used for publications that focused primarily on the perceived character of the town. Finally, materials focused primarily on the perception of a language barrier in the town were coded "lng", and any publication that focused on the need for immigrants to learn local laws, customs, and cultures, or to integrate more thoroughly into the community was coded "com". Once organized by code, each piece was read for the rhetoric and narratives used by the author.

I downloaded Town Council minutes, and development and branding plans from the Town of Georgetown's municipal website. Older town council minutes that were not stored online were downloaded from a computer in town hall. I searched through these documents for the same themes and topics used in collecting articles from the *Sussex Countian*. Analysis of the visual branding guide created for the town was done in conjunction with notes taken from a recorded presentation done by the branding consultant the town hired to aid in their branding initiative. Town Council minutes provided insight into the discussions happening at the level of the local government, but provided a less robust set of data than the newspaper articles. This is because the majority of the minutes consisted of lists of budget and project updates. Because of this, data collected from these sources will supplement what was found from the *Sussex Countian* and in my semi-structured interviews, but they will not be at the forefront of analysis.

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

A total of 19 participants were recruited for interviews for this project, including conversations with public officials. Participants ranged in age from early 20s to mid-80s; 11 participants were male, and 8 were female; 10 participants were white, two of Spanish decent, two African American, three were Guatemalan immigrants, one of Indian decent, and one participant identified as multi-racial; and eight participants were born in Georgetown. Finally, six of the participants in this study were either first- or second-generation immigrants. Participants were recruited through a mix of purposive and snowball sampling, as detailed earlier.

I chose key questions and topics of discussion for the semi-structured interviews, but the interviews were not held to a strict list of questions. All but four of the respondents were only interviewed once, and the average interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. An interview guide was used for each interview. It included questions about how long participants had been a part of the Georgetown community, what the town was like either when they were young (if the resident was born in Georgetown) or when they had first moved to the area, and how (if at all) the town had changed. While the guide was used to keep the interviews on track, the format of each session was left open to allow for flexibility in deeper, probing questions, and in order to not lead participants towards particular answers. Guided by what I uncovered in from archival sources, as well as findings in previous research done on Georgetown (see: Borland, 2001; Jacobson, 2014; Veness et al., 2013), the topics touched on in interviews centered on: housing, Georgetown's history and character, immigration to Georgetown, the challenges the town had faced in the past and was continuing to face today. Special care was taken to avoid questions of about the legal status of

Georgetown's foreign-born population. As this study is not concerned with legal status, just whether or not an individual is a newcomer or not, any question about status or how an individual arrived at their new destination was strictly avoided. Most of the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. However, in some instances when either a respondent felt uncomfortable being recorded, or the interview was unplanned and I did not have a recorder handy, detailed notes were taken in my field journal.

Elwood ad Martin (2000) indicate that it is important for respondents to choose locations where they feel comfortable speaking freely during an interview. Further, if respondents do not recommend any locations, it is recommended that the researcher suggest a few and allow the respondents to choose from the given options (Elwood and Martin, 2000). With this in mind, all respondents were first given the option to choose their preferred location for the interview. When respondents did not offer any, I suggested using one of the private study rooms available in the Georgetown Public Library, as well as the library on the Delaware Technical Community College campus nearby. All interviews were undertaken in areas where privacy could be ensured, so that respondents would not need to worry about being overheard by a fellow community member.

Once collected, interviews that I was able to record were transcribed, and detailed notes taken from non-recorded interviews were recorded in a Word document to increase ease of analysis. Each transcript and detailed notes taken during non-recorded interviews was read through multiple times in order to identify key themes, topics, and narratives employed by respondents. These were then transferred to an excel spreadsheet, wherein I coded data based on themes found throughout all interviews.

This allowed for thematic place stories to be uncovered, which served as the basis of the findings from interviews.

3.4   Focus Group

Initially, I had planned on conducting multiple focus group sessions with members of Georgetown's business community, White, African American, and Hispanic residents, and members of Georgetown's service providers. However, I was unable to successfully recruit members for focus group sessions due to difficulty scheduling a time for people to meet, and general unwillingness of folks to participate in a group session. Instead, I was able to conduct one large, quasi-focus group session with 26 members of the Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce.

It is important to note that not all members of the Chamber of Commerce reside in Georgetown, nor did all members have a business operating within the municipal limits. Given this constraint, the session was used to see how Georgetown and other towns in Sussex County were viewed by the local business community. In this session, participants were shown a presentation about Georgetown, its recent efforts to revitalize, and a quick overview of the study. Participants were then asked to write on color coded cards three words or phrases they would use to describe different towns through Sussex County, namely: Georgetown, Laurel, Seaford, Millsboro, Lewes, and Milton. After the session, each response was coded for its broader theme, and tallies were created for each theme by town, allowing for comparisons of how each town was generally viewed to be made. The results from this session were not as robust as the data collected from archival sources and semi-structured interviews. As such, the

focus group data will not be presented on its own, and will instead be used as supplementary data when applicable.

3.5 Analysis

Analysis of all data was done by coding for themes, narratives, and discursive strategies used in textual documents, as well as by interviewee and focus group participant responses. Drawing on insights from scholars performing discourse analysis, each source of data was viewed as a text describing the construction of Georgetown as a place (Porter, 2016; Waitt, 2005). In my analysis, I identified themes and narratives that arose across all sources of data, and, in doing so, was able to identify which place stories about Georgetown became dominant among non-immigrant residents (Porter, 2016; Waitt, 2005). Focusing on the multiple, and often contradictory, narratives at play provided insights into how belonging and place in Georgetown have been negotiated and renegotiated since the 1990s (Antonsich, 2010; Porter, 2016; Price, 2004). Results and analysis produced from this study will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The results of each method are presented and analyzed in this chapter. I will begin the

chapter by presenting my findings from the *Sussex Countian*. In this section, articles

are divided between those focusing on immigration and those focusing on housing

issues in Georgetown. Each section begins with an overview of the articles collected

in order to identify how immigration and housing were covered between 1990 and

2006. The chapter ends with findings from the semi-structured interviews. In this

section, key narratives surrounding Georgetown's place identity and immigrant

population are highlighted. They are combined with information gathered from

archival materials, and the findings of prior research done in Georgetown.

4.2 Archival Analysis of *Sussex Countian* Articles

This section will detail the findings from my analysis of the *Sussex Countian* articles I

collected from the archive at the Marvel Museum. Articles were collected for this

thesis are those that appeared in the *Sussex Countian* between 1990 and 2006 The

physical archive held at the Marvel Museum ends in 2006, leaving a decade long gap

of articles between 2006 and the present. The editor of the *Sussex Countian* was

contacted via phone in an attempt to gain access to the missing years, but I was not

able to obtain them. Unfortunately, no other archives exist in the State of Delaware,

and as such the findings from this method are only able to speak to the years leading up to 2006.

Because the topics of immigration and housing were emphasized in my initial contacts with Georgetown residents, I will present those articles that covered any discussions and reports on the state of Georgetown's immigrant population and housing stock. Further, it should be noted that the majority of the articles collected for this study were primarily letters to the editors and guest articles written by residents of both Georgetown and the wider Sussex County community, and editorials written by the staff of the *Sussex Countian*.

4.2.1   Overall Coverage of *Sussex Countian* Articles

Between the years of 1990 and 2006, 89 articles were found that discussed the immigrant population, and 77 were found that focused on housing. No articles were found between 1990 and 1991, and 2004 and 2006 (see Figure 4.1) This is likely due to few immigrants living in town prior to 1993, and a reported reduction of the immigrant population in the late 2000s (Town of Georgetown, 2010). Prior to 2000, immigration was covered more regularly per year than were issues pertaining to Georgetown's housing stock. From 2000 to 2006, however, we see housing gaining a larger amount of coverage. Unsurprisingly, 40.4% (n=36) of all of the articles that focused on immigration were also focused on housing issues that pertained to Georgetown's burgeoning immigrant population, confirming the suggested link between immigration and housing overcrowding and degradation concerns mentioned in my initial contacts.
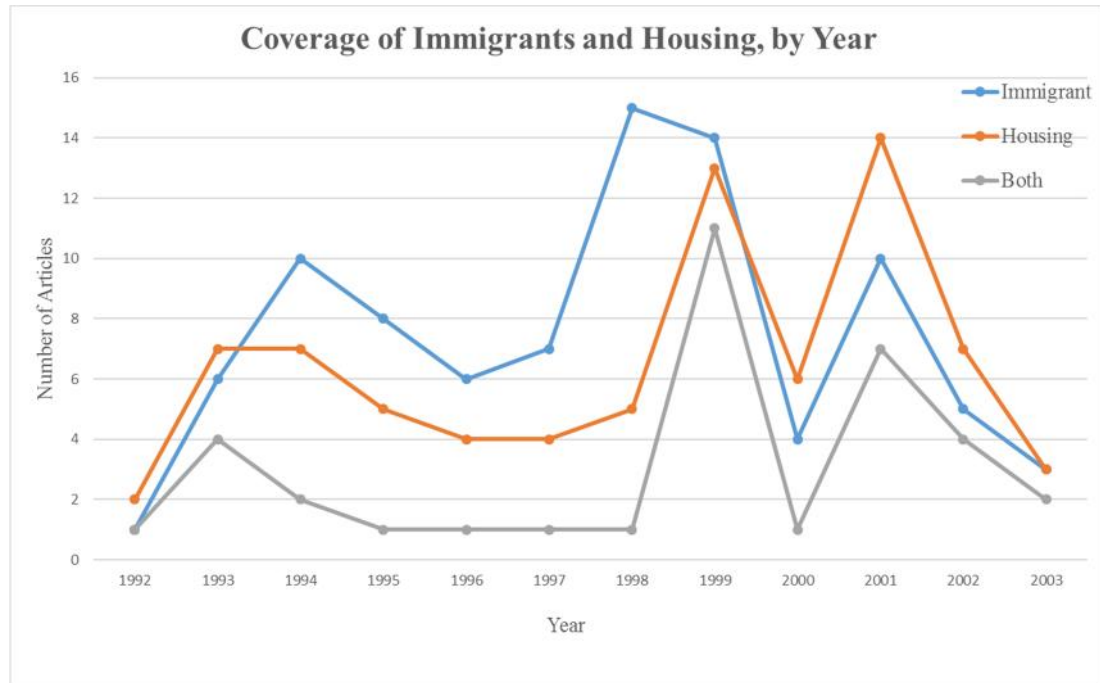
Figure 4.1 Coverage by the *Sussex Countian* of Immigration and Housing issues in Georgetown. The blue line represents Immigration focused articles, the orange represents Housing focused articles, and the gray line represents those articles that focused on both.

Since the mid-1980s, Georgetown had issues with a substandard housing stock in the older central part of the town. Deteriorating homes, unsafe conditions, and overcrowding in rental properties repeatedly came up during discussions about how to spur new growth and development in Georgetown. This lead one councilperson to declare in a 2001 Town Council meeting that housing was "the root of every issue before the town" (Town of Georgetown, 2001). As the immigrant population moved into many of the rental properties in town, particularly in Kimmeytown, that population became intimately tied to the public's discussion and perceptions of the deteriorating conditions of homes in the town.

The years 1999 and 2001 stand out as two noticeable peaks in which number of articles focusing on immigration and housing were both high. These two years correlate with two notable events in Georgetown's recent history. In January 1999, a house rented by immigrants caught fire, resulting in the death of Transito Berduo (Moore, 1999a). This tragedy created outrage about unscrupulous landlord practices such as letting houses fall below code and turning a blind eye to overcrowding. It also jump-started more aggressive action by the Town Council to enforce Georgetown's housing codes, and manage the growth of Georgetown's rental market.

The town's reactions to the house fire and death of an immigrant culminated in a 2001 proposal to raise the fee on rental units in order to slow the conversion of owner-occupied homes into rental properties, which was linked to the growing number of unsafe homes in town. Area landlords swiftly opposed the proposed increase arguing that these fees were designed to harm Georgetown's tenant population and discriminate against the area's growing Hispanic population. After the landlords threatened legal action against the town, the *Sussex Countian* reported that the town turned towards what was described as a friendlier approach to code enforcement. Tenants were given warnings when problems occurred, and information was provided in English and Spanish to tenants in properties violating local codes, in essence shifting responsibility from the landlords to the tenants (Sussex Countian, 2002).

The sharp rise between 2000 and 2001 in published materials focusing on immigration and housing (during which housing concerns overtook immigration concerns in sheer numbers) is linked to the proposed development of the Pin Oaks apartment complex on Murray Lane. This multiunit complex to be located on the eastern boundary of the town was as seen as a way to alleviate some of the overcrowding found in single-

family homes. The proposed development plan, however, was eventually rejected after residents voiced their concerns that the multiunit building would degrade the single-family character of the neighborhood in which it was to be built.

During this time, public discussion focused on the issues of overcrowding and the loss of the town's historic, aesthetic, and single-family character. Further, while most of the blame was pinned on the actions of area landlords, a great deal of focus was also placed on a perception that the immigrant population renting these homes simply did not know how to live safely in homes. That is, they did not understand the norms and behaviors associated with the use and maintenance of modern amenities and good housekeeping. The rest of this section will take a deeper look at how those themes were narrated over the study period.

4.2.2   *Sussex Countian* **Coverage of Immigration.**

A few temporal patterns appear in how immigration was covered and discussed in the *Sussex Countian*. First, the inflammatory words and unflattering stories used to portray how the immigrant population invaded the town only appeared between 1994 and 1998 (inv) While the invasion narrative only accounted for 12.3% of all immigration coverage, between 1993 and 1998 this particular narrative accounted for 21.1% of all coverage. At the same time census data showed that the non-white Hispanic population of Georgetown grew from 75 individuals in 1990 to 1473 by 2000. However, conversations I had with community members, plus and *Sussex Countian* coverage, suggested that the 2000 Census vastly undercounted the number of Hispanic residents, meaning the felt impact of immigration was considerable. Regardless of the accuracy of the count, the appearance of a type of rhetoric that cast the incoming

immigrants as invading Georgetown between 1994 and 1998 may be attributed to the fact that Georgetown had never had a sizeable immigrant population before this time. Why the occurrence of these types of articles suddenly dropped off in 1999 could not readily be discerned from the articles or my conversations. It might be attributed to changes in editorial decisions, or to the death of Transito Berduo, which shifted public attention more heavily towards the substandard housing stock and dangers it presented.
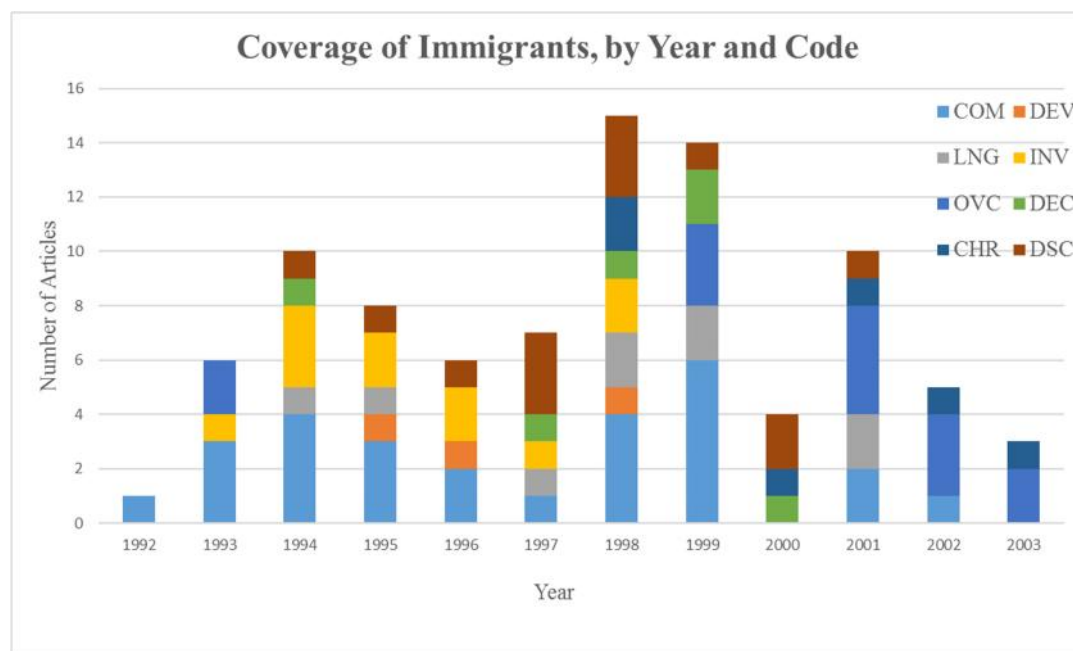
Figure 4.2 Number of articles focused on Immigration, by year and thematic code. Refer to section 3.2 of the thesis for a description of each code.

Second, from 1999 on the issue of overcrowding (see Figure 4.2, ovc) accounted for a larger portion of immigration coverage. Prior to 1999, overcrowding and immigration were only explicitly focused on in one year, 1994. While overcrowding accounted for

15.7% of all immigration coverage, between 1999 and 2003 33.3% of all immigration articles focused on overcrowding issues. This increase paralleled the overall increase in the number of articles focused on housing, the death of Transito Berduo, the proposed construction of the Pin Oaks apartment complex, and the conflict between the town and local landlords.

Finally, published editorials that described the need for the immigrant population to learn (or be *taught*) local customs, norms, and behaviors accounted for nearly a third (30.3%) of all *Sussex Countian* coverage of immigration between 1992 and 2003 (see figure 4.2, com). While articles that focused primarily on the issues of a language barrier (lng) were coded separately from the articles focused on customs, norms, and behaviors, it is incorrect to separate the two issues. For immigrants who could not speak English were often portrayed either as a part of the reason why it was so hard to integrate this community more fully into Georgetown, or as a group needing to learn English. When pooled together, these two topics accounted for 40.4% of all immigrant focused articles.

While looking at the total amount of coverage provided insights into which narratives and topics proved important during Georgetown's earliest experiences with their new immigrant population, looking at the data this way provided only a descriptive account of how the population was perceived and portrayed in the media. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the narratives, or public stories that shaped how the town viewed and described its newcomer Hispanic population, I examined several themes more closely: Georgetown as an invaded place, overcrowding and the deterioration of homes, and the need for immigrants to learn, or be taught, local customs and traditions.

4.2.2.1 Georgetown as an invaded place

During the 1990s, editorials about the growing Hispanic population in Georgetown focused on the need to ensure that the new residents were in the country legally. Public discussions utilized anti-immigrant rhetoric depicting Georgetown as being taken over and degraded by the arrival of a new and culturally different population. The main thrust of the articles focused on illegality was the need for an Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) office in Sussex County. One editorial, written October 26, 1994, called for an increased INS presence in the county, arguing that "more searches" would be helpful to the town efforts to get a handle on illegal immigration. It was "not to harass, but to gather information" said the writer (Sussex Countian, 1994d, p. 4). The Hispanic immigrant population, then, was not to be targeted for harassment; rather it was an unknown entity requiring careful monitoring. Monitoring, argued the writer, was important because:

> Many towns in Sussex are faced with a growing Latino population. We
> think if any group decides to come here and better their life, that is
> great – as long as they abide by the laws of this country… We have
> always said, it is fine to hang onto your culture and your customs, but
> it is important to be able to adapt as well (Sussex Countian, 1994d, p.
> 4).

Throughout the editorial, the author made clear that immigrants, or any group coming to Georgetown looking for a better life, were clearly welcome, but immigrants needed to be good law-abiding citizens and the INS would help ensure that. Casting doubt about the legitimacy of the many Hispanics in Georgetown, and, by extension, the surrounding county, the quotation emphasized the need for immigrants to adopt the

culture and customs of the area, a theme that ran through nearly all segments of how the Guatemalan population was portrayed in the media.

Calls for an increased INS presence in Sussex County continued until 1997. Throughout this time, the editorial comments focused on the need for a better understanding of how many immigrants had moved into the county. As one writer stated:

> One thing that local officials have struggled with is the actual number of Latino residents in Sussex County. A 1990 Census reported less than 2,000 in Sussex County. Giuliano said that the Latino Task Force estimated the numbers are near 20,000 for Sussex and Kent counties (Keeler, 1996, p. 1).

The perception that there was a grossly undercounted and rapidly growing undocumented immigrant population coming into Georgetown and nearby towns was a constant preoccupation. In fact, the preoccupation was justified in op-ed pieces. Writers did not blame local citizens for worrying that the "vast majority of the immigrants were in the country illegally" (Sussex Countian, 1996, 4). Nor did they question the importance of a stronger INS presence in the form of an office in Georgetown. They repeated the pitch that what was important was a constant monitoring of the situation and ensuring that the Hispanics in Georgetown and Sussex County were legal (Sussex Countian, 1996). One article, penned in 1997, actually expressed outrage and incredulity that the closest INS office was located in Dover, not Georgetown.

Just a look around can justify the belief that the majority of the

Hispanic population in the state has settled in Sussex County

where there is plenty of employment for them in the poultry plants.

You would think that with all the space for rent in and around

Georgetown, there would be at least one affordable office in which

the INS could have established its physical presence in Sussex

County instead of just giving us a pacifier (Sussex Countian,

1997a, p. 4).

Though pleas for an INS office in Georgetown urged that the immigrant population

not be harassed and did have a right to reside in the area if they were legal, many

articles unsympathetically took a more xenophobic, condemning and fearful tone. In a

1993 letter to the editor, a non-immigrant resident wrote that a conference held by

local pastors to discuss the issues facing the newly arrived population were not

tackling hard enough the fundamental question of whether these newcomers were

legal. Many people felt the local clergy were sidestepping the dark side of immigration

by using phrases such as the United States was the "land of liberty" and a "haven for

the poor". These "platitudes", as described by the author, hid the fact that the nation's

immigration laws were "the manure that draws the flies" (Patz, 1993, p.4). Continuing,

the author compared the growth of the immigrant population in Georgetown to the

opening of Pandora's Box and the decline of Rome:

We, too, are looking down the road at our Dark Ages. My greatest

fear is that Americans have lost the moral vigor to confront this

problem and, even if they do, may not find the nerve to manage the

"cruel necessities" inherent to its solution. Pandora's Box was split

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in distant time and, in time, no one escaped its wrath - or use. Our

time is near, and we must choose (Patz, 1993, p. 4).

The narrative that unrestricted immigration presented a direct threat to the local area continued over the decade. In letters to the editor, residents expressed fear that the local immigrant population was hurting the Georgetown economy in part because they didn't pay taxes and in part because their earnings were being sent back to their home country as remittances and not going into the local economy. In addition, some writers feared immigrants were taking all of the low-income jobs making it hard for unskilled native-born workers to earn a living. Georgetown, instead, needed to be "a responsible parent [that] takes care of [its] own family" and community (White, 1995, p. 4). Another editorial, entitled "Writer says town has never been in this shape before," blamed immigrants for hurting the local businesses because "residents of 'Little Mexico'" were patronizing Hispanic businesses (Campbell, 1995, p. 4). This perception that Georgetown was becoming a "Little Mexico" also arose in six of my interviews with local residents. Here, not only is the immigrant population cast as an occupying force degrading place identity and hurting local businesses in Georgetown, it is cast in these editorials as taking away opportunity from the rightful (i.e., non-immigrant, long-term) residents of the community. This narrative situates the non-immigrant residents of Georgetown as a group that is being harmed, economically and culturally, by the in-migration of foreign immigrants. In doing so, the immigrant newcomers in Georgetown become seen as an *other,* who are out-of-place in town, with little right to access the economic opportunities of Georgetown (i.e. jobs in agro-processing), and no right to truly belong in Georgetown.

The loss of Georgetown space to the immigrant population is a theme that appeared in

 another *Sussex Countian* piece (as well as in interviews that will be presented

 later). In 1994, a local Hispanic artist was contracted by town officials to

 design a new park tucked into a corner of Kimmeytown, the neighborhood

 where many Hispanic immigrants had settled. The intent of the artist was to

 weave the culture of the new immigrant group into the park as a celebration of

 the towns increasing diversity. While the intent of the town and artist was

 proactive, in that both were looking to cement the new cultural diversity into a

 public place, the park's theme was actually opposed by the anonymous local

 resident who donated the site where the park was to be built on.

 Last week, some friends informed me that the mayor and the

 council had voted to implement a project of the Sussex County Arts

 Council to convert this lot, designated by me for a schoolchildren's

 playground, to an Hispanic Park I realize that the Town Council

 does not want this lot for a schoolchildren's playground. And since,

 unfortunately, I neglected to have my attorney put a clause to

 reclaim the lot if it was not used for this purpose, I now know that I

 have absolutely no control over what is done with it, including

 ceding it to a foreign country, the last six words being an

 exaggeration of course, and meant only in what to me is a

 disturbing situation (Sussex Countian, 1994a, p.4).

Entitled "Lot was supposed to benefit town children", it is clear that the betrayed
benefactor of the plot of land adjacent to Kimmeytown, and hemmed in by woods and
a railroad track, does not view the many Hispanic children in this part of town as

genuine children of Georgetown, as rightful residents. Rather they and their families are temporary, suspect and not part of the core of the town. As shown by previous research, inclusion in public spaces has a strong influence on new residents' ability to develop place attachment (Shutika, 2008). Recent research on Georgetown also highlights how local residents did not use or feel comfortable in all of the town's public spaces and public activities (Veness, et al., 2013 and Jacobson, 2014). When Hispanics cannot be or feel included in the town's public spaces it undercuts their ability to belong and be a legitimate voice in local concerns. By the mid-1990s, town officials were making small concessions to open up space and foster a sense of belonging via a culturally-themed children's playground. Though some locals applauded this effort, other long-time residents were resistant. Today, the awkwardly located park intended to celebrate and serve the needs of local Hispanic children as well as serve the needs non-Hispanic children, looks a bit ramshackle.

By the mid-2000s Georgetown was becoming the poster child of a small town embroiled in the challenges of rapid immigration. Echoing many of the narratives found in the *Sussex Countian* editorials, a National Review journalist published a somewhat troubling portrayal of Georgetown's struggles to deal with the abrupt arrival of and adjustment to its resident Hispanic community. Describing white non-immigrant residents who suddenly see themselves as a minority and feel resentment toward the immigrants and businesses that drew them to town, Caldwell (2006, para 11) wrote that the immigrants "had changed the town beyond recognition." Picking up on stereotypes of drunken Guatemalan men wandering the streets, repeating questions about whether the town's immigrants had legal documents, and describing immigrant cultural practices that were foreign and upsetting to many town residents,

Caldwell's article reinforced the notion that Georgetown's immigrant population was, still, out-of-place in the mid 2000s.

Throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s, then, immigrants were often portrayed as an existential threat to Georgetown and the county at large. Constant calls for an increased INS presence illustrated an ongoing anxiety about this new, unknown foreign population entering the county at what felt like an incredible rate. Beyond the need for increased monitoring, the new population was described as a threat to the economic and cultural life of Georgetown because they did not blend in, contribute to the community or conform to local practices. Moreover, many locals felt that the Guatemalan immigrants in particular, coming as they did from impoverished villages where many were accustomed to collecting their own water, washing clothes by hand, and cooking meals over an open fire, were unable to make the transition to life in Georgetown (for a description of life in the home villages of the Guatemalan immigrants see Veness, 2011). While this sort of rhetoric began to dissipate after 1998, it reflected ideas about the type of place that long-time local residents clung to in their efforts to halt challenges to how they saw themselves as a community. Narratives which were founded on suspicions of illegality, and which cast the immigrant newcomers as invaders who were transforming parts of Georgetown into something unrecognizable (i.e., "Little Mexico") transmitted a clear message. Not only did foreigners from Central America not belong in Georgetown, their mere presence presented an existential threat to the kind of place Georgetown was.

4.2.2.2 *Sussex Countian* coverage of overcrowding in Georgetown

A different story was told about the Guatemalan population in editorials that focused on housing and its overcrowding. Instead of an emphasis on Georgetown being invaded by potentially dangerous and out-of-place immigrants, editorials about problems with rental properties focused the actions of local landlords, who were often portrayed as greedy and negligent (sentiments echoed in conversations with my interview respondents). According to the language of the following editorial, blame for deteriorating conditions and overcrowding was laid at the feet of greedy and inattentive landlords even as immigrant tenants were cast in a negative light:

> Certainly, the situation with the increasing Latino population could
> be described as a problem, but I know Sue [councilperson] sees it
> as a challenge. She has been a strong advocate of the housing code
> which has caused some Latinos to be evicted from substandard
> housing. She strongly feels that landlords must be held
> accountable. But she does not feel the town has a responsibility for
> housing the growing foreign-born population… I support the
> strong efforts being made to clean up housing, and I do not believe
> that we should let people live in such conditions, just because they
> don't know better. And the town's tax monies should not be used to
> teach them (Walls, 1993, p. 8).

While the immigrant population is described here as a potential problem, and is a challenge, the explicitly xenophobic language seen in the invasion narratives was not present. Instead, the town's Hispanic population was portrayed as living in substandard conditions either because this is what the landlords have given them or

because they simply did not know how to maintain their rental properties. The writer made clear, however, that it was not the town's duty to spend resources to "teach" the Hispanic community proper living conditions, something that other residents were advocating.

Following the death of Transito Berduo overcrowding became a dominant topic of discussion in Georgetown because the fire was attributed the unscrupulous "packing" of immigrants into substandard housing in order to increase profits. Following the tragedy, Georgetown's mayor commented in the press that "we cannot fault the occupants of these houses", they should be "applauded for their courage, not exploited for their naiveness [sic]" (Ricker, 1999, p. 4). The mayor ended the article by stating "it's our town, they are our neighbors" (Ricker, 1999, p. 4). As mentioned earlier, many locals had concluded that the predominantly Guatemalan immigrant population in Georgetown simply did not have the cultural and place-based knowledge to enable them to live in standard and safe conditions. Pointing to examples of tenants engaged in cooking practices that created a lot of smoke and fire (Moore, 1999b), their lack of knowledge about indoor fire safety and use of modern appliances, and their ignorance of and unwillingness to file complaints about landlords (Sussex Countian, 2003), a common belief crystalized that the town's immigrant community needed to be taught how to live in Georgetown residences without being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords.

While landlords' inattentiveness to overcrowding in their rentals, and overall neglect in the maintenance of their rental houses, were cited as the root causes of Georgetown's housing problems, it was clear that the immigrants' lack of knowledge about how to live in Georgetown was a concern. The town was described as not being

able to take in all of the immigrants who migrated there to work in the local poultry industry. The town welcomed the immigrants, but, as one article stated, "For those who want a home there are plenty of houses available… but for people who just want a cot, there is no room in Georgetown" (Moore, 1999b, p 2).

Thus, Georgetown would incorporate its immigrant newcomers as long as they were willing to live the right way. This stance privileged already established notions of housing, culture, and place, and it worked to preserve a particular way of being in Georgetown.

Two opportunities to help alleviate the town's overcrowding arose during the study period. The first was the development of the Pin Oaks apartment complex, which ultimately failed to be built. While this issue dealt with the issue of overcrowding, I will cover it in more detail in the section on housing and development. The second issue, which will be covered here, was action taken by the town to enforce housing codes more vigorously and slow the growth of rental properties. The action was a proposal to raise annual rental permit fees, and it quickly was opposed by the newly formed landlord's association that threatened legal action against the town if fee increases were approved. In filing the lawsuit, the landlord association claimed that Georgetown officials had long-held discriminatory sentiments towards the immigrant community.

> According to the lawsuit, Georgetown official have publicly
> expressed frustration and disapproval with increases in the
> Hispanic population and have publicly expressed discriminatory

sentiments towards Hispanic and Latin persons (Sussex Countian, 2001b).

Interestingly, to refute criticism that they, the landlords, were to blame for the town's poor housing conditions, the association claimed the town government was practicing discrimination itself. Using the logic that increased rental fees would contribute to additional overcrowding and undercut the efforts of immigrant workers to find housing in Georgetown, the landlord association accused the town of being guilty of discrimination. This landlords' counter narrative challenged the public story used by the town—a narrative about the town protecting local immigrants from greedy landlord practices.

Some of the first articles published in the *Sussex Countian* written by members of the Hispanic community came in response to the proposed rental fee hike. Filling a void of representation in the area's dominant media outlet, these articles argued that the rental fees were unjustifiable. They would directly harm the immigrant community without solving the issue of overcrowding. As one Hispanic resident stated, the fees would only impact the low-income workers likely to see a hike in their monthly rent, contributing to additional overcrowding because the reason many people live in one house is to save money (Sussex Countian, 2001a).

The rental fee hike was eventually abandoned by the town, and an aggressive approach to house inspections was given up for a softer approach to dealing with the town's housing stock. Overcrowding and poor housing conditions are still an issue in Georgetown today. However, as noted by a town official I spoke with, because of the

lawsuit brought against the town, the town is less able to directly control and deal with fixing substandard housing.

4.2.2.3   Norms, Behavior, and Integration into Georgetown's Culture

The most persistent narrative found in the collection of *Sussex Countian* articles, as well as my interviews, was around the barrier created in Georgetown due to the cultural and linguistic differences of the immigrants. Again, much of this narrative focused on substandard housing in Georgetown and the immigrants' perceived inability to live in the same manner as Georgetown residents. Questions about how to absorb the Hispanic population first appeared in the *Sussex Countian* in 1992, when a local minister argued that the county at large needed to figure out how to incorporate the newcomers into the "Sussex way of life" (Sussex Countian, 1992, p. 12) in order to deal with the expansion of Georgetown's substandard housing stock. Here, the minister argued that locals shouldn't outright reject the incoming immigrant population. Instead, in order to deal with issues of overcrowded and deteriorating homes, non-immigrant residents needed to figure out how to teach local customs around housing to an immigrant group that arrived from small rural villages in the western highlands of Guatemala where living conditions were basic, housing conditions often very substandard, and modern infrastructure and amenities non-existent (see Veness, 2011).

Early on, the deterioration of Georgetown's housing stock was conflated with a perception that Guatemalans living in town did not know how to maintain properties to the standard commonly held in Georgetown, and thus were contributing to a decline in the town's place identity. In a 1993 letter to the editor, one writer claimed that

immigrants moving to the area were not only failing to pay their fair share of taxes, but were also the cause of degrading properties in town. The writer went on to explain that a house down the street from him, described as "lamentable", had been "rented not by the room, mind you, but by the shift" and the "multitude of people thus in stages occupying the house" were quickly transforming the home into an "eyesore" (McCauley, 1993, p. 16). The article ends with an account of an instance when the writer had to be instructed in proper behavior, equating a correction in his behavior with corrections that immigrant newcomers also needed:

> I remember when as a young man in driving down a wide street in
> a mountain town in Colorado, I undertook to make a U-turn.
> Halfway through the turn, a 40ish male driver… said to me
> through his open window "We don't do that here". We need to say,
> "We don't do that here (McCauley, 1993).

The sentiment that the immigrant population needed to be taught "we don't do that here" in regards to the use of housing, was echoed in another editorial. This resident emphatically stated: "We need to teach these people our customs… We live one family to a house, not 50 people to a house. What they've done to my town… it's a shame" (Keeler, 1994b, p. 3). Again, the immigrant population is criticized for not conforming to expectations in Georgetown. Even though overcrowding and landlord neglect contributed heavily to the decline in character and quality of Georgetown homes, the immigrants themselves were depicted as being hopelessly out-of-place.

Much of the narrative that surrounded the cultural differences between long-term residents and the immigrant newcomers also took on a more paternalistic tone.

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Echoing the sentiment above about normative notions around appropriate house-sharing, many Georgetown residents and officials argued that the Hispanics in town needed to be taught the proper way of life in Georgetown. Writers to the paper often relied on language that described the immigrant community as uneducated, unfamiliar with the ideas of fire safety or good home management, and as simply not knowing better. Praising the efforts of La Casita, a local non-profit focused on serving the immigrant community, one writer contended: "A new way of life does not come naturally[,] [i]t must be taught in order to be respected" (Sussex Countian, 1997c, p. 4). Another resident, quoted in an article written about housing concerns in Georgetown, also believed that immigrants did not understand what society expected of them:

> [T]hey are like a bunch of kids with money in their pockets and a
> house of their own for the first time in their lives… when I was
> young and got my first place I was wild too. But, I knew what
> society expected (O'Neil, 1999, p2).

Repeating the narrative that immigrant newcomers from traditional villages in Guatemala did not understand how to live properly in a house according to local standards, other editorials called on non-immigrant residents to help these immigrants learn local ways because if immigrants could not conform it would seriously hurt the town. In fact, one of the objections to the proposed development of the Pin Oaks apartment complex, to ease overcrowding in the rental housing market, hinged on the need for immigrants to be taught local standards. Fearing that the complex would be filled with immigrants unable to maintain the property, critics resisted the development arguing that the proposed complex would not fit with the middle-class

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character of Georgetown housing (even though there were other apartment complexes in Georgetown that served the lower-income white and African-American community as well as seniors). Some critics reiterated that the Pin Oaks complex, to be built in a neighborhood on the edge of town, would be out-of-place in a town defined by its single-family housing stock. One author even argued that the proposed complex would not actually serve the needs of the long-term needs of the immigrant population because living in small apartment units would not give this group needed experience in taking care of a house, thus harming their ability to successfully maintain a property they may own in the future.

> A rent house would furthermore provide a valuable training ground
> for people from *primitive rural culture* that lacks many of the
> modern amenities that we take in stride…. The renting of a house
> would provide valuable training to future home owners
> (McCauley, 2001, p. 4, emphasis added).

While the creation of multiple affordable housing units would certainly have helped alleviate overcrowding in town, the proposal was shot down because it would not provide adequate education on how to properly live in Georgetown. This narrative, however, did more than simply ignore the economic needs of Georgetown's immigrant community. Immigrant practices of sharing households with multiple people, either extended family members or other, unrelated members of the Guatemalan community, did not fit with the expectations of single-family (i.e. the nuclear family) living in Georgetown. Instead, these narratives privileged a view of Georgetown as the kind of place defined by middle-class, owner-occupied homes, leaving little room for the cultural practices, and economic needs, of the Guatemalan community. Until the

immigrant community learned to live as the long-term residents did, thus conforming to this privileged place identity, they would never truly belong in town.

The need for Georgetown's immigrants to learn, or be taught, local customs and ways of life was often tied to notions of learning to be productive, conforming and contributing citizens. Interestingly, this narrative did not outright exclude the Guatemalan immigrants from Georgetown. Instead, writers often noted that once immigrants learned how to become responsible, productive citizens benefiting the town by contributing to the local economy, it could assist the town's efforts to revitalize its economy and reassert its historic identity as a family-friendly small-town place. It would be wrong to "drive people who want to be good citizens from their homes without at least giving them the opportunity to learn our ways" according to one editorial (Sussex Countian, 1999a). The immigrant community, then, could potentially belong in Georgetown if expectations over occupancy limits and home maintenance were met, if they contributed to the community by preserving non-immigrant perceptions of Georgetown's place identity, and if they helped better position the town to revitalize.

While housing troubles in Georgetown were often attributed, at least partially, to differences in culture, the slow adoption of local customs was often tied to difficulties overcoming the language barrier. In particular, discussions in the press centered around the need for immigrants to learn English. Increased dialogue between the communities, it was argued, would increase the rate of adoption of safe and sanitary living practices in town and help solve the housing crisis of the 1990s. Many argued, however, that the onus of English language education should be placed on the immigrants themselves, the employers who were drawing them to town, and the

service organizations that existed to help the local Hispanic population. At one point, the town proposed creating bilingual signage around town, in order to help local immigrants navigate the local area. This proposal, like many designed to deal with issues between the town and its immigrants, met with resistance. In one editorial, the writer argued that any public money spent on bi-lingual signage would be a waste, and "new arrivals to this country would be denied the necessity of learning our country's dominant language at an entry level" (McCauley, 1995, p. 4). The proposed bi-lingual signage was eventually abandoned, signaling that while public officials were willing to find ways to help immigrants better navigate town services before the immigrant population had been in Georgetown long enough to learn English, resistance against working with the Guatemalan community was strong enough to halt such efforts.

Narratives which portrayed the Guatemalan immigrants as out-of-place because of their cultural and linguistic differences with long-term residents of town work against the ever-changing nature of place. While places are fluid and unbound, in that they are constantly in flux as new social realities arise, narratives that argued the immigrant community needed to learn and conform to local standards of housing (as well as learning the local language) worked to freeze the place identity of Georgetown (Massey, 2005; Price, 2004, 2012). This binding of place to a single, non-changing reading in effect constructed the immigrant community as something different from Georgetown, situating them out-of-place in the community.

The town government, however, was able to make a significant inroad to tackling the language barrier in one sector: policing. The inability of police officers to communicate with local Hispanics presented a challenge in terms of dealing with crime connected to the new immigrant population. Although many believed the town's

immigrants were perpetrators "involved in crime themselves" (Arnold, 1998, p. 4), one of my interviewees, a former police officer, argued that the immigrant newcomers were often the victims of crime. Regardless of the nature of the crime, an inability to communicate quickly became a safety issue for the Hispanic population and the police. Responding to an article that questioned why local Hispanics hadn't learned English before immigrating to Georgetown, one writer argued that the local police needed to be trained in effective communication in order to protect themselves. Why "wait for all the immigrants to learn?" worried one writer when we can and need to step up to the challenges around us (Sussex Countian, 1998c). The local police chief concurred, hiring Georgetown's first bi-lingual officer in 1999 and creating of a new victim's specialist position, an office also held by a bilingual employee.

Whether it was in regards to the language barrier, housing practices, or cultural practices, throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s the immigrant population was continually portrayed in the press as being out-of-place. Even when townsfolk argued that the Hispanic population was here to stay and that diversity could be a benefit to the town and beyond, these sentiments were always qualified by the belief that the immigrants needed education on how to conform to customs and norms already established. The message was: belonging is contingent, possibly open to negotiation, but only within certain parameters.

4.2.3   Housing and Economic Revitalization in the *Sussex Countian*

Housing, as noted before, was a pressing issue that the town has faced since 1990. The aging, and in many cases deteriorating and unsafe, housing stock was a major roadblock to economic development efforts. While the previous section (4.2) detailed

how the newly arrived immigrant population was discussed and portrayed in articles and editorials published in the *Sussex Countian,* the articles presented in the following instead focus on the way Georgetown's dilapidated housing stock and residential landscape became directly linked to an argument that Georgetown was a historic, small-town place. Further, as the following editorials written to the *Sussex Countian* will detail, this place identity and any challenges to it were tied to Georgetown's future economic successes.

The articles collected from the *Sussex Countian* divide up nearly evenly between the topics of decline (dec), development (dev), character (chr), overcrowding (ovc), and the need for immigrants to learn local customs, culture, and behavior. Because the articles that focused on overcrowding and culture were covered in the previous section, only the topics of decline, development, and character will be presented in the following.

Concerns over the character of Georgetown's housing, as well as the issue of overcrowding, appeared throughout the study period, but became more concentrated between 2000 and 2003. This is likely due, as before, to the death of Transito Berduo and the proposed development of the Pin Oaks apartment complex. Articles focused on the character of Georgetown's housing accounted for 23.4% of all *Sussex Countian* coverage, and 43.3% of all articles between 2000 and 2003. Overcrowding accounted for 20.8% of all coverage, and, likely due to the house fire that killed Transtio Berduo, accounted for 30.2% of all articles between 1999 and 2003.
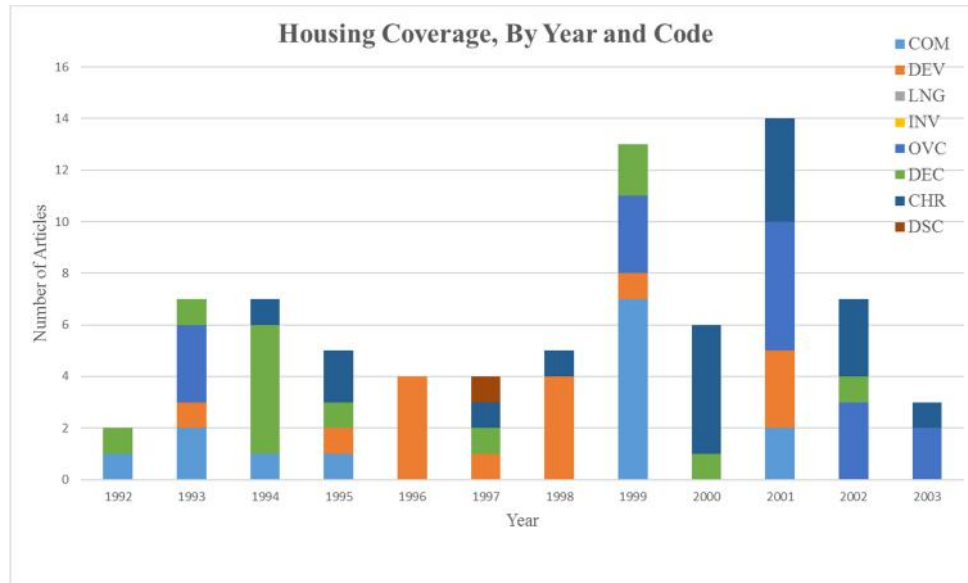
Figure 4.3 Number of articles, by year and code, that focused on housing issues. Refer to section 3.2 of the thesis for an explanation of coding structure

Finally, articles focused on trying to kick start development in town appeared throughout the time period represented in the collected articles, but dominated discussions between 1996 and 1998. A great deal of overlap existed between the articles coded for decline and development. As such, these two topics will be presented in tandem with one another.

4.2.3.1 Georgetown as a historic, small-town place

When describing the character and identity of Georgetown in public conversations about the town's efforts to revitalize, editorials published in the *Sussex Countian* paralleled sentiments held by many of my interview respondents. They often defaulted to one of two narratives, both of which recalled the town's past. First, Georgetown was described as having a decidedly small-town, everyone-knows-everyone character,

a narrative which often left little room for the story of the arrival of Hispanic immigrants, or retirees, during the 1990s. Second, Georgetown was often celebrated as the governmental center of the county, where historical homes (which often translated simply to its oldest homes) became a focal point around which pride in the town was often anchored. Both narratives were often utilized in op-eds and editorials meant to guide how Georgetown dealt with its messy and degraded homes, as well as its recent growth due to the arrival of foreign and out-of-state newcomers.

> When I was growing up, and up until about 10 years ago, I remember how nice our town was to live in. It was a beautiful town, well maintained, well groomed, and safe. It was much the All-American small town with tree lined streets, small stores and friendly people… These days it's a much different place. The town, as anyone can see, is an embarrassment (Headley, 1994, p. 4).

Invoking the quintessential rural American town of the 1950s, the language used to describe Georgetown in the 1990s and 2000s stepped backwards to a time when there were no troubles over housing or cultural misunderstandings. Privileging a particular aesthetic and social order, and speaking to a way of life and quality of interaction, Georgetown's future success was tied to recouping its past. If Georgetown's small-town charm and economic success rested on it being a predominately middle-class, white community, then all effort should be made to bring those attributes back to the town both by preserving what remained of Georgetown's small-town aesthetic and actively recreating a type of economic development and housing rehabilitation that supported this place identity. Narratives that argued for a future vision of the town that

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was decidedly founded on its pre-immigrant past worked to freeze Georgetown's place identity, and left the immigrant newcomers closed out of truly belonging in town (Antonsich, 2010; Massey, 1995)

By the 2000s, most of the Sussex Countian articles used in this study focused on the direction the town was taking in tackling degrading housing, dealing with overcrowding, and stimulating economic development. While the quotation above suggests that the town's small-town character had been irreparably harmed by the decline in the quality of housing stock, most writers noted that that small-town character, defined by the town's single-family homes and familiarity with your neighbors, was still alive in Georgetown. It simply needed to be protected and promoted. For Georgetown still had "a small-town flavor" argued one writer (Sussex Countian, 2000, p. 4).

How the residents of Georgetown went about preserving that small-town character often centered on arguments for continued growth of single-family homes. Between 1995 and 2000, the town passed two ordinances dealing with zoning for single-family housing. The first dictated that all new residential construction had to be single-family units, with any proposals for multiunit housing to be considered on a case by case basis. The second ordinance, adopted in 2000, stated that any future zoning changes must revert back to a lot's original zoning designation if a proposed multiunit development project did not come to fruition. Both ordinances slowed the construction of multifamily housing and garnered the support of many local residents, according to editorials published in *Sussex Countian.*

Beyond being perceived as increasing crime, multiunit complexes were suspect because they attracted and concentrated low-income residents in sections of town that were not only quite visible but also quite difficult to manage. In this way, multiunit complexes did not fit the single-family, middle-class, mixed-income and safe nature of Georgetown's residential past, or its promoted future. Reacting to the proposed Pin Oaks apartments project, one writer claimed that it simply would not be "compatible with the small-town atmosphere" that was one of Georgetown's most "appealing features" (Robinson, 2002, p. 4). These defining features of the town's identity, alluding to single-family, mixed-income neighborhoods, were described as being the "traditional hallmark of smaller, rural communities" such as Georgetown (Robinson, 2002, p.4). Ending on a cautionary note, the writer described one of the dangers another multiunit complex in town would create:

> The combination of the Georgetown Apartments to the east, Pin Oak
> to the south [sic], and the commercial development along the
> highway will form a ring of large-scale developments and low-
> income areas around the town, impeding a more gradual
> development of the town and the further development of single-
> family homes which the Georgetown Comprehensive Plan
> emphasizes (Robinson, 2002, p.4).

The development of additional multiunit complexes, then, was portrayed as out-of -place for the single-family, small-town aesthetic upheld by residents and the town plan. Interestingly, arguments against the Pin Oaks complex did not hinge on descriptions of the types of people who would likely live there. It was the concentration of many low-income residents into a single area in the wrong location

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that was seen as being out-of-place with the character of Georgetown (by it being too urban, and too close to other low-income rentals). Residents contended that their disapproval "[had] nothing to do with who [the units] are occupied by… it has to do with the problems of a multi-residential property in a place where it doesn't belong" (McClure, 2001, p.4).

It needs to be noted here that throughout the 1990s, three other low income apartments had already been built within or immediately adjacent to Georgetown's town boundaries (Affordable Housing Online, 2017). While an argument can certainly be made that the perceptions some residents of Georgetown held of lower-income, multiunit complexes were shaped by racialized undertones (see Jacobson, 2014), much of the opposition seen here could also be class based. Multiunit complexes simply did not fit within narratives found in the *Sussex Countian,* as well as in my interviews, that construct Georgetown as a clean, well-manicured and well maintained kind of place— a place defined by single-family homes, and a middle-class ideal.

While the opposition to the Pin Oaks (and likely resentment to other complexes in town) was focused on issues of class and aesthetics in Georgetown, not the incoming Guatemalan immigrants, it did not open up possibilities for belonging to a group of newcomers who faced different economic realities than the people voicing opposition to the apartment complex (Antonsich, 2010; Kielland, 2017). The argument that buildings like Pin Oaks had no place in Georgetown ran counter to calls in the community to end the overcrowded and substandard conditions many of the area's Hispanic residents were living in. As noted in the previous section, local advocates for the Hispanic population argued for Pin Oak to be built, citing the lack of affordable homes as the primary cause of overcrowding in immigrant-occupied rentals. While the

need to protect local immigrants from dangerous living conditions was clearly wanted, this need did not negate local residents' desires to keep Georgetown a small-town, family-oriented, middle-class place in keeping with its historic past and protected identity.

Georgetown historic past and protected identity were woven into the town's dominant landscape of: governmental buildings clustered near The Circle; large, gracious-looking older homes fronting North Bedford and West Market streets; and vibrant commercial establishments in the central business district. This landscape became intertwined with discussions of how the town was to move forward with its development. Preserving the historic quality of Georgetown was not only a concern of the residents of the community, but of the whole county. As one editorial pointed out, the town's sense of history, heritage landscapes and community pride were fundamental assets: "It took over two hundred years to make us who we are today…. History and our heritage are firmly rooted in the soil of this county, and the town of Georgetown is the focus of our pride" (Jones, 2000, p. 4.)

Arguing that Georgetown had benefited from growth in its local economy, it also suffered as the "buildings, old houses, and special places of our memory fade," and "places have been lost" for future generations (Jones, 2000, p.4). Much of Georgetown's history is centered on the open public park called The Circle and the buildings that frame this space (see Figure 4.4). The Blueprint Community Plan to Revitalize (2015), the suggested (and adopted) branding style guide (Town of Georgetown, 2014a, 2014b), and the local Chamber of Commerce (2012) each feature The Circle heavily in their plans to create new economic growth and better situate Georgetown to attract summer tourists.

Any time changes to the historical buildings on The Circle were proposed, residents wrote to the *Sussex Countian* in alarm and protest. When the State of Delaware bought the old, rundown, historic Brick Hotel to tear it down and build a new court building on that site, residents quickly opposed the plans. Like The Circle upon which it stood, the Brick Hotel was a symbol of the type of place Georgetown was and wanted to remain. "[The Brick Hotel] is Georgetown" (see Sussex Countian, 1999f, p. 4). Its history and traditions were wrapped up in that building (McClure, 1999d). Today the renovated Brick Hotel draws many visitors and is a favorite backdrop for photographs of handsomely dressed and smiling prom and *quinceañera* attendees, as well as members of local wedding parties.

Figure 4.4 The Circle. Source, www.georgetowndel.com

In another op-ed piece, a local resident complained about the handicap accessible ramp that was added to the courthouse on The Circle because it was out of character with the town's historic look. Constructed of exposed, salt-treated wood, some residents felt

that it too closely resembled a boardwalk – a look that belonged in coastal towns like Rehoboth not Georgetown (Diehl, 2000). When it came to developments that would alter the historical architecture found on The Circle residents expressed concern about the loss of place identity this would precipitate.

Much of the effort to improve the appearance of Georgetown's degraded housing stock adopted this narrative of preserving the town's historic place identity. The idea that Georgetown was defined by its historic identity appeared throughout *Sussex Countian* editorials, public documents, and was mentioned in a number of interviews I conducted. Kimmeytown, where much of the degraded housing was located, was described as holding a special place in the town's history. One resident, a local realtor involved with the Historic Georgetown Association, noted that this working-class neighborhood only came into being because of the development of the Treat factory in the late 1800s (mentioned in chapter 1). Because the neighborhood was so closely tied to this pivotal point in Georgetown's history, the deterioration of houses there was tied to a deterioration of the town's identity. In an article titled "Kimmeytown is rich and abundant in History," Moore (1998) decried recent actions taken by the Town Council to condemn and raze a number of substandard houses in that neighborhood. Instead of demolishing degraded homes, the author argued that the town needed to restore the properties in order to maintain the neighborhood's history.

The only time housing and housing rehabilitation were portrayed in a positive light was when efforts were made to restore homes to their original look. For example, when the Historic Georgetown Association (HGA), a non-profit founded by local realtor Carlton Moore, preserved and rehabilitated several historic properties it received praise. An influential stakeholder, the HGA has actively worked with the

town's Planning Commission and various development groups including the local Chamber of Commerce (see Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, 2012). The organization's role is to ensure that any new plans for development highlight the town's historic character. Individual Georgetown residents involved in the restoration of their historic houses were also applauded in a series of articles about "the brave undertaking some area couples have taken on by buying and remodeling some of Georgetown's older homes" (Sussex Countian, 1997c, p. 4). Fortifying the type of identity that long-time residents wanted, the Sussex Countian agreed that "These homes accent the town and give it the unique character Georgetown possesses" (1997c, p.4).

By asserting that Georgetown was defined by its small-town, family-oriented, community-minded character and history, by adopting policies to curtail the development of additional multi-family rental units, and by promoting a landscape and way of life that privileged a particular social group's attachment to place, community members were articulating what kind of change was allowable in Georgetown and what was not. In essence, they tried to fasten down the type of place Georgetown was in the past and *should* be going forward. While this narrative did not directly exclude, or even for the most part mention the Hispanic community, it was instrumental in shaping the way that the town looked at and interacted with its growing immigrant population—a population that by all appearances was settling permanently in the town and simply needed to learn to conform to already established notions of place in order to belong in the community.

4.2.3.2   Combatting Decline, and Revitalization in Georgetown

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s when public officials were asked to identify the greatest challenges facing Georgetown, two issues were always cited as central to revitalizing the town: incorporating the growing Hispanic population and tackling the town's housing crisis. As discussed before, the two issues were highly interrelated, and became stumbling blocks in the town's efforts to initiate new economic development. In the early 1990s, the town attempted to coordinate efforts with the National Main Street Center (NMSC) to develop the downtown area of Georgetown, namely, Market Street and The Circle. NMSC, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is a development and branding program that aims to revitalize communities by drawing on the "social, economic, physical, and cultural aspects that sets a place apart" (National Main Street Center, 2017, para. 1). While Georgetown eventually succeeded in becoming an affiliate in the 2000s (see, Town of Georgetown, 2010), attempts made a decade earlier failed, due to the high concentration of degraded homes in town and difficulties incorporating the immigrant community. In the early 1990s,

> Two other issues which have a higher priority right now. They are
> housing code revisions and enforcement notwithstanding the
> integration of new Central American residents into the community
> (Sussex Countian, 1994, p.2).

Until Georgetown dealt with those two issues, it would be at a disadvantage when seeking funding for revitalization projects, and when discussing development projects with prospective entrepreneurs. Kimmeytown, which had the highest concentration of degraded homes and immigrants, was the obvious location for change.

In 1997, a candidate for councilperson for Ward 2—which includes, among other neighborhoods, Kimmeytown—described how that neighborhood had "suffered severely" and been "terribly neglected" by property owners (O'Neil, 1997, p.2). Criticizing local landlords who exploited their immigrant renters by subjecting them to substandard housing conditions, and pushed the economic burden of substandard housing onto the town, the Town Council was asked "to make sure housing conditions in the Ward are sanitized and that landlords pay their fair share" (O'Neil, 1997, p. 2).

Words like sanitize, unsanitary, deteriorating, degraded, and dilapidated were almost always used when describing the town's aging housing stock in articles written to the *Sussex Countian.* This language evoked an image of a town crumbling at its foundations and beset by disease, a town losing an essential attribute of its identity. In one set of Town Council minutes where the public is allowed to comment, one person described Kimmeytown as having a "cancer" (Town of Georgetown, 1990). Attacking and curing the "cancer" overshadowed any attempts by the town government to work with directly with the Hispanic community on other issues. Instead, the Hispanic "situation" would be better dealt with by outside authorities or local agencies. This lead the town to "keep pressure on federal authorities to make sure all immigrants are here legally" (O'Neil, 1998, p. 2) as well as maintain pressure on those people who contributed to blight:

> You can be certain that the Town Council care about our town. Even with our very limited resources, we will continue to work within the court system to clean up dilapidated houses, we will look out for junk cars and junk in yards, we will encourage single family development (Sussex Countian, 1994, p. 4).

As highlighted in the above quotation, the deterioration of the town's look and public identity was not only tied to the decline of the structural integrity of houses. Trash in yards and junk visible around the house (i.e. couches, old cars) factored into the decline in aesthetics in town. These sentiments paralleled remarks made by non-immigrant participants in the interviews I conducted, as well as findings from the We Are One Georgetown Survey where respondents identified degraded properties and non-conforming behavior as some of the reason for the town's decline: "Property values have decreased due to a lack of homeownership: sheets being used for curtains, torn blinds, landscaping used to dry laundry, total number of vehicles parked at various properties, and a complete disregard for garbage accumulating" (Veness et al., 2013, p. 18). This was also echoed in Town Council minutes and interviews performed for this study. To deal with these conditions, local officials called for residents (likely aimed at landlords) to take more pride in their community in order to maintain Georgetown's character, equating pride in the town as a whole with good housekeeping standards.

Beyond simply pressuring citizens to take on more responsibility in maintaining properties, the town also aggressively began to enforce its housing codes. The uptick in housing code enforcement led to numerous court battles between the town and landowners that had let their properties degrade. During that time period, multiple buildings throughout town were condemned and demolished (usually by controlled burns). In conjunction with razing numerous homes throughout town, the town council relied on key revitalization strategies, such as lifting impact and building-permit fees to incentivize the construction of new, single-family homes.

However, not all efforts aimed at revitalizing Georgetown centered on housing. As noted previously, Georgetown's history and landmarks became intertwined with arguments for how the town needed to position itself to attract new visitors and new consumers. Route 9, which runs from Laurel, DE to the coastal community of Lewes, DE, bisects the town and runs directly through The Circle and Georgetown's commercial district. As tourism to Delaware's beaches grew throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Georgetown experienced a sharp rise in traffic caused by beachgoers en route from urban areas such as DC and Baltimore to beach towns such as Lewes and Rehoboth. As a result, the county's access to beaches and bays were seen as an "untapped resources" for everyone in the county (Sussex Countian, 1995, p. 4).

While Georgetown could not directly compete with the coastal communities as a tourist destination, groups like the Historic Georgetown Association, the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (2012), the Blueprint Communities Revitalization Plan (2015), and the Town of Georgetown (2010) each believed that Georgetown's historic landscape and identity could be used to draw those visitors to town businesses. Looking beyond the town government, the local Chamber of Commerce business community, consulted during a pseudo-focus group conducted for this study (see section 3.4), pointed to the town's historic landmarks and governmental offices located on The Circle as defining features of the town.. Asked to list three words they would use to describe Georgetown, 18 of the 22 participants in this pseudo-focus group session identified Georgetown's history, position as the county seat, or The Circle (another frequently mentioned descriptor was Hispanic). In addition, two local businesses, Sports on the Beach and 16 Mile Brewing Company, were banking on the idea that beach-goers would drive 16 miles inland to the outskirts of Georgetown to

participate in the organized athletic activities of a private sports facility plus ale and activities at the Georgetown microbrewery (Chamber of Commerce, 2012, p. 17).

This effort to preserve and highlight Georgetown's historic features became a goal written into the town's 2010 comprehensive plan, and was one of the recommendations that came out of a 2012 community forum undertaken by the Georgetown Blueprint Communities Revitalization Team (2015, p. 27). It was also the basis for much of the rebranding the town underwent in in 2014 (Town of Georgetown, 2014a, 2014b). For instance, the comprehensive plan described Georgetown as a "special town with great community character" (Town of Georgetown, 2010, p. 1), and then attributed many of these strengths to the town's historic architecture, single-family neighborhoods, and economic base. To preserve Georgetown's historic features, and encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties, the town recommended a few revisions to zoning codes. One strategy proposed by the town was to expand the town's Historic District concentrated on the area around The Circle in order to give the town more say in any demolition and remodeling that happened on properties in the central part of the town. Trudeau (2006, p. 437) contends that zoning ordinances are often utilized to create landscapes that become a "powerful means of bounding places," because they fix the multivocal readings of place to a single identity. Here, planning documents, housing code enforcement, and efforts to link economic development to Georgetown's historic landscape provided an avenue to harden and preserve notions that Georgetown was a quaint, historic place.

In addition, a consultant brought in to help the town create a cohesive brand to boost tourism and consumer activities downtown in 2014, also focused on the historic aspects of the town. The branding message given to the town in a public presentation

by the consultant, as well as the branding style guide suggested for the town to use, both highlight Georgetown's history and centralized location in the county as being essential to its character (Town of Georgetown, 2014; Town of Georgetown, 2014b). According to the consultant, the colors chosen for the town's brand were drawn from the historic landscape of the town: red, to match the brick of the older buildings, blues and greens from many of the community's older homes, and warm browns from the town's historic landmarks (Town of Georgetown, 2014; Town of Georgetown, 2014b).

Interestingly, by 2014 both the Georgetown comprehensive plan and the branding recommendations given to the town began to include language that highlighted the new diversity in Georgetown that resulted from the in-migration of Guatemalan and other Hispanic immigrants. In the comprehensive plan, the planning commission wrote: "Georgetown has become more of a destination showcasing small-town charm, historical prominence, cultural diversity, and excellence in educational facilities" (Town of Georgetown, 2010, p. 2). This cultural diversity, however, was not linked to new avenues for development in any of the editorials describing Georgetown's character published by the *Sussex Countian* from 1990 to 2006. Proactively or reticently, leaders in the town have recognized that diversity is one of Georgetown's many strengths—a strength that could help it attract to new investment and development. The branding consultant went even further in his formal public presentation to the town. He claimed that Georgetown was at an important turning point in its growth process and had to embrace its diversity. Acknowledging that the rapid growth of the immigrant community in Georgetown created challenges, the consultant asserted that it also opened up development opportunities. But the town must quickly act to nurture public pride in an inclusive portrait of community and

unite the diverse elements of Georgetown into a cohesive whole (Town of Georgetown, 2014a).

Though Georgetown's diversity was highlighted as important to future plans for development, actual concrete plans to incorporate the immigrant population into economic planning did not materialize in either the comprehensive plan or the consultant's recommendations in 2014. In the plan itself, the immigrant community is only mentioned in three areas. The first mention appeared in a description of the town's racial composition, and another in the slight reduction of immigrant workers in town as they sought out construction jobs throughout the county. The third reference to the Hispanic population—a population that comprised nearly 50% of the town's total—was in a section detailing the state of housing in Kimmeytown. Here, Kimmeytown was described as having a "high concentration of Latino residents of limited income" and needing the most "attention in regards to housing rehabilitation and infill development of new homes" (Town of Georgetown, 2010, p. 35). As was seen in the *Sussex Countian* articles, the comprehensive plan detailed the need to control the density of residential units in Kimmeytown. In particular, the town needed to avoid "conversions of existing one family homes into multiple units or into rooming houses" (Town of Georgetown, 2010, p. 35).

Again, while the new diversity in town was portrayed (albeit briefly) as having potential for the town's development efforts, the immigrant population was more closely linked to the housing problems that plagued the town than the revitalization opportunities that could help make the town prosperous. Seeing Georgetown's historic landscape as a solid platform for attracting new development, particularly drive-by tourism, residents as well as the town government attempted to reproduce already held

understandings of place and identity. Specifically, they encouraged a development model rooted in the town's past and not its newly diverse present or future.

4.3   Analysis of Interview results

Findings from the semi-structured interviews will be presented in this section. Interviews were conducted throughout 2016 and took place in various locations (homes, offices, and the library) chosen by the respondents. In total, 19 people participated in over 17 interviews, two of which were group interviews with husband and wife respondents. Eleven of the respondents were male, and 8 were female. Ten of the participants were white, two were of Spanish descent, two were African American, three were Guatemalan, one was of Indian decent, and one participant identified as multi-racial. Finally, only 8 of the 19 participants were born in Georgetown, with the rest moving to the area at various points in their lives. With this being said, the group of respondents sampled in this study skewed toward white and male, a demographic that is not representative of the makeup of Georgetown today. This skew is partially attributed to the difficulty I encountered recruiting from the immigrant community, and possibly due to a lack of comfort, lack of interest, and/or the relative inflexibility of working schedules in the immigrant community. It could also be due to the fact that the immigrant community was not familiar with me (I am an outsider to this community), and my inability to speak Spanish, which precluded interviews with the members of the older generation of immigrants.

Many of the same narratives that appeared in the *Sussex Countian* came up in the interviews I conducted. These similarities will be discussed where they appear in order to highlight which narratives persisted over time in Georgetown. One notable

exception is the complete lack of any of the respondents relying on more xenophobic views of the immigrant population. The absence of this narrative, and the disappearance of that narrative after the late 1990s in articles written in the *Sussex Countian* suggest that an earlier sentiment that the immigrant population should not be in Georgetown, or would not be there over time, did not have much staying power in Georgetown. Instead, respondents' responses mirror the shift seen in the *Sussex Countian* towards arguments over the town's character, overcrowding caused by landlord mismanagement of rental properties, and local immigrants needing to learn the customs and housekeeping practices of Georgetown residents.

4.3.1   Sense of Place in Georgetown

When asked to describe Georgetown as a place, both in the past and how it has changed to the present, respondents typically described Georgetown as the prototypical small-town in America. This echoed editorials in the *Sussex Countian* and images used in promotional materials by the Chamber of Commerce (2012). One white respondent, born in Georgetown, described the town's past as being like any other small town in America:

> Oh it was like any town, small town USA. Everybody knew
> everybody. Everybody went to church and the Sunday school
> classes were full. People dressed up, and the social norm was not
> as expansive as it is today. Generally, you didn't have a problem
> with people walking home, and that's the way Georgetown was. It
> was pretty neat. We had a lot little of traditions, some of which are
> still upheld today (interview, 9/7/16).

This particular understanding of Georgetown's small-town identity, as conveyed by the respondents, was often intertwined with the sense that everyone in town knew one another and that Georgetown was a safe town to live in. This sense of Georgetown's small-town aesthetic played a prominent role (as highlighted before) in how the town's character was portrayed in *Sussex Countian* articles written in the 1990s and early 2000s. Further, it found its way into Town Council discussions, with one resident describing Georgetown as "town like Mayberry" (Town of Georgetown, 2012). By invoking images of the quintessential rural American town crafted in the Andy Griffith Show, the resident was able to show how Georgetown as had fallen to a state that was "embarrassing" (Town of Georgetown, 2012).

While none of the respondents described the state of the town in such drastic terms, five of the respondents did describe the loss of some key features. Notably, respondents said that, today, they don't sense that everyone in town knows each other. One respondent, an African-American woman who moved to town in 1985 as an adult, mentioned that back when she first came to town "there was still a community." As time passed and the town grew, driven by the in-migration of both immigrants as well as retirees from surrounding states, community connections were lost for some of Georgetown's residents. Later in the same interview, the respondent indicated that, early on, the town would have stopped the flow of immigrants into Georgetown if they had to ability to do so. When asked to explain why, she remarked:

> They liked being a quiet community - to know who were your
> neighbors. They wanted Georgetown to remain central Sussex
> County. They didn't want [it] to be like a city (interview, 8/19/16).

Again, we see the concern residents had about newcomers moving into town and diminishing the sense of community. No longer able to know who your neighbors were, in part because many of them spoke a different language, Georgetown was drifting away from being a small, Sussex County town; instead it was becoming an unfamiliar place. Interestingly, this notion was also tied to a perception that Georgetown was becoming more like a city, where familiarity with all of your fellow residents is all but impossible. Only two other interviewees brought up Georgetown turning into an unwanted urban space. One, a white town councilperson, attributed difficulties attracting new economic development to perceptions by outsiders that Georgetown was too urban, too much like a city slum. This concern is also reflected in interviews with Georgetown residents conducted by Jacobson (2014) where respondents noted that Race Street, the site of many of Georgetown's immigrant-owned businesses, belonged in a city, not Georgetown. Another respondent in this study, an African-American man in his twenties, mentioned that residents were worried that the town was becoming too urban because of the increase in population, traffic, and crime. While population growth can be attributed to the in-migration of immigrants and retirees, the increase in traffic owed more to the growth of summer tourism along the coast than to any in-migration of people into Georgetown.

When asked how Georgetown changed after the immigrants arrived, one interviewee, an older African-American woman, stated: "what did happen, [is that] leaving your doors unlocked stopped" (interview, 8/19/16). Respondents also noted that in the past you could let your children walk around town unsupervised, or leave your car doors unlocked, unworried about safety. That sense of security, it seemed, had faded. Another respondent, who is currently serving as a town council person, furthered the

narrative of Georgetown's loss of a sense of community by tying it to the troubles the town had overcoming some of its major issues. She stated that "small communities need to feel the whole of the community, they can't be disjointed" if the town was going to thrive.

The perception that Georgetown as a whole was now a disjointed community was repeated by other respondents who acknowledged that much of the trouble the town has had in attracting new economic development was associated with problems of getting the different communities in town to talk and work together. This lack of interaction was also brought up in the We Are One Georgetown community survey when one respondent stated that "The level of communication in Georgetown is very poor and sad" and another indicated that "People only go to activities with their language [group]" (Veness et al., 2013, p. 16-17; See also, Jacobson, 2014). The image of Georgetown as a disjointed place signifies a loss of connection and attachment to Georgetown by non-immigrant respondents in this study. What had caused this disjointedness was the cultural and linguistic differences between residents and newcomers, which prevented interaction between the communities. Here, it is not the Guatemalans per se which are out-of-place, but the perceived current state of community relations and belonging which their presence has brought about.

This sense of lost character corresponds with arguments made in the 1990s and early 2000s in articles in the *Sussex Countian*, where the story about preserving Georgetown's single family neighborhoods and small-town character dominated public conversations. Data from both sources (interviews and articles) suggest that as the town navigated the growing pains of accepting a new immigrant population, more importance was placed on keeping Georgetown's place identity tied to a small-town

character, which, as seen in the previous section on housing in Georgetown, often made little room for the needs of the Hispanic community. Interestingly, missing from these arguments was any mention of the other in-migrating group to Georgetown: retirees from surrounding states. This suggests that non-immigrant residents may have viewed retirees as more like them and more acceptable than the lower-income, Central American immigrants.

Four of the respondents, however, provided a different take on Georgetown's lost small-town charm. The two respondents of Spanish descent argued that the local immigrant population had been unfairly associated with a decline of Georgetown's identity. Georgetown, they argued, was already in a state of decline from its aging housing stock and economic stagnation, which started in the mid-1980s. The two argued that any notion that Georgetown's history and identity was interrupted by the incoming Hispanic community was simply false. When one looked at the spread of Hispanic businesses along Race Street and throughout Kimmeytown, the Hispanic community should be credited for saving the town from stagnation. Another respondent, a former mayor, also challenged the idea that the immigrant community was the root cause of negative change. Instead, the respondent believed that "we have changed but we haven't changed any differently than anywhere else." Continuing, the respondent argued:

> The makeup of the town and the influx and whatnot, I wouldn't say
> it has gone away it is just not prevalent. I would disagree with
> anyone who says Georgetown is different than any other town. If
> you go to the other towns in the county, the smaller ones, you

would see the same changes there. We have moved into a

computerized age, a motorized age and things have changed

(interview, 9/7/16).

Here, Georgetown's change in character (i.e., growth related loss of small-town feel)
was not attributed to the immigrant population. Moreover, the respondent argued that
Georgetown's small-town feel was still intact as long as residents, both immigrant and
long-term, were willing to interact with one another. The respondent recounted a past
conversation he had with a local Hispanic business owner and his son. They made
small talk (translating through the son) about how businessman's children (whom the
respondent had coached in Little League) were doing. This, the respondent noted, is
the small-town feel, and that sense of community is "kind of what you make of it."

This counter narrative to the perception that Georgetown had lost its small-town
community character suggests that residents are still able to find that sense of
community in town, but only if they put the effort in to communicate and interact with
one another. Making that effort, however, was problematic. Many adults in the
Hispanic community not only spoke limited English, they did not receive, understand
or pay close attention to information generated by the English-language press or
posted in public places (Veness et al., 2013). Another contributor to the lack of cross-
community interaction is the spatial segregation of residents' homes and different
public spaces they visit. Six respondents brought up this aspect of Georgetown. While
each cited different reasons, all six portrayed Georgetown as a place with different
communities (notably, White, African American, and Hispanic), each with their own
spaces in town. One respondent argued that "In Georgetown, you have your pockets

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and you don't leave them." These pockets existed from the scale of the neighborhood, to businesses, and down to community activities like the Little League. Another respondent, a white advocate for the immigrant community, referred to this as "two communities that coexist in the same space."

Jacobson (2014), in an unpublished thesis studying place attachment in Georgetown, confirmed this sense that Georgetown is marked by considerable ethnic spatial segregation in its public spaces. Her study found that residents from each of Georgetown's three largest racial and ethnic groups (White, African American, and Hispanic) described varying levels of comfort while present in different parts of Georgetown (Jacobsen, 2014). Nelson and Nelson (2008) suggest that a lack of face-to-face interaction between new immigrants and established residents works to maintain an overall disconnect within towns where new immigrants have settled. It is likely, then, that there is some truth to both the dominant narrative that Georgetown had lost some of its small-town feel, and the less dominant counter narrative that people could not know, or did not try hard enough to get to know, one another. It is easy to understand how residents without the ability to speak Spanish felt hampered in their desires to communicate and out-of-place going into Hispanic-owned restaurants and businesses where they could not understand conversations around them. It is also natural that there would be a decline in Georgetown's friendly banter and communal character due to the inability to communicate across a language divide. As Veness et al., (2013, p. 15) report, non-verbal friendly exchanges and openness to alternative ways of interacting can go a long way to improving cross-community dialogue.

Interestingly, findings from this 2013 community-wide survey looking explicitly at communication problems in Georgetown, showed that the Hispanic population felt very attached to the town: 72% of the Hispanic respondents indicated that Georgetown was an excellent or good place to live, as opposed to 58% of white survey respondents and 34% of African American survey respondents (Veness et al., 2013, p. 17). The authors of the report interpret this finding as evidence that the Hispanic community was large enough and settled enough to find comfort and satisfaction in their situation in Georgetown (Veness et al., 2013). Observations from white and African-American respondents in my study concur with evidence from that 2013 survey. At the same time that the immigrant community was becoming more established and attached to Georgetown, non-immigrant residents experienced a sense of dislocation and loss in their own sense of place.

4.3.1.1 Sense of Place in Georgetown: housing, aesthetics, and decline

The seemingly rapid growth in the town's population, as noted above, led to a perception that the small-town, community-oriented character that made Georgetown a safe and friendly place to live had declined over the years. However, this was not the only source of decline cited by interviewees in this study. As with the articles collected from the *Sussex Countian*, narratives around degrading housing, overcrowding, and how immigrants maintained their homes repeatedly came up in conversations I had with members of the Georgetown community. In total, 14 out of 19 respondents mentioned the housing issues that troubled Georgetown in our conversations. This parallels findings from the We Are One Georgetown community survey done 2013

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wherein the majority of respondents disliked the town's degraded landscape, dilapidated houses and unkempt yards.

When asked to describe exactly how Georgetown had changed over the years, one respondent (a white, male) claimed that "housing was huge." As much of the older housing in town was bought up by landlords and converted from owner-occupant, single-family use to rental properties used by multiple families or unrelated occupants, this respondent claimed that you began to see a "change in the upkeep" of the properties that led to a "decline in the aesthetics" of Georgetown. Continuing, he remarked that in the past a lot of those older, historic homes were "well-manicured," adding that in the past people held to certain restrictions on what you would have in their yards. Now he says it is common to see trash, refuse, and cars everywhere in these yards.

The specific mention of the look of houses declining in town, not because of the structure of the building degrading, but instead because of unkempt appearances was brought up by other respondents. One respondent, a white woman in her 40s, described that some of the resentment in town came from Georgetown residents not wanting anything in town to change; they did not respond well to anything in Georgetown looking different:

> I think that the people who are most resistant to it just don't want things to change. They want Georgetown to look the same, they don't like things to look different. So, it does bother them that the Hispanic community doesn't keep their houses the same way. You know, trash outside, cars outside, they don't plant flowers when

everyone else does. But they rent their houses you know, so it is

very different than when you can control it (interview, 9/26/16).

The way that immigrant renters kept their homes was seen as decidedly different from the clean, manicured look Georgetown residents wanted for their town. This falls in line with articles in the *Sussex Countian* that focused on the decline of Georgetown's small-town character, landlord neglect, and what the town needed to do to clean up its image.

Similar sentiments arose in another interview, when an elderly white woman stated that many immigrants had "trash around," and many "have all their stuff and furniture on the porch or in the yard, and would actually be sleeping on it and that kind of stuff." The respondent then speculated that that "the town fathers did not want Georgetown to be portrayed with that kind of an image." When asked to explain how this clashed with the town's desired self-image, the interviewee stated:

Well you see people sleeping on an overstuffed couch in the lawn

or in their truck and it made you feel like it was downgrading or

degrading their community, or their respective community or

respective street. There wasn't a lot of it, but there was some and

that's why some of the landlords got called slum landlords because

they didn't go and say you have to clean up and be respectable and

have your yard clean you know? And that's a whole new trend for

some of them I'm sure (interview, 7/15/16).

This is a slightly different telling of why immigrant-occupied rental properties were degrading. In both quotations trash and furniture in visible spaces contributed to an

overall decline in the neighborhood's aesthetics. Both quotations also pointed to the landlords as an explanation as to why this situation couldn't be rectified. However, in the first quotation the respondent simply stated that when you rent you have no control over your property, implying that if the aesthetics of a house were to be maintained it was up to the landlord to do that work. In the second quotation, good house maintenance was not portrayed as the landlord's duty. Instead, the second respondent speculated that some of the landlords were labeled as slumlords because they didn't tell their tenants to "clean up and be respectable." This parallels arguments made in the *Sussex Countian* that the immigrant community needed to be taught local customs, especially those around house care, in order to keep the town's character from deteriorating any further.

The storage of furniture and other items on front lawns and porches, the accumulation of trash, and simply keeping your house in a manner that was not well manicured were not the only actions that were seen as contributing to a decline in Georgetown's characteristic aesthetic. Resident responses, as well as a few entries in the town council minutes, pointed towards a perceived misuse of residential spaces by immigrants in the area. A few residents noted that when the immigrants first moved into Georgetown in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many of them seemed to spend a lot of time walking around town when not at work or sleeping. These interviewees attributed this unusual-to-them activity to the widespread impression that these often single men slept "in shifts." By this, respondents were referring to the practice of one bed being used by sequential occupants in houses rented by a group of people—a group of friends from the same hometown, for instance, or a group of extended family members. As one occupant headed off to work and bed space was opened up, another

would return from work to use that bed space. This practice undoubtedly was connected to economizing or lowering the cost of housing for these immigrants. But it also could have been due to not having transportation that would enable them to find less crowded housing and seek indoor diversions elsewhere. It could also have been a preference by these immigrants to pool their resources and create an immediate support structure.

Whether or not this sleeping pattern was the real cause of immigrant wandering throughout town, the perception of its existence led to a belief that many were drinking and walking around town. One respondent, a current councilperson, noted that for a while, during the 1990s, public drinking and public drunkenness were a "real concern in Georgetown" and one of the reasons why the immigrant population was viewed in a negative light. Another respondent, a younger Hispanic woman, noted that a perception that the immigrant community was full of drunks fed residents' concerns that Georgetown was earning a bad reputation as a place full of people "getting into trouble." A quotation from a Hispanic woman included in an ethnography about Hispanic migrants to Sussex County revealed some of the reasons why single Hispanic men might have been seen wandering around at odd hours and, often, in a state of drunkenness:

> [The single men] have very few friends, the only thing they do is
> work…. Because I think they are alone, and they leave their
> families behind, perhaps their children, their mother, father, their
> friends, and they are here by themselves without anyone to cook
> for them, without anyone to ask them how things went at work. I
> think that they get depressed, and the men don't find any outlet

besides drinking and forgetting themselves for a while (Borland,

2001, p. 328).

Beyond worries about the problems associated with loitering and public drunkenness, Georgetown residents were worried about how their town looked in the eyes of outsiders—outsiders who might be potential customers in local businesses or homeowners. Previously mentioned practices such as some immigrants drying clothes in their front yards or hosting large weekly yard sales were also problematic, according to one respondent. Though the town eventually passed ordinances prohibiting yard sales (2013) and inappropriate drying of clothes outdoors (2016), those activities did not stop. One respondent, a white man in his 40s, mentioned that the community did not like the way the yard sales looked, did not like the increased traffic in town, and worried that both would undercut efforts to improve the town. A year after the ordinance prohibiting yard sales was passed, town council was still dealing with the issue:

Mayor West stated that a SATB tournament was held this weekend

at the Little League Park and with people coming in from Jersey

and Pennsylvania that leaves a bad impression with clothes spread

out all over the ground with yard sales taking place there. It gives

the town a bad name, a bad image (Town of Georgetown, 2014c).

In the end, it was the way that immigrants used public residential spaces that drew criticism. Yard sales were very much part of small-town America as long as they upheld a view of Georgetown as a middle-class place and did not go beyond what was deemed appropriate. The actual language of the ordinance itself illustrates this point.

In describing the purpose of the ordinance, the town describes its residential neighborhoods as a "source of civic pride," and explains that the purpose of this ordinance is to regulate yard sales in town in order to a) "protect residential areas from the permanent encroachment of commercial use," and b) protect the "aesthetic qualities of neighborhoods" by limiting both the hours of operation and where yard sales could happen (Town of Georgetown, 2013, § 225-1). Likewise, outdoor clothes drying was part of small-town America. But it did not extend to drying clothes on porch railings or car tops in areas visible from the street, according to an ordinance declaring these practices "nuisances" (Town of Georgetown, 2016, §165-18.1). The respondent, a white woman in her 50s, stated that this largely immigrant practice didn't "project the [clean and orderly] look the town is going for." When I asked if immigrant renters used porch railings because they did not have on-site dryers or clothes lines (thus making clothes washing at a laundromat a more expensive and time-consuming task) the respondent stated that she didn't really know but speculated it likely due to "cultural differences." While cultural differences are likely, this practice can also be linked to economic differences between working-class immigrants and middle-class non-immigrants.

The narrative that many of the daily practices undertaken by members of the immigrant community, from how they used space around their homes to how they moved around town, did not fit into the norms of Georgetown is also seen in other parts of my interviews, town council minutes, and editorials from the *Sussex Countian*. Each described how Georgetown's clean, historic aesthetic and a small-town traditions were being chipped away by both poor landlord practices and the presence of an unassimilated immigrant population. This rhetoric implicitly excluded the incoming

population from an overall vision of place and community in Georgetown, and portrayed the immigrant newcomers as a group needing to work to adopt local customs in order to belong in town.

Two of my respondents, a young Hispanic woman and a young African-American man, contended that non-immigrant residents believed that additional Hispanics coming into Georgetown would further diminish the town's image and reputation. Further, the young Hispanic woman argued, members of the Georgetown community wanted outsiders to think of Georgetown as a middle-class place, and not a working-class immigrant place. In all, the rhetoric and narratives employed by Georgetown residents when discussing what kind of place Georgetown was meant to be suggests that residents were more apt to view all unwanted changes as coming from the immigrant community. More often than not, they would also react by trying to preserve previously held notions of place and identity by clamping down on what was permitted instead of what could be done to incorporate the needs of the Hispanic community into the town as a whole.

The one unwanted change that immigrants were not entirely to blame for was housing. Overcrowding and the deterioration of properties was a landlord issue, though ignorance of maintenance and local customs by immigrants was also mentioned. Six respondents specifically indicted landlords, and eight respondents referenced cultural differences as a contributor to the town's decline. A town official, however, believed landlords were the root of the town's housing problem, a problem the town had tried to deal with via legal action without success. Losing a legal case against landlords in the early 2000s over proposed fee hikes and code enforcement, the town is required to give a 48-hour notice of any inspection for housing code violations. This gives

landlords time to hide any apparent problems in the property before an inspection happens, a practice that perpetuates the degradation of homes throughout Georgetown and continues and unfair association of housing problems with immigrant tenants.

Similar sentiments were echoed in another interview with a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. When asked about the state of housing in Georgetown, the respondent stated that "some of the landlords, what they do is despicable." When asked to clarify this response, she explained that it was less about what the landlords actually do, and more about "what they don't do." She continued to explain that the landlords allow their housing to fall into disrepair, create overcrowding by charging too much for housing, and don't contribute back to the community. She cites these practices, especially that of overcrowding, as being major roadblocks for any kind of productive change in town.

As noted in the *Sussex Countian* editorials, overcrowding in substandard rentals was similarly by interviewees. One respondent, a former mayor who had overseen many of the town's controlled demolitions of substandard houses, remarked on how the high demand for housing by members of the new immigrant community meant landlords could "pack" residents (a term I heard in a few other interviews) into degraded housing. Some of the houses, he claimed, often lacked basic necessities like running water and were well beyond what was acceptable:

> You know today you might call them crack houses, but in that day
> they were refugee houses. They would move here, and they were
> like well we will just move in here and no one will mind. But they
> weren't safe (interview, 9/17/17).

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Conjuring the image of a crack house – a dirty, unclean den of unfavorable activity – mirrors rhetoric heard elsewhere that described much of the housing immigrants lived in as a source of "pestilence" and "cancer". Unsanitary and totally out-of-place in a small town like Georgetown, crack and refugee houses belonged elsewhere, in inner cities and disaster zones. These were the abodes displaced, marginalized people inhabited, situated in unsanctioned or reluctantly sanctioned spaces set apart from society. Both references, the crack house and the refugee house, cast degraded rental properties as something that did not fit with the manicured, middle-class look the town was trying to maintain.

Two respondents explained that the reason landlords allowed their properties to degrade had less to do with outright careless neglect and more to do with profit margins. One of these two, who is a landlord in Georgetown, explained that there was no financial incentive to take care of cheaper rental units in town. He explained that repairs could easily be made, but after factoring in tenants' abilities to pay higher prices and the cost of mortgages and repairs it would not be possible to make a reasonable profit. Continuing, he noted that in recent years he had begun taking better care of his rentals. But if he had listened to what he described as "the intelligent mind" he would have been better off selling the worst of the properties and only holding on to those that "make money."

It seems as though the need for affordable housing by the growing immigrant population, combined with a lack of financial incentive to take care of the properties and the town's inability to fully control landlord practices, proved to be the perfect trifecta that laid the foundations for Georgetown's prolonged housing crisis. Again, paralleling findings from the *Sussex Countian*, when interviewees spoke about housing

problems in town, poor landlord practices were always placed as the root cause. However, continuing what was seen in my other data sources, cultural differences and perceptions that immigrants simply did not know better, were often cited as contributing factors to many of the negative changes experienced in Georgetown.

Of the 8 respondents that specifically cited cultural differences held by the immigrant community, only two suggested that either the landlords or other community members needed to teach the newcomers how to go about their daily life in Georgetown. Instead of holding local authorities responsible for the education of the immigrant population, most of the respondents in my interviews suggested that there was a cultural mismatch between newcomers and established residents, and this mismatch fed into some of the resentment felt in town.

One respondent, a white former police officer in Georgetown, commented on the rising in crime rates in Georgetown as the numbers of immigrants increased, and pointed out that while some residents saw the immigrants themselves as committing the crimes, the real rise in crime was due to victimization of the immigrant population. Though he addresses the same issue of public drunkenness brought up in earlier reports, this interviewee stated that:

> The Hispanics would drink and wander the streets, and you also
> had a lot of them being victims because a lot of them would carry
> cash. When they came to Food City they would pay in cash. And
> they became victims of robberies, and they wouldn't report it to the
> police because they couldn't speak English or didn't' trust the

cops. So you had a rise in crime, but it wasn't always their fault

(interview, 9/19/16).

The interviewee admitted, however, that many in the town saw the victimization of the immigrant population as being their own fault, stating that many residents felt that "You're [the immigrants] here, and now you are causing this problem." Continuing, he said residents know that "you don't walk around with hundreds of dollars in cash," but apparently many immigrants don't. This practice of carrying cash, as one of my interviewees responded, was due to the difficulty immigrants have setting up bank accounts, as well as a general distrust of banks (see also, Gaffney, 2007). Similar to how immigrants became associated with some of the blame of deteriorating housing conditions driven by landlord practices, immigrants in town were seen as contributing to the increase in crime because they made themselves easy targets of crime. All of this contributed to a growing sense that that Georgetown was becoming less safe overall.

Respondents who referred to the cultural mismatch between immigrants and long-term residents tended to focus on the fact that immigrants did not quite knowing how to live in American style homes, and thus stood apart from the rest of Georgetown's community. Echoing similar rhetoric used in some of the *Sussex Countian* editorials, these respondents also believed or understood that many of the immigrants in Georgetown had come from underdeveloped places and that is why they did not know how to adapt to modern infrastructure, appliances and habits. While there is some truth to this understanding (see Veness, 2011), it does not take long for adults to figure out what is going on and learn by example. One respondent, a white advocate for the

immigrant community, urged town officials not to reject immigrant newcomers, but help them learn:

> The police chief, town managers, who really saw this as this is our
> community, these people live here, they work here, and we need to
> catch them up to speed on how things runs here. Because they
> come from places where they don't have indoor plumbing. They
> come from places where they don't have the housing we have, and
> the codes we have and all that. So, most of the people I ran into
> were very matter of fact [that] they are people we need to help
> (interview, 9/7/16).

Another local landlord said that while his Hispanic tenants in the past "weren't the cleanest of people," overall they were good tenants. The problem, he noted, was that they wouldn't complain about issues in their house, either because they didn't know there was a problem or because they were afraid that they would be kicked out for reporting a problem. He would hear "grumbling" from other residents about the immigrants:

> They would complain about the number of Hispanics in a single
> house, that and that plumbing issues. This is just what I heard but
> they would complain that they [the immigrants] didn't know how
> to use bathrooms correctly. I never saw that there was any real
> proof of that (9/19/16).

Here, as elsewhere, the interviewee alluded to a perception in town that local immigrants, at least during the 1990s when this respondent rented properties, did not

know how to use commonplace household amenities correctly. This respondent, however, casts doubt as to whether or not there was any truth to those kinds of sentiments. Another respondent, an elderly white woman, described the immigrants' lack of knowledge in a somewhat more positive light. She described how half of the town seemed to be stuck in its ways, unwilling to accept the presence of the immigrant population, and the other half embraced change and accepted the town's growing diversity:

> I think when they came from wherever they came from they just
> didn't have our customs. I mean some of them, maybe, moved
> from lean-tos where they didn't need heat and so they didn't
> know… I try to put myself into their shoes and think about what it
> would be like to be them and looking to be treated with respect. I
> think that when they first got here and so many people were saying
> 'oh no, they have to go', I think that must have been hard as an
> immigrant hear to swallow (7/15/15).

This quotation highlights one final point I'd like to make about my interviewees' perception that the immigrant population didn't have the place-based knowledge to thrive in Georgetown. Here, as elsewhere, the Hispanic population was described as coming from places where they were not used to having, or needing, many of the features American citizens consider as standard in a habitable home. This perception, however, is not necessarily attached to a negative view of the immigrant population. Instead, the respondent shows a great deal of empathy, recognizing the difficulties many immigrants may have had moving into a community which did not always receive them well. In taking a more sympathetic stance, this respondent (as well as

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others in the study) does not exclude the Guatemalan population from belonging in Georgetown. However, while the immigrant population had the right to belong in Georgetown, they still needed to learn how to, an argument which preserves Georgetown's aesthetics and place identity.

Most of my interviewees, save for a few, did not view the immigrant population as negatively as writers of the op-eds and editorials in the *Sussex Countian*. This is possibly due to a general easing of tensions between the communities that naturally occurred as time moved forward. As opposed to the majority of overly negative op-ed pieces written in the *Sussex Countian*, which were written when Georgetown was first receiving its newcomers, these interviews took place 25 years after the first arrival of the immigrant population, decades after the town started its own journey down the road of cultural diversity. It also, however, could be due to some sampling bias. It is very possible that the residents who were willing to speak with me about Georgetown and its experiences with immigration happened to be residents who, overall, either held a more positive view of the immigrant population or were reluctant to express overly critical remarks to me, a graduate student and outsider. Due to this, I cannot with any clear certainty pinpoint a single reason for the overall positive perception of the immigrant population.

Finally, when asked why the immigrant newcomers were seen as one of the reasons for the lost small-town character of Georgetown, four of my respondents described this stereotype and perception simply as a "fear of the unknown". One respondent ventured to say that as an immigrant group was moving in, they brought with them a foreign language, as well as foreign social norms and values. This led many to believe that these foreigners would create situations hard for non-foreigners to tolerate. Another

respondent argued that this fear of the unknown was fading because the immigrant community is comprised of many nuclear families and not collections of young single men:

> It is more palatable when it is a new person entering kindergarten than a 24-year-old coming in to work, single man. You don't know how long he is going to be here. They were born here; you know? They are American. You can't not like that part of the population increase as oppose to the 24-year-old guy who comes across as undocumented. You don't know who he is, and because you don't know the language. It comes across as suspicious and dangerous. You don't know who he is, where he was before, and how long he will be around (9/7/16).

Another interviewee repeated this sentiment, stating that many Georgetown residents "were set in their ways, and Caucasian," and that the immigrants were viewed as "outsiders" who could not be easily trusted—outsiders who created "chaos and havoc" for the town. In pointing to a fear of the unknown in regards to the immigrant population, these interviewees' remarks paralleled the narrative portrayed in other interviews, my archival sources, and published documents. As one respondent in the We Are One Georgetown community survey said, "Georgetown is scared of change" (Veness et al., 2013, p. 18). All of these sources concur, part of Georgetown's identity was lost as the town filled with unfamiliar faces and unfamiliar behaviors.

4.3.2   Georgetown as an Invaded Place, and "Little Mexico"

While none of my interviewees relied on the same xenophobic and exclusionary rhetoric seen in the *Sussex Countian* editorials during the 1990s, four indicated that sometimes it felt like an "invasion" happened when the immigrants, seemingly overnight, first moved into town in the 1990s. One respondent, and middle-aged African-American woman, stated "at first it was just a few, and then there were multitudes." She then went on to describe what it was like when the immigrants first began arriving:

> Let me give you an anecdote. They came in a U-Haul – that's how
> they'd often come in, in U-Hauls and large vans. And [the
> immigrants] were unloaded, and they all went into the same house
> (8/19/16).

Beyond images of immigrants being offloaded onto the town like a shipment of goods, the same respondent recounted how at first the immigrants were only concentrated in housing in Kimmeytown. Soon, she remarked, they began to "spill over" into housing in the African-American parts of Georgetown. According to this interviewee, as landlords in town began buying up properties outside of Kimmeytown, and renting single family homes to multiple immigrant families (as she describes it), one member of the African-American community felt as though they were being displaced both from their neighborhoods as well as from job opportunities at the poultry processing plant.

Another interviewee, a white man in his 40s, commented that many in town were "resentful" because of an overall feeling that "[immigrants] are invading our space,

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and [they] are not supposed to be here." In the same interview, he also commented that his friends and family do not like going to the local Walmart because, as they put it, "it's nothing but Hispanics." He did state that in reality, it wasn't as bad as many made it out to be. However, to him it felt like the immigrants all arrived overnight. He mentioned that a friend of his once jokingly said to his Hispanic classmate "it's like all of you just one day woke up and decided to all parachute in here."

Overall, the interviewees who described Georgetown as being "invaded" by the immigrant population did not do so with the same negative rhetoric seen in op-ed pieces published in the *Sussex Countian* during the 1990s. In the *Sussex Countian,* writers conveyed a feeling that Georgetown was being taken over by this new foreign community, and was in the process was losing a bit of its own identity, the immigrant newcomers were seen as a threat and a population that did not belong in Georgetown. Interviewees, instead, tended to focus more on the sudden appearance of new faces in town, and the speed at which the population moved in.

Six of the respondents indicated that Kimmeytown had become an ethnic enclave. One respondent, a young African American man, noted that as the immigrant population moved into the vacant homes in Kimmeytown, the neighborhood shifted from being and feeling like it was a part of Georgetown to something else. Kimmeytown transitioned from a neighborhood of lower-income whites, to Hispanics, in the minds of many residents. It became, as they pejoratively labeled it, "Little Mexico," even though the number of Mexican migrants in that neighborhood was smaller than Guatemalan immigrants. In addition, as another respondent described, as the neighborhood shifted from housing being used for single families to housing being

used for extended, or multiple, families, it increasingly was deemed a foreign space – a place out of Mexico.

The other respondents noted that outsiders began to also refer to Georgetown as "Little Mexico" after the settlement of the immigrant population. Some, one white interviewee noted, would state that friends of his from around the county would joke that Georgetown had become the "capitol of Mexico." Another white interviewee noted that people would ask her why she would want to live in Georgetown, stating that these people would say "oh you're living in little Mexico now." Finally, one respondent, a Hispanic woman in her 20s, noted that many outsiders call "Georgetown a little Hispanic town," an appellation that she believes "the white families don't like."

Interestingly, this notion that Georgetown was now a Hispanic place arose in the large pseudo-focus group conducted for this study. In the session, Georgetown was the only town in Sussex County that participants linked to the presence of a Hispanic population, despite the fact that Millsboro, another central Sussex County town, also has an Hispanic community. This supports interviewee responses that suggest a growing perception countywide that Georgetown was becoming a "little Hispanic town", setting it apart from the rest of Sussex towns.

Beyond simply conflating the Guatemalan immigrants with immigrants from Mexico, this narrative feeds into broader discourses in American politics that portrays Mexicans – or in our case, Guatemalans – as an *other* that serves as a foil to bolster a particular version of white American identity (Ackelson, 1999). When many residents and outsiders view Georgetown, or at least Kimmeytown, as "Little Mexico", we learn that the town is no longer viewed as a rural white town, in a rural white county.

4.3.3 Moving forward: resisting change, and improvements in community relations

I would like to end this chapter with a brief discussion of how respondents described Georgetown's difficulty encouraging new economic growth. In doing so, I will also touch on why respondents felt Georgetown was so slow to accept the new immigrant community. Finally, this section will end by detailing the improvements many of the respondents have seen in Georgetown in recent years.

When asked why Georgetown had trouble throughout the years attracting and initiating new economic growth, three of my respondents cited a perception that the town was not "shovel ready." By this, each of the three respondents argued that over the years possible investors had viewed Georgetown as unfriendly towards them. Strict, and, according to some, outdated zoning rules made it difficult for outside developers to begin work in Georgetown. This reality, as one interviewee from the Chamber of Commerce described, made it difficult for Georgetown to capitalize on the growth of the tourism industry 16 miles to the east along Delaware's shoreline. Two respondents, a town official and a member of the Chamber of Commerce, each stated that Georgetown was also afflicted by what they described as "court time," meaning too many businesses in Georgetown operated only during the hours that the county court house and government buildings operated. Thus, Georgetown had very little nightlife and few opportunities to attract visitors at night and on weekends.

Beyond troubles with zoning restrictions and Georgetown's lack of nighttime and weekend activities, six respondents noted that it has been difficult getting the two business communities in town – namely the Hispanic businesses that are heavily concentrated along Race Street and the white owned businesses along Highway 13 and

the Market and Bedford street corridors – to work together as a cohesive unit. One interviewee, a white woman in her 40s, quickly pointed out that Georgetown has "more Hispanic business development than any other type." However, according to the respondent, who was a part of the Chamber of Commerce, the town also had a lot of difficulty getting Hispanic-owned businesses and non-Hispanic businesses to work together on development projects. While the language barrier in town may have contributed to this impasse, this respondent believes that the lack of solidarity is also due to "uneasiness" these business people feel about working with one another. The apprehension, she stated, is that your business may end up "losing [it's] character or sense of identity." Interestingly, many of the white respondents echoed the sentiment, that it had been difficult to work with the Hispanic businesses, because of their seeming resistance to working with the white population.

Three respondents countered the narrative that Hispanic businesses were reluctant to partner with non-Hispanics businesses. Instead they pointed to what one described as a "lack of partnering" by the non-immigrant community with the Hispanic community. These respondents argued that non-immigrant groups and businesses in town had never really reached out to the Hispanic businesses to include them in different development-focused initiatives. In addition, there may be a perception by Hispanic businesses that the Chamber of Commerce, which coordinates a lot of the non-immigrant community's outreach efforts, is not an organization designed to serve their particular business interests, which tend to focus on retailing that serves an almost exclusively Hispanic clientele.

While language barriers were downplayed by the Chamber of Commerce interviewee, its existence as a stumbling block was often cited by other interviewees. Twelve of 19

respondents pointed to a widespread inability to easily communicate with the immigrant population. This impacted public safety issues, solutions to housing, health, and social concerns, and any dialogue about how to stimulate economic development and encourage citizenship participation in Georgetown (See: Veness et al., 2013). A few respondents suggested that the language barrier contributed to suspiciousness and distrust on the part of non-Hispanic residents. As one respondent succinctly put it, "when people speak and you don't understand [their language], you tend to not like it."

However present the language barrier was, one respondent, a young African-American man, emphasized that this was not the real reason the town had trouble bringing the two communities together. He felt the town really did not try hard enough to incorporate the immigrants on a large-scale, permanent basis. Instead, the attitude was that the town's immigrant population would be impermanent or transitory. Thus, there was no need for long-term community-building efforts; benign neglect would suffice until the immigrants returned to their homelands. This lack of "partnering" between the different stakeholders was viewed as a characteristic of Georgetown that had little to do with immigrants. People may use language barriers and lack of political and community commitment as explanations for the lack of partnerships, however the reality is different, according to this respondent:

> If we go back to 1996 I would buy the argument [that language
> barriers and unwillingness] was enough to not partner. But fast
> forward 20 years and it doesn't fly anymore. They are here, and
> can speak and interact. I think that Georgetown is comfortable with
> not moving more (interview, 7/28/16).

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This notion that Georgetown is complacent or "comfortable with not moving more," came up in 10 of my interviews. Respondents described Georgetown as a place traditionally slow to accept changes in town, especially if those changes were linked to anyone viewed as an outsider. Three of the respondents pointed out that in Georgetown, as well as Sussex County, people have "deep roots" with families having lived there for many generations. One respondent, a white woman who moved to the area 25 years ago, recalled a time when she jokingly asked local friends when she would be allowed "in the club." The friends responded "you get into the group when you have a parent in the ground [and] it doesn't matter how long you have been here if you don't have your roots here."

One respondent, a white man in his 40s, described Georgetown's slowness to accept change and outsiders as one of the reasons why the town reacted negatively to the immigrant newcomers and pressed to maintain a status quo: "I think the town of Georgetown has been reactive instead of proactive, and because of this we have struggled." This posture, moreover, had been detrimental in the long run for the community, he said. Again, the idea that many Georgetown residents were resistant to change of any type parallels actions taken and rhetoric used by members of the community around issues of housing, development, and place identity. It also reiterates an observation given by a resident in the We Are One Georgetown community survey: "Georgetown has beautiful potential, but it is stuck in a time warp. It is 50 years behind the time!" (Veness et al., 2013, p. 18). While some residents worked to incorporate the newcomers into Georgetown from the beginning, the narratives that always held the most sway were those that worked to freeze

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Georgetown's place identity. Protecting and preserving hegemonic place identities, and upholding the social and spatial order, were paramount.

Despite an underlying resistance to accept change, and aside from any difficulties caused by the inability to communicate with one another, respondents noted that in the past 5-10 years there have been significant improvements in Georgetown. Alison Gaffney (2007), in an unpublished thesis studying immigrant integration throughout the Delmarva Peninsula, argued that when compared to other Delmarva towns, Georgetown had been more successful in incorporating immigrant newcomers into town. The proliferation of immigrant-oriented nonprofits in Georgetown, such as La Esperanza (social services), La Casita (education), and La Red (healthcare) located in Georgetown have contributed significantly to improving social relations in town, as well has integrating the immigrant community into local social service and healthcare networks. Further, Gaffney (2007) pointed to partnerships between local schools and groups like La Esperanza and La Casita as helping to break down language barriers in town. Finally, the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity was been instrumental in helping the Guatemalan population transition away from being a tenant population, into a growing homeowner population (Gaffney, 2007).

When asked to identify what had contributed to easing tensions in town, four respondents stated that the town had begun to work more inclusively with the immigrant community, in part because the town had no choice. Residents are increasingly accepting the reality that the immigrant community is here to stay, though one respondent, a Hispanic woman in her 20s, felt the town had not yet fully accepted them as equals. Another respondent noted that recent efforts to work with the immigrant community were not really founded in "a great love of the Hispanics."

Rather, newcomer accommodation came down to "plain dollars and cents." The town simply could no longer afford to ignore the need to find ways to incorporate Hispanics. Further, according to these respondents, the town would have been better off in terms of housing and economy if they had been more proactive to begin with.

Regardless of why Georgetown has become more willing to work with the immigrant community in recent years, interviewees noted some considerable improvements in town. By hiring bilingual police officers and support staff (in conjunction with the removal of a police chief that was described as not wanting to work with the community), respondents said that debates about public safety, and tensions between the police and the Hispanic community, were less heated. Overcrowding and deteriorating homes continue to be problems. At the same time many Hispanic families have begun buying their own homes.

Finally, the town has recently made moves to incorporate Race Street, the site of many Hispanic-owned businesses, as well as Kimmeytown into its proposed Downtown Development District. The district is part of a state partnership that provides economic incentives to businesses—incentives such as the waiving of impact fees and easing of zoning restrictions to encourage economic development. As explained by a town official, the incorporation of Kimmeytown into this district was designed to help rehabilitate the housing in that area in order to improve the living conditions experienced by immigrants.

Georgetown's initial unwillingness to accept the immigrant newcomers in the belief that they would soon go away, as well as the blame the town put at the feet of poorly behaved landlords and tenants, likely prolonged many issues the town faced between

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1990 and the present. Efforts to preserve Georgetown's small-town, single-family character worked against ready solutions to immigrant-associated overcrowding and improvement of aging housing stock. In addition, though there is a persistent belief that the town is hesitant to embrace inevitable change, in recent years there are more and more positive signs that barriers between the immigrant and non-immigrant communities are beginning to dissolve. This suggests that if the town continues to work with the immigrant community (as opposed to without them), new possibilities of belonging in Georgetown may likely arise (Bauder, 2016).

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1   Discussion

As detailed in this study, the community members of Georgetown have had to navigate a number of changes and challenges over the past three decades. During this time, the areal extent and population of the town have nearly doubled in size, creating changes in the traditional look and general nature of the town. Driven by the incorporation of tracts of land at the outer edge of the town that would allow for future development, as well as by the in-migration of Guatemalan immigrants working in the expanding agro-processing industries to the center of Georgetown, residents were unprepared for the challenges these changes would bring. Very quickly attention turned to how to pay for services to new businesses and residents, how to create an adequate supply of well-tended and affordable housing, and how to handle the social and cultural impacts of integrating native-born and immigrant newcomers in a town where everyone knew each other and little had changed for generations. Despite these challenges and the tensions they created, Georgetown benefitted from new growth in the form of Hispanic businesses and a growing labor force.

The town struggled hard to grapple with increasingly unsafe, overcrowded, substandard rental properties while at the same time trying to revitalize the local economy and situate itself as a tourist destination in order to draw in beach going summer tourists. While each of these issues could be examined separately under lenses

that focus solely on economics or public discourses of immigration, viewing them as a whole through a framework of place provides insight into how the intersections of local history, economic trends, and identity play into the negotiation of social belonging in a small town that relatively quickly became a minority-majority place.

Reactions in the *Sussex Countian* to the immigrant newcomers during the 1990s often drew from rhetoric that outright questioned the populations right to belong in Georgetown. In these narratives, the incoming immigrants were portrayed as an invading force that would irreparably damage Georgetown. The very presence of immigrants, as seen in these narratives, sparked reactionary rhetoric that attempted to strengthen the borders of place in Georgetown between the perceived rightful residents (i.e. non-immigrants) and the immigrant newcomers. While this initial rhetoric did not, in the long term, have much staying power in Georgetown, interviewee responses that highlighted the growing perception that Georgetown was becoming an immigrant place (i.e., Little Mexico) suggest that today the immigrant population still stands apart from the dominant view of Georgetown as the quintessential American small town.

Public discussions about Georgetown's increasingly overcrowded and degraded housing stock, and its efforts to court development in order to increase revenues strengthen this perception. These discussions were almost always presented against the backdrop that Georgetown was, and should always remain, a small, historic town. Narratives focused on the decline of housing in town, as found in the *Sussex Countian* and the interviews I conducted, linked immigrant practices of housekeeping, and the use of space around town, to the overall decline in Georgetown's place identity.

Having taken the plunge and allowed change to begin so that Georgetown could keep up with economic and demographic transitions occurring at the county level (see Pugliano, 2013), town officials and long-term residents were not ready for how the quaint character and political significance of their home town would be altered. Unable to hold firmly onto to a known past while hesitantly embracing an unknown future, the town fixed its sights on what was wrong and who was responsible for those wrongs. The deteriorating conditions of many properties throughout town did not uphold an image of the towns identity that fit with its past and celebrated its pride of place. The poultry industry that brought in immigrant labor, the landlords that provided housing to that labor, and immigrant tenants who labored and lived in the community all dealt a blow to Georgetown's identity in the minds of many long-term residents, according to the narratives outlined in the data sources of this thesis.

The linguistic and cultural differences that the immigrant population brought to Georgetown further implicated them in them in the loss of Georgetown's identity. As indicated in the *Sussex Countian* pieces, and in interviews I conducted, long-term residents increasingly began to feel that the small-town, middle-class character that they believed to be inherent to Georgetown was rapidly disappearing. As the Spanish speaking, outsider population grew in town, non-immigrant residents began to lose a sense of community where everybody knew everybody. This newfound unfamiliarity among residents in Georgetown, and the perception that the immigrant newcomers lacked the cultural, place-based knowledge necessary to preserve Georgetown's historic, small-town character, fed into concerns that Georgetown in the future would be seen as an immigrant place. The narratives uncovered in this thesis constantly portray the low-wage, Hispanic newcomers as out-of-place in what was supposed to

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be a historic, middle-class, small-town community, in native-born residents' minds. This case study of Georgetown highlights how exclusionary rhetoric and policies can move from being explicit and visible, as seen in the invasionary and xenophobic rhetoric highlighted in the early editions of the *Sussex Countian*, into the realm of the implicit and unseen. In Georgetown, narratives that identified a lack of place-based knowledge and customs as contributing to housing mismanagement, and the misuse of space around town, construct the immigrant newcomers as still being out-of-place in Georgetown. In casting the immigrant as incompatible with what kind of place Georgetown was, long-term residents rarely denied the immigrants' right to *reside* in Georgetown. They did, however, time and time again question their ability to truly *belong* in Georgetown.

5.2   Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations present in this study. For one, a decade of missing information from the *Sussex Countian* newspaper (there is no archive of materials from 2006-2016), leaves out crucial details about improvements such as the expansion of bilingual police officers and efforts made to bridge the gap with the Guatemalan population and the town government.

Next, as my interview sample skewed heavily towards older, white residents, it does not include narratives and rhetoric used by the immigrant residents of town. The Hispanic voice was (save for a few interviews) missing from this study. With these limitations in mind, the conclusions and findings of this study should be seen as speaking to how the already established, non-immigrant residents in town perceived, narrated, and reacted to how Georgetown, as a place, has changed since 1990.

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Future research could remedy this by establishing better connections with the Guatemalan community, in order to increase recruitment of the population. It is also recommended that additional information about changes in Georgetown, and how they are treated in public narratives, be sought from other news outlets in Sussex County, such as the local Spanish language newspaper, *Hoy en Delaware*

, or the other county-wide paper *The Cape Gazette.* This would provide a comparative analysis between discourse used by the immigrant versus non-immigrant community. Price (2012) argues that there is a considerable gap in the geographic literature on immigration and place that highlights the positive contributions to placemaking immigrant newcomers provide. Future research in Georgetown that focuses on the actions and narratives of the immigrant community has the potential to fill this gap.

Further, missing from this research is a focus on how Georgetown's other marginalized community, the long-established African-American community, navigated the changes detailed in this study. Future research comparing the experience of African-American residents to the debates over housing and the growing immigrant population may be able to build on this research, which, while containing a few African-American voices, mostly highlights the experiences of Georgetown's older, white population. Finally, more consideration needs to be given to the role of class in narratives about place and negotiations of identity.

5.3   Conclusion

The dominant narratives discussed in this study can be interpreted as attempts by one segment of the Georgetown population to preserve historically accepted notions of place and identity in Georgetown. Some of these narratives were woven into zoning

and planning decisions—decisions that may have prolonged the town's inability to deal with shortages of affordable housing and overcrowding, and slowed the process of immigrant incorporation. By shoring up and reproducing understandings of Georgetown as the historic, small-town center of Sussex County, this dominant narrative shaped who did and did not belong, and who, effectively, was deemed "out-of-place" in Georgetown. Linguistic and cultural differences between non-immigrant residents and the Hispanic newcomers simply became visible markers of what was proper, right and part of Georgetown's identity, and what is improper, wrong and not part of the town's identity.

Nelson and Heimstra (2008) contend that by adopting a framework of place and belonging when studying immigrant receiving communities, it opens analytical avenues into understanding the renegotiation of community and social inclusion without adopting assimilationist narratives that cast the immigrant group as having to become more like the receiving population. In Georgetown, we can see that place matters in understanding how residents reacted to the immigrant newcomers. By focusing on the preservation of Georgetown's identity as a historic, small-town place, non-immigrant residents were able to define immigrant newcomers as being out-of-place without excluding them outright from residing in the town. In effect, this allowed the town to ignore its newest community members as it worked to develop and portray a sense of place that would allow the town to better take advantage of new economic opportunities that had been opened up by the growing tourism industry in Sussex County. Instead of adopting a stance that would actively work to include the immigrant community into wider understandings of place and belonging in Georgetown, the immigrants were resigned to being outsiders within the community.

However, as highlighted in the final section of the interviewee responses, this stance likely impeded Georgetown's ability to efficiently manage its new growth. By holding onto a preconceived notion of Georgetown as a small-town, single-family, historic place, efforts to rehabilitate housing and spur on new economic development in town were stalled. This finding has implications for other small towns across the country that are increasingly receiving new immigrant residents.

In recent years, however, we have seen Georgetown work more actively to incorporate the Guatemalan population into the community. The recent inclusion of Hispanic businesses and residences on Race Street and in Kimmeytown into the Downtown Development District plan, as well as the hiring of more bilingual employees in the police department and the return of the Hispanic Festival to Georgetown, suggest that the Guatemalan population is becoming more widely accepted, at least at the level of the town government. This presents exciting new possibilities for Georgetown, as the town continues to encourage new economic development. Careful attention should be paid to Georgetown in the next few years. As these new opportunities unfold, continued research could allow for better understandings of how towns undergoing similar changes can more successfully receive immigrants as *a part* of the community, as opposed to simply being *in* the community.

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Appendix

INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: March 18, 2016

TO: Nathan Thayer, MA Geography
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [870631-1] Projecting Place: Perceptions of change and identity in Georgetown, DE

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: March 18, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: March 17, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # (6,7)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

- 1 -

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Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Famese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.